Choice Based Lettings
Housing Allocation Policy

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF
WELLINGBOROUGH

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALTHOUGH THE NAME WELLINGBOROUGH CBL HAS BEEN USED THROUGHOUT THIS DOCUMENT, THIS WILL NOT BE THE NAME THAT WILL BE ADOPTED BY THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH FOR ITS CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME.
TRANSLATIONS AND MAKING THE POLICY ACCESSIBLE

Please Contact us at:

Borough Council of Wellingborough
Tithe Barn Road
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Northants
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1.0 GLOSSARY AND DEFINITION OF TERMS
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<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allocation Policy</strong></td>
<td>This explains the rules that determine how Borough Council of Wellingborough and the Wellingborough CBL Landlords allocate social housing properties. The policy also outlines other housing options.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applicant</strong></td>
<td>A person who applies to go on the Wellingborough CBL register.</td>
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<td><strong>Refused nomination</strong></td>
<td>The term used when a Wellingborough CBL Landlord rejects an applicant for a property because:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The applicant is not suitable, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The property would not meet the applicant's needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Choice-based lettings</strong></td>
<td>A scheme that gives all applicants a greater degree of choice of home.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eligibility</strong></td>
<td>The term used to describe factors that match an applicant to a property. For example, the size of your household and the number of bed spaces in a property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitual residence test</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mutual exchange</strong></td>
<td>A swap of accommodation between two social housing tenants that relies on each tenant moving permanently into the other persons/tenants property.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutorily homeless</strong></td>
<td>A term that refers to homeless people or households to whom local housing authorities do not have a duty to make an offer of permanent housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Build Homebuy (Shared Ownership)</strong></td>
<td>This scheme allows first time buyers and others in unique circumstances to buy a proportion of a new home and to pay rent on the remaining proportion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nomination</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rechargeable repairs</strong></td>
<td>This is damage caused by a tenant to a property during a tenancy for which the tenant is directly and/or indirectly responsible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registered Providers</strong></td>
<td>A housing association or a not-for-profit company registered by the Tenants Services Authority to provide social housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rights of Residence Directive</strong></td>
<td>This directive allows citizens from the European Economic Area who are not economically active to live in another member country. A condition of this is that the citizen should have enough resources to avoid relying on the benefits system of the member country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shortlist</strong></td>
<td>A list of applicants that have expressed an interest in a particular property advertised on Wellingborough CBL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social housing</strong></td>
<td>The term used for affordable rental accommodation owned by a local authority or housing association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutorily homeless</strong></td>
<td>A term that refers to people or families to whom a local housing authority have a duty to make a permanent offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession of tenancy</td>
<td>When a tenant dies, the tenancy will automatically pass to any joint tenants, a partner or a close member of the tenant’s family as long as they were living with the tenant at the time of death and for at least 12 months before. Anyone who takes over the tenancy in this way is called a successor. Successions are at the discretion of the landlord.</td>
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2.0 INTRODUCTION
This Allocation Policy explains how the Borough Council of Wellingborough, working in partnership with a number of Registered Providers, allocates social housing properties within the borough through a jointly operated choice-based lettings scheme. Choice based lettings involves the advertising of social housing vacancies and the registering of ‘bids’ by applicants who would like to live in the property.

The Borough Council of Wellingborough’s choice-based lettings scheme is called Wellingborough CBL and is intended to be the single register for access to all social housing within the borough, whether it is social rented or shared ownership. In addition to social housing, Wellingborough CBL applicants will also be able to access vacancies in the private rented sector that are advertised via the scheme.

All properties that are advertised by a private landlord within the Wellingborough CBL scheme have been inspected, and accredited in accordance with Borough Council of Wellingborough’s Property Accreditation scheme. This is to ensure that all private rented properties advertised through the scheme conform to the current national lettings standards. Finally, whilst private landlords are not legally bound to offer their properties in accordance with this allocation policy, they will endeavour to do so where possible.

With the current level of demand for social housing exceeding supply, the register exists to enable all households who are in housing need to be included on one list, so maximising their opportunities for re-housing. The scheme seeks to offer choice, while giving reasonable preference to those in the greatest housing need. The register also acts as an index of the level and nature of housing need locally.

By joining the register, those in housing need can be considered for vacancies which occur in properties owned or managed by any of the Wellingborough CBL Landlords (Registered Providers and Accredited Private Landlords). The aim is to make the task of applying for social housing as simple as possible, requiring only one form to be completed for all social housing opportunities.

This Allocation Policy applies to:

- new applicants,
- existing Registered Providers’ tenants who want to transfer from one tenancy to another with their current landlord, and
- existing social rented housing tenants who want to transfer from a secure tenancy to an assured tenancy with an Registered Provider and vice versa, and
- new applicants and/or existing tenants looking to purchase shared ownership properties.

The Borough Council of Wellingborough and the Wellingborough CBL Landlords are committed to equal opportunities and to making sure that everyone is treated fairly.
3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

The aims of this Allocation Policy and of having choice-based lettings is to help people with housing need choose where they would like to live and to prevent people from becoming statutorily homeless.

The objectives of the Policy are:

- to enable applicants to make an informed choice about where they would like to live
- to allow applicants to look for a vacant property in the area of their choice
- to encourage common standards of working for Borough Council of Wellingborough and all of the Registered Providers partners of Wellingborough CBL
- to reduce the number of properties refused by applicants
- to ensure properties are let as quickly as possible
- to reduce the number of difficult-to-let properties.

4.0 STATEMENT OF CHOICE

The Borough Council of Wellingborough and their partner Registered Providers involved in the Wellingborough CBL allocation scheme are committed to offering the greatest choice possible, in the allocation of social housing within the borough. However, the ability to offer applicants choice has to be balanced against a legal requirement for an allocation scheme to ensure that those in greatest housing need are given priority for social housing.

This is achieved by advertising all social housing vacancies within the borough (see section 19 of this document for how properties are advertised) and inviting applicants to state which property they would prefer to live in, by registering a ‘bid’ for the property (see section 20 of this document for how to make a bid). Applicants can only bid for a property that is suitable for their household need. Housing will only be allocated to applicants who bid for a specific property. Therefore if an applicant does not bid for a property they will not be considered for its allocation. The successful applicant will normally be the applicant with the greatest housing need (as defined in section 15 of this document) that has waited the longest.

Prior to submitting a bid for a property, applicants are informed how many other applicants have already bid for the property. They are also informed as to what position they are currently ranked amongst the other bidding applicants, in terms of their housing need and waiting time. This enables them to identify the level of priority that they have within the allocation scheme, and to develop an awareness of the availability of accommodation suitable to their needs within the borough. Applicants can therefore make an informed decision on their housing options by balancing their need for accommodation with the availability of properties.
Within this it must be recognised that there is very high demand for affordable housing in Wellingborough and that this demand cannot be fully met from the current social housing stock. Consequently our expectation is that only those applicants in greatest housing need will obtain social rented accommodation.

The Borough Council of Wellingborough is committed to extending choice of housing to those who are accepted as homeless under the statutory duties contained within Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. ‘Statutory homeless’ applicants will be given eight weeks from notification of acceptance, within which to bid for properties through Wellingborough CBL. If at the end of the eight weeks statutory homeless applicants have not bid successfully for a property, Borough Council of Wellingborough Housing Options staff will review the circumstances as to why they were unable to secure a property. If there has not been a suitable property on which the applicant could have been reasonably expected to bid, the period may be extended. Alternatively they will bid on behalf of a statutory homeless applicant for each suitable property that becomes available until a bid is successful. This will then constitute a nomination for the purposes of discharging the homeless duty (further details can be found in section 15.2).

5.0 HELP IN APPLYING TO TAKE PART IN WELLINGBOROUGH CBL

Staff from the Borough Council of Wellingborough, Wellingborough CBL Landlords, statutory organisations and voluntary bodies are able to provide advice and assistance to applicants when joining and taking part in Wellingborough Council’s Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

In particular, help will be provided to anyone who may have difficulty participating in Wellingborough CBL. For example, due to physical disability, learning disability, illness, age, those for who English is not a first language, or any other reason that might make it harder for someone to participate within the scheme.

Statutory and voluntary bodies that may be able to help applicants take part in the scheme include:

- Accommodation Concern
- CAN Homeless Action Team
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Connexions – Wellingborough
- Daylight Centre
- Bassetts Court (Mayday Trust)
- English Churches Housing (Broadway)
- Wellingborough Community Mental Health Team
- MIND
- National Probation Service
- Wellingborough Women’s Aid
- Northamptonshire County Council Leaving Care Team
- Northamptonshire County Council Teenage Parent Support Team
6.0 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Borough Council of Wellingborough and the partner Registered Providers are committed to promoting equality of opportunity in housing services. We aim to deliver quality services without prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of all the community, regardless of age, cultural or ethnic background, disability, gender, marital status, religious or political persuasion or sexual orientation.

To view Borough Council of Wellingborough’s Equality and Diversity Strategy please visit www.wellingborough.gov.uk or contact Borough Council of Wellingborough on 01933 229777

7.0 DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

You have the right to access the personal information we hold about you. We will use the information you provide to enable us to assess your application and place you in the correct band according to your housing need. We may also use the information for issues of child protection, public protection and for preventing and detecting fraud and other criminal offences. This includes information we hold as paper and electronic records. If you would like to access your file, please contact Borough Council of Wellingborough for an application form (see section 27.0 for contact details).

8.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This allocation policy has been written to meet the duties of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 covers:

- allocating local authority properties to new tenants
- transfers that are requested by registered social landlord tenants
- allocating properties to current tenants of Registered Providers
- nominations that the Council makes to Registered Providers

The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, also sets out the housing circumstances of those applicants that must be given reasonable preference within an allocation scheme.
Section 167(2) Housing Act 1996 states that the scheme should be framed so as to secure that reasonable preference is given to:

- **a)** people who are homeless (within the meaning of part 7 of the 1996 Act); this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who are not in priority need;

- **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 unsanitary 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; and

- **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 to others).

There are instances where this policy does not apply. These include:

- mutual exchange
- succession of tenancy
- decanting for major works
- where a property is leased to a support agency

In each of these instances, neither the Council nor any other Wellingborough CBL Landlords are required to identify a new tenant for the relevant property or properties from the Wellingborough CBL register. A definition of each of these terms can be found in the ‘Glossary and Definition of Terms’ in Section 1.0.

### 8.1 False statements and withholding information

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 states:

(1) A person commits an offence if, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under this Part –

- a) he knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in material particular, or

- b) he knowingly withholds information which the authority have reasonably required him to give in connection with the exercise of those function.
Wellingborough CBL is the local housing authority’s mechanism for discharging its functions under Part VI of the Act. Consequently where section 171 applies, Borough Council of Wellingborough will bring a prosecution.

Where false information is found to have been given, the applicant may also be excluded from registration with Wellingborough CBL, and where false information has resulted in the applicant obtaining accommodation, Borough Council of Wellingborough or the relevant Registered Provider may bring possession proceedings for recovery of the property.

9.0 HOUSING PROVIDERS WORKING TOGETHER

The Registered Providers, who have homes to rent or buy in Wellingborough, are working together as Wellingborough CBL Landlords. They have all agreed to use this policy and to allocate properties through Wellingborough CBL.

The Wellingborough CBL Landlords are:

- Wellingborough Homes
- Bedfordshire Pilgrims
- East Midlands Housing Association
- Housing 21
- Gharana
- Leicester Housing Association and ASRA
- Masonic
- Places for People
- Northants Rural
- Orbit Housing
- Rockingham Forest
- Spire Homes
- Midsummer
- Riverside
- Sanctuary
- Aragon

See section 27.0 to 28.0 for full address and contact details.

10.0 WHO CAN APPLY TO GO ON THE WELLINGBOROUGH CBL REGISTER?

The Wellingborough CBL Landlords keep a single housing register, called the Wellingborough CBL Register. This means applicants only have to fill in one housing application form to be considered for housing by all the Wellingborough CBL Landlords.

We will accept a completed housing application form from people who are aged 16 or over. We do, however, have some rules that could affect an
application – see sections 10.1 to 10.2 – and we cannot accept applications from people in certain circumstances – see sections 11.1 to 11.2.

10.1 Young people under-18 rule

You can apply to go on the Wellingborough CBL Register once you are 16. If you are under 18 you must provide details of a guarantor otherwise a tenancy will not be offered to you, this may vary depending on the requirements of the Registered Provider.

10.2 Owner occupiers in housing need

If you own or jointly own residential accommodation, either freehold, under mortgage, shared ownership leasehold or under an equity release scheme and/or have a legal right of occupation, you must have a housing need to apply to the Housing Register, i.e need a sheltered unit, disrepair of current home, medical conditions affected by your current housing or have an eviction/repossession order served.

10.3 Councillors, board members, employees & their close relatives rule

Councillors, board members and employees of Borough Council of Wellingborough and the partner Wellingborough CBL Landlords and their close relatives, can apply to go on the Wellingborough CBL Register. However, you must make your position or relationship within the Council or with the Wellingborough CBL Landlord known on your application form. If you do not do this and it is discovered later that such a relationship exists, then it may affect your tenancy.

The Council will neither give an advantage to nor disadvantage an applicant falling into this category. The other Wellingborough CBL Landlords have their own policies on lettings to some or all of those identified in section 10.2. You may need to contact them to get details of their policies – see section 27.0 to 28.0.

11.0 WHO CANNOT APPLY TO GO ON THE WELLINGBOROUGH CBL REGISTER?

We cannot accept applications to go on the Wellingborough CBL Register from people in certain circumstances – see sections 11.1 to 11.2.
11.1 People from outside the United Kingdom

The Council cannot accept applications to go on the Wellingborough CBL Register from:

- people who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996
- people from outside the United Kingdom who fail the habitual residence test
- people from outside the United Kingdom who are in breach of, or whose residence does not comply with, the European Union Rights of Residence Directive and statutory instruments.

If you are subject to section 11.1 the Council has no duty to offer you a home. We will, however, offer you advice on your other housing options.

11.2 People who behave in an unacceptable way

A local housing authority can decide that an applicant be treated as ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by them (S160 (7) Housing Act 1996) if they are satisfied that:

1. the applicant, or a member of the household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority; and
2. in the circumstances at the time the application is considered, the applicant or a member of the household is unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of that behaviour.

The only behaviour, which may be regarded by the authority as unacceptable for these purposes, is:

(a) behaviour of the person concerned which would (if he were a secure tenant of the authority) entitle the authority to a possession order under section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 (c. 68) on any ground mentioned in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to that Act (other than ground 8); or
(b) behaviour of a member of his household, which would (if he were a person residing with a secure tenant of the authority), entitle the authority to such a possession order.

We will tell you in writing if we cannot allocate you a property on the Wellingborough CBL Register because of unacceptable behaviour. You have the right to ask for a review of the decision. See section 24.0 on Your Right to a Review for more information. You can ask us to reconsider our decision at any time if you can demonstrate that your behaviour has changed and that you can conduct and sustain a tenancy.
12.0 HOW TO JOIN THE WELLINGBOROUGH CBL REGISTER

You need to fill in a housing application form, which you can get from a variety of places:

- from the Wellingborough CBL website – www.wellingborough.gov.uk
  or contact/visit:
  - Borough Council of Wellingborough’s customer service centres. See section 27.0 for contact details.

13.0 HOUSING APPLICATION PROCESSING STANDARDS

When we get your housing application:

- we will let you know that we have received it within five working days
- if we need to visit you at home or arrange an office interview, we will contact you to arrange this within ten working days of receiving your application
- we will contact you within five working days of receiving your application to tell you if we need any extra proof to confirm your details
- we will contact you to confirm that your application is active within 28 days of receiving your form and all relevant information we require
- we will let you know if we cannot register your application within 28 days of receiving your form. The delay may be due to us requiring additional information from you or another relevant agency

13.1 Confirming your details

You need to give us all the information we ask for so that we can confirm your details. If you do not give us this information it will delay your application.

We will check all housing applications when they are received. We will make any checks we consider necessary with current and former landlords, and other relevant agencies. If this information is not given to us quickly it may delay the processing of your application. We may also check your details with a credit-referencing agency. See section 6.0 on data protection for how we use and protect the information you give us.

It is your responsibility to give us the proof that we ask for to confirm your details. We will suspend your housing application until we get this information.

If, after a 28-day period, you have not given us the information we have asked for, we will cancel your housing application.

If you have given false and/or misleading information on your application form and during its processing, we may cancel your application. We may take legal
action against you. This action may include prosecuting you in the criminal courts.

You must say on your housing application form if you and/or other members of your household have current and/or past rent arrears or rechargeable repairs from any private, council or housing association tenancy. If you do not tell us this information and it is later discovered, we may cancel your application and take legal action against you.

You must tell us, and if possible provide evidence, why you have rent arrears or rechargeable repairs. You also need to provide evidence of payments made or arranged payment plans to reduce any arrears. We may be able to offer advice or refer you to free money advice to help you reduce your debts.

If you are successful in making a bid for accommodation we will seek to verify that your circumstances are still the same as those on your application form prior to making an offer of accommodation. If it is found that your circumstances have changed to the extent that you are now incorrectly banded in a higher band than your circumstances dictate and you have not told us of the change, we will not make you an offer of accommodation. Your application will be re-banded and we may take action under section 8.1 (False statements and withholding information).

14.0 HOW IS A HOUSING APPLICATION ASSESSED?

We assess your housing application based on the information you have given on the form and any other evidence or details you have provided.

We assess this information against the:

- Wellingborough CBL Bands – see section 15.0
- Property eligibility table – see section 16.0

14.1 Home visits and office interviews

If, when we assess a housing application, we need to get further information from you, we may have to arrange a home visit or office interview. We will contact you to arrange a convenient appointment.

14.2 Disability, mobility and medical needs

If you, a joint applicant, or other member of your household identified on your housing application have:

- a permanent physical disability
- a mobility problem, or
- a medical condition.
We may need to do a further assessment and you will have to complete a form detailing the current medical circumstances.

If you wish to appeal against the banding decision we make concerning medical priority, you should contact us so that we can seek independent medical advice.

This will help us to decide:

- whether your current home is having a detrimental impact on the health or mobility of you or anyone in your household
- what type of property would best suit your/their needs, or if a move is necessary
- how to match your specific needs to properties that are adapted.

If you express an interest in properties that do not have the adaptations you need the landlord may be able to adapt the property to your needs, however, this would be subject to their policies.

We will seek separate independent advice from a medical advisor where necessary and/or circumstances will be verified with a visit from housing staff prior to an applicant being placed in Band A.

Verification in all other bands will take place when an applicant makes a successful bid or is offered a property.

14.3 Placing you in a different Wellingborough CBL band

In some cases, we may place your housing application in a lower band than your circumstances call for – see section 15.0 for all bands. We may do this, for example, if you or anyone in your household has:

- abandoned a previous tenancy
- moved to new housing that is worse than your previous housing without good reason
- sold a property or given notice on a tenancy without getting other housing first.

If we think that you have deliberately made your own housing circumstances worse we will place your housing application in a different Wellingborough CBL Band for 12 months from the date of application. The band we place you in will best reflect your housing needs from your previous accommodation.

14.4 Community Safety

The Council works in partnership with the Police, the Probation Service, the Community Safety Partnership, and housing providers to manage risk to the community.
If your application leads us to believe there are implications for community safety, we may refuse you housing in certain areas.

**15.0 THE WELLINGBOROUGH CBL BANDS**

We will categorise your housing application into one of four bands.

These bands are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band A</th>
<th>Band B</th>
<th>Band C</th>
<th>Band D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The four bands have been created to ensure that people with the greatest housing need are given the greatest opportunity to get a home. This is in accordance with Section 167(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (see section 8 of this document for further information). Applicants with an emergency need for accommodation are placed in the highest band (Band A); while applicants who are adequately housed are placed in the lowest band (Band D). Sections 15.1-15.6 of this policy explain the circumstances by which an application is banded against.

**15.1 Band A – Emergency housing need (8 week bidding time limit)**

We will place you, a joint applicant, or any other member of your household in this band if your circumstances fall into one or more of the following criteria: -

- The Council has accepted you are ‘statutorily homeless’. - Section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996, or you are occupying accommodation provided by any housing authority under section 192(3).
- Your property is found to be ‘statutorily overcrowded’ and you have not intentionally caused the overcrowding as defined in the Housing Act 1985.
- You cannot be discharged from hospital to your current accommodation because it has been deemed unsuitable for your continued occupation (this must be verified by a medical professional).
- You are at serious risk of harm or severe emotional or physical trauma resulting from violence (this includes but is not limited to racial attacks and domestic violence) or threats of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse in the current accommodation (this must be verified by the Police or similar statutory agency).
- The Council prohibits the use of the property you are living in under the terms of the Housing Act 2004 and considers that it is not reasonable for the property to be brought back into use.
- You need to move because your home is about to be demolished or redeveloped.
• You are a tenant of a Council or a Registered Provider who needs to move because your home requires major renovation or extensive repairs.
• You have lost your home due to fire, flood or natural disaster.
• You are leaving supported accommodation and have been deemed ready for independent living from:-
  • Wellingborough Family Hostels
  • Teenage Parent Support
  • Bassetts Court
  • Robin Lane
  • West Street
  • English Churches

This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change

15.2 ‘Statutorily Homeless’ final offers

If, within eight weeks, you have not been successful in getting permanent housing, the Council reserves the right to make you a final offer of suitable housing. If a suitable property does not become available within the eight week period further time may be given.

If you feel that a final offer property is not suitable, you may ask for a review of the offer. You can ask for a review whether or not you accept the final offer.

You may refuse a suitable final offer of housing. If you do then the Council’s obligation to find you a new home will end and you will lose your emergency status and be moved to a new band that reflects your housing need. If you are not sure about refusing a final offer, you can discuss it with your Housing Options Advisor at Borough Council of Wellingborough.

When reviewing a final offer, the Council will check that:
• the property is of the right size and type for your family
• the property is safe for you to live in – that it is not in a dangerous condition or that occupation of the property would not lead to your being in fear of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out
• it takes account of any special needs you or your family have
• we have taken into account any other relevant circumstances you have told us about before we made a decision.
• all information provided and discovered will be taken into consideration.

15.3 Band B – Urgent housing need

We will place you, a joint applicant, or any other member of your household in this band if your circumstances fall into one or more of the following criteria: -
• The Council has accepted you as ‘non-statutorily homeless’. (Within the meaning of part 7 of the Housing Act 1996).
• You are intentionally homeless.
• You have:
  o children of different genders (one child must be at least 10 years old) sharing a bedroom, or
  o children of the same gender with an age difference of ten years or more sharing a bedroom, or
  o three or more children sharing a bedroom.
• You have parental responsibility of a child/children who are not able to currently reside with you because of your accommodation.
• You or a member of your household has a permanent medical condition, which is seriously, adversely affected by your current housing situation or circumstances.
• You are under occupying socially rented family accommodation (2, 3 or 4 bed houses or 2/3 bed ground floor accommodation) within the borough by 1 bedroom or more.
• It is unreasonable for you to stay at your current accommodation due to travelling costs causing you financial hardship. This may include but is not limited to:-
  o a need to give or receive essential care and support, or
  o a need to access urgent specialised medical treatment, or
  o a need to take up particular or to continue current employment.
• Your current landlord has asked you to leave, for a reason or situation that is not caused by you or a member of your household, and the tenancy cannot be prevented from ending.
• You are a successor of social rented accommodation and under occupying the property and require more suitable accommodation.
• You meet three or more of the criteria in band C.

15.4 Band C – Non urgent housing need

We will place you, a joint applicant, or any other member of your household in this band if your circumstances fall into one of the following criteria: -

• You are a household, with at least one dependent, sharing accommodation with another household.
• You need more bed spaces than your current accommodation can reasonably provide.
• You have had a relationship breakdown, and are living in the same property as your former partner, and a move would allow the partner and family to remain in the property.
• You have a non urgent medical condition which is made worse by your current accommodation.
• You need to give or receive non essential care and support.
• You are suffering from low level antisocial behaviour or harassment.
• Your current accommodation is suffering from some disrepair, but it is not sufficient enough to prevent you from continuing to live there.
15.5 Applicants with multiple housing needs

We take account of multiple housing needs in this policy. When we receive your Wellingborough CBL application we will assess you, a joint applicant, and any other member of your household identified on the form.

If an application is assessed as having a non urgent housing need it will be provisionally placed into Band C. It will then be further examined to identify if multiple non urgent housing needs exist. If this is found to be the case then applicants will be given additional priority within Wellingborough CBL by being promoted into Band B.

Applicants can only be promoted from Band C to Band B on the grounds of multiple housing needs. Therefore applicants in Band B with multiple housing needs will not be promoted to Band A.

Band A is solely reserved for applicants with an emergency housing need.

15.6 Band D – No reasonable preference category satisfied

We will place you in this band if:

- You are currently adequately housed.

15.7 Reviewing banding

Applicants in any band have the right to ask us to review their banding by contacting Borough Council of Wellingborough’s Housing Options team. See section 27.0 for details.

We will regularly review all of the housing applications that we place in Band A.

16.0 PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY TABLE

The size and type of property we normally offer you will depend on the size of your household. The table on the next page gives a general guide.

16.1 Access to child/children

Households with access to children, but no children permanently residing with them, can be considered for properties with up to two bedrooms, (excluding houses and ground floor accommodation).

A household with permanently resident child/children and access to additional child/children will only be considered for properties that are suitable for the permanent household members.
PLEASE NOTE:
- Other household types that do not appear within this table will be advised what size and type of property they qualify to bid for.
- ‘Household’ includes single adult or couple.
- ‘Couple’ includes same sex couples.
- Bungalows are offered to households with someone over 60, or where someone in the household has a disability that requires a bungalow.
- Sheltered accommodation will be offered to households over 60, where a household member has a support need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedsit</th>
<th>1 bedroom bungalow</th>
<th>1 bedroom ground floor flat</th>
<th>1 bedroom 1st or 2nd floor flat</th>
<th>1 bedroom house</th>
<th>2 bedroom bungalow</th>
<th>2 bedroom house or 2 bedroom ground floor flat</th>
<th>2 bedroom 1st or 2nd floor flat</th>
<th>3 bedroom bungalow</th>
<th>3 bedroom ground floor flat or 3 bedroom maisonette</th>
<th>3 bedroom 1st or 2nd floor flat or 3 bedroom maisonette</th>
<th>3 bedroom parlour type house</th>
<th>4 bedroom house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single person</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
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<td>∗</td>
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<tr>
<td>Couple without children</td>
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<td>∗</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household with medical need for 2 bedrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household expecting first child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household with 1 child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household with 2 children</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household with access to child/children (see 16.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household with 3 children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household with 4 children</td>
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<td>∗</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household with 5 or more children</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
<td>∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large households with a medical need for a ground floor bedroom</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similar properties can differ in the size of bedrooms and the ideal number of occupants. We will tell you which size of property we consider is most suitable for you when we accept your housing application. We will advertise properties with the minimum and maximum number of occupants.

If a property becomes available that is suitable for households with a disability or a mobility need we will highlight this. Only households with an identified disability or mobility need will therefore be able to bid for this type of property.

We will normally offer you accommodation with an extra bedroom if you have a permanent carer or a medical condition that means you need an extra room.

- If you are getting Disability Living Allowance the Wellingborough CBL Landlords may offer you a property that’s normally for someone over 60 – even if you are younger. We will advertise the property with details of the age of the persons who could apply. For example, receiving Disability Living Allowance and over 50 years of age.

17.0 CONTACTING YOU ABOUT YOUR HOUSING APPLICATION

Once we have made all our assessments, we will write to you and tell you:

- if you are excluded from the housing register, the reasons for the exclusion and your right to a review of our decision.
- that we have accepted your housing application and you can start to look for properties advertised on Wellingborough CBL
- your unique housing application number for you and your family
- the Wellingborough CBL band we have placed you in
- the date we placed you in the band
- how to use the Wellingborough CBL scheme to look for properties
- the terms of the scheme and details of your rights and responsibilities under the scheme.

18.0 HOW WELLINGBOROUGH CBL WORKS

Wellingborough CBL advertises a variety of properties, including:

- social housing for rent
- private landlord housing for rent
- low-cost home ownership properties, such as shared ownership.

It also offers a ‘mutual exchange scheme’ for applicants who already have a tenancy with any Registered Provider.

We advertise all properties so that our allocation scheme is open and clear. This also allows you to choose which properties you would be willing to accept, if offered.
All properties available are advertised on Wellingborough CBL every Wednesday from 12 noon. The property advertisements close on Tuesday at midnight.

During the weekly advertising cycle, you can express your interest in up to two properties. Expressing an interest in a property means that you will be shortlisted for that property.

If you do not express an interest in a property, you will not be shortlisted for it. This means that you will not be considered for the allocation of the property.

Each Wellingborough CBL Landlord allocates their own properties from the shortlists provided by Wellingborough CBL. If you have any questions regarding a particular property or its allocation you should contact the Wellingborough CBL Landlord responsible for the property (see sections 27.0 and 28.0 for contact details).

Each week Wellingborough CBL will publish information on the previous week’s property bids. Information on the following will be published:

- 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.

For more information on Wellingborough CBL visit www.wellingborough.gov.uk, telephone 01933 229777.

19.0 ADVERTISING PROPERTIES ON WELLINGBOROUGH CBL

Each Wellingborough CBL Landlord is responsible for describing and labelling its properties on Wellingborough CBL.

Each property will be advertised with:

- the criteria for eligibility
- property details.

We will advertise each property to applicants from all bands.

If you do not meet the criteria for a property, you will not be able to express an interest in that property.
19.1 Property details

To help you choose the properties that would best suit your needs, we will advertise all properties with information on size, location and features. The adverts will also include:

- which Wellingborough CBL Landlord owns the property
- landlord contact details for further information
- weekly rent and any other 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 on the property.

19.2 Grouped property advertisements

At times, we will group some properties together and advertise them with one reference number on Wellingborough CBL. In these cases, you would only have to express an interest once to cover all the properties within the group.

This situation would happen, for example:

- a new development of the same type of properties
- an existing scheme where there are empty properties of the same size and type.

19.3 Low cost home ownership properties

In order to provide a variety of low cost home options we will also advertise low cost home ownership products. It is important that you understand the financial requirement that is expected of you (for example that you are able to raise a sufficient mortgage). You should contact the Wellingborough CBL landlord with whom the property is advertised if you require further information on the financial requirement that comes with a property.

20.0 EXPRESSING AN INTEREST IN ADVERTISED PROPERTIES

You can express an interest by:

- internet – www.wellingborough.gov.uk
- automated telephone service
- telephoning Borough Council of Wellingborough customer response centre
- via your digital telephone
- visiting Borough Council of Wellingborough customer service at Tithe Barn Road (see section 27.0 for address details)
You can get further information and assistance on how to express an interest in a property by contacting Borough Council of Wellingborough’s Allocations Team on 01933 231845, 231835, 231865 or by visiting our website www.wellingborough.gov.uk.

Wellingborough CBL has the facility to allow you to view or hear your position on a shortlist before you express an interest in the property. The Wellingborough CBL information leaflet gives details on how to do this.

21.0 ALLOCATING PROPERTIES

A shortlist of applicants who have bid for a property is automatically created once the advertising period has ended.

We sort the shortlist by:

1. the Wellingborough CBL Band
2. the date you were placed in the band

This means that we will normally offer a property to the applicant from the highest band that has been waiting the longest.

At all times, the individual Wellingborough CBL landlord is responsible for allocating properties.

When allocating, the Wellingborough CBL landlord gives preference, where possible, to applicants who specifically need the services or facilities that are part of the property.

If you are made an offer of accommodation by a Wellingborough CBL landlord you will be given the opportunity to view the property. You are under no obligation to accept an offer of accommodation and you will not be penalised in any way if you do not accept. Where an offer of accommodation is refused by an applicant the offer will pass to the next suitable applicant from the property shortlist.

21.1 Rejection of Nomination

If a Wellingborough CBL landlord rejects your nomination, we suggest that you contact the Council’s Allocations Team for further information.

If you disagree with any decision and want to complain, please see section 25.0 – Making a Complaint.
21.2 Offers

If you have been successful with your bid you will be contacted by the Wellingborough CBL Landlord that owns the property with details of the potential offer. Each Wellingborough CBL Landlord may have a different process that they follow.

All Wellingborough CBL Landlords reserve the right to:

- carry out checks on the information you provided as part of your housing application. If your circumstances have changed, you may not receive an offer until the changes are fully assessed.
- withdraw an offer if checks reveal issues that are not included in your housing application

If you are under 18 years of age you will not be offered a property unless you can provide details of a guarantor.

You must tell the Wellingborough CBL Landlords whether you wish to accept the offer. There will be deadlines for responding to offers.

21.3 Local lettings policy

The Council may, from time to time, agree a local lettings policy for specific areas or developments to reflect local circumstances. Any local lettings policy will have regard to housing management considerations such as the social mix of tenants, density, age range, vulnerability of tenants (e.g. because of insufficient facilities for vulnerable people) and community stability. Under a local lettings policy some properties may be allocated to applicants who do not fall within the reasonable preference categories, these will be under special circumstances and only a small percentage of available stock will be used for this purpose.

The link between residency and certain affordable housing units, in a number of villages in the borough, is covered in a legal agreement. Through Wellingborough CBL the advertisements for these properties will include a clause giving preference to applicants who fulfil the criteria set out in the legal agreement.

The Council has agreed a local lettings policy for the allocation of properties within rural settlements (see appendix one). Anyone wishing to bid and be considered for a property within a village will be required to complete a Local Connection Form, which will form part of the general application for housing. Verification of connection criteria will have been carried out prior to nomination and allocation.
21.4 Direct Lettings

All Wellingborough CBL landlords have the ability to undertake a direct let of a vacant property. A direct let constitutes a property being allocated to an applicant without it being advertised. Rare circumstances in which a direct let may occur include, but are not limited to, a landlord making use of a property temporarily under their employee ‘relocation package’ scheme and the police requesting that we re-house an applicant. Feedback will be available on any property that is let as a direct let.

22.0 NON-SECURE TENANCIES

Most new tenancies will be ‘introductory or starter tenancies’, unless the applicant is transferring or exchanging from a secure tenancy or a housing association assured tenancy.

You can get further information about these tenancies from Borough Council of Wellingborough – see section 27.0.

Introductory or starter tenancies aim to make sure that, during the first 12 months of a tenancy, people act responsibly and comply with the conditions of the tenancy agreement. If there are no problems during that period, an introductory tenant automatically becomes a secure or assured tenant.

The landlord may extend the first 12-month period of an introductory tenancy by a further six months if you do not keep to your terms and conditions of tenancy. Alternatively, the landlord may seek to evict you if you do not keep to the terms and conditions of tenancy.

Registered Providers involved in Wellingborough CBL reserve the right to also offer a non-secure tenancy, or an assured short-hold or introductory tenancy.

You will always be told whether you are being offered an introductory or assured short-hold tenancy, and of any other conditions attached, before you sign the tenancy agreement.

23.0 CHANGES TO YOUR HOUSING APPLICATION

You must let us know if the circumstances of you, a joint applicant, or other members of your household or any number of you identified on your housing application change as this may affect the band we have placed you in.

23.1 Change of circumstances

This can include but is not limited to:

- a change of address
- a change of contact telephone details
• people leaving your household or more coming into your household
• a change in your health or wellbeing.

If we later discover a change in your circumstances that you have not advised us of it could affect your housing application and/or you could be in breach of your tenancy.

It remains your responsibility to inform us of a change of circumstances that may affect your banding. We may need you to fill in a change of circumstances form so that we can do a new assessment of your Wellingborough CBL Band.

If there is a change in circumstances we may have to change your band and the date you were placed in the band. We will always write to tell you of any changes we make to your banding.

Tenants of a Registered Provider should contact their Housing Officer. Other applicants should contact the Housing Options Team – See section 27.0 for details.

We aim to process your change of circumstances within 28 days of receiving all the information we need from you and other relevant agencies.

23.2 A change in your needs

If the needs of you, or a member of your household change, you can ask us to review your Wellingborough CBL Band.

If you have previously completed a medical assessment form and your housing circumstances change, you will need to fill in a new form. This is because the Wellingborough CBL Band takes into account how housing impacts on the medical problem rather than the medical problem itself.

23.3 Wellingborough CBL Register review

We will carry out a review of those applicants in Bands B, C and D every year.

We do this review to make sure that:

• the number of applicants on the register reflects the immediate needs for social housing
• applicants still want to stay on the register, and
• applicants details are accurate and up-to-date.

Those applicants in Band A who are not statutorily homeless will have their application reviewed every eight weeks. If the applicant has not bid for suitable vacancies during the eight week period, we may place the application in a lower band unless no suitable property was available on which to bid.
23.4 Cancelling your housing application

Your housing application will be cancelled if, for example:

- you have asked us to cancel it
- you have not replied to our review letter
- you have been re-housed by a Wellingborough CBL Landlord
- you have moved and not told us of your new address
- we have contacted you and you have not responded within 28 days
- you have given false or misleading information on your housing application
- You have not given us all of the information we have asked for to support your application within 28 days, unless a longer time is agreed by Wellingborough CBL.

If we cancel your application, you have the right to a review. See section 24.0 on Your Right to a Review for more information.

24.0 YOUR RIGHT TO A REVIEW

The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, gives you the right to ask for a review if we decide not to allow you to join the Housing Register or make any decision that affects your housing application.

24.1 To request a review

You, or your representative, must make your request to the Housing Needs Manager at Borough Council of Wellingborough in writing within 21 days of getting our written decision. You, or your representative, may give your reasons for requesting a review in person, if it is difficult to tell us your reasons in writing. We will give you a form of receipt that acknowledges your contact with us.

24.2 The decision about your review

A senior officer, who has not been involved in the original decision, will look at your request for a review.

The officer will base his or her decision on the known facts at the time of the review. In some cases, they may need to ask you for more information to help them make a decision.

They will write to you about their decision and explain their reasons for it within 28 days.
25.0 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

If you wish to make a compliment or comment about Wellingborough CBL or Borough Council of Wellingborough, you can do this by contacting Borough Council of Wellingborough’s Customer Services (see section 27.0 for contact details). If you wish to make a compliment or comment about any partner Wellingborough CBL landlord you should contact them directly (see section 28.0 for contact details).

25.1 Complaints against Borough Council of Wellingborough

We are committed to giving you the best possible housing service. We will always try and get it right, but we need you to tell us if we are getting it wrong.

If you are unhappy with the service Borough Council of Wellingborough provides please contact us to try to get the problem settled there and then. If you telephone or visit us please ask for the names of the people you speak to.

If you are not satisfied with the reply, you should write to the Housing Needs Manager of Borough Council of Wellingborough. You will receive a written acknowledgement that your complaint has been received within 3 working days and the outcome of your complaint within 10 working days.

If you are unhappy with the Housing Needs Managers reply, you can make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. This is an independent service run by central government to make sure that local authorities provide a certain standard of service to their customers – see Section 25.2 for contact details.

25.2 Complaints against Wellingborough CBL Landlords

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have not been given a professional service by any Wellingborough CBL Landlords, you should complain directly to them. All the Wellingborough CBL Landlords have their own formal complaints policies and procedures.

If you have followed the Wellingborough CBL Landlords complaints procedure but are still unhappy, you can contact:

- the Local Government Ombudsman for complaints about Borough Council of Wellingborough

Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks,
No. 2 Westward Way,
Westward Business Park,
Coventry,
CV4 8JB
26.0 OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

We offer other housing options. This includes providing information on:

26.1 Low cost home ownership

There are a range of low cost home ownership products which are intended to help people buy a home that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

These products are known as HomeBuy.

There are two parts to the HomeBuy scheme:

26.1.1 New Build HomeBuy – where you share ownership of your home with a housing association. You buy a share of a property, usually between 30-70% by way of a mortgage or cash payment, and pay rent on the remainder.

26.1.2 Open Market HomeBuy – where you part-buy a property and get a loan from a housing association for the rest. You will need to use your own money and raise a mortgage for around 75% of the cost of the property. The housing association will provide an interest free equity loan of up to £50,000 to cover the balance. Please note that funds for this scheme are limited.

If you would like further information on these schemes, including whether you are eligible to apply, please contact East Midlands Housing on 0844 8929000.

As a ‘HomeBuy’ agent they help people in Northamptonshire access low cost home ownership schemes, and provide information and advice relating to the different products available.
26.2 Right to buy

Registered Providers tenants should contact their Housing Officer to find out if they are eligible to apply for the Right to Acquire.

26.3 Mutual exchange

A swap of accommodation between two social housing tenants that relies on each household moving permanently into the other household’s property.

26.4 Private landlord properties

Wellingborough CBL will advertise accredited private landlord properties that are available to rent. We will encourage the landlord to offer the property to the successful bidder but we cannot force them to do so. Private landlords will only offer assured shorthold tenancies to applicants. For more information on the accredited private landlord scheme contact the Private Sector Accommodation Officer on 01933 231 or The Housing Options Team on 231805, 231838.

27.0 BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH CONTACT DETAILS

Borough Council of Wellingborough
Tithe Barn Road
Wellingborough
Northants
NN8 1BN

Housing Options 01933 231805, 231838 and 231716

Allocations Officers 01933 231835, 231845, 231865

Private Sector Accommodation Officer 01933 231776
Web site www.wellingborough.gov.uk

28.0 WELLINGBOROUGH CBL PARTNER LANDLORD CONTACT DETAILS

To be advised