Homefinder Lettings Policy

Ashfield District Council
Mansfield District Council
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1. **Ashfield and Mansfield Sub-Regional Partnership**

1.1 **Introduction**

1.1.1 Ashfield District Council and Mansfield District Council have joined to set up **Homefinder**, their Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme. The Scheme delivers greater choice to all those seeking housing in the Ashfield and Mansfield areas. It also enables people to make better-informed decisions about their housing options.

1.1.2 This Scheme is known as Homefinder. The partners are:

   - Ashfield District Council who have transferred the management of their homes to Ashfield Homes Limited
   - Mansfield District Council
   - Participating Private Registered Providers (PRP’s) with properties in the Ashfield and Mansfield areas

   These partners are known as Participating Landlords.

1.1.3 In order to be considered for a social housing tenancy from a participating landlord customers will be required to apply to join the Common Housing Register.

1.1.4 When a property owned by a Participating Landlord in the Homefinder area becomes vacant, the property is advertised in a variety of ways; such as on the internet and in a free property magazine called Letterbox. In exceptional circumstances a property may be let through the Direct Let process (see Sec 9.8)

1.1.5 An eligible applicant will be able to ‘bid’ for a property if they meet the property’s advertised letting criteria. The successful ‘bidder’ will normally be the applicant in the highest band, with the earliest ‘effective date’.

1.1.6 Homefinder recognises that social housing may not meet the needs of all applicants on the Housing Register. Homefinder provides details of other affordable housing options such as private rented accommodation and mutual exchanges, as well as low cost home ownership and shared ownership properties.

1.1.7 Homefinder participating landlords advertise their vacant properties in accordance with the Homefinder Common Lettings Policy. Under the terms of the Policy, in order to make the best use of their housing stock, participating landlords can advertise their properties in accordance with local lettings plans.

1.1.8 Ashfield District Council and Mansfield District Council will ensure that housing advice and housing options information is available to everyone, free of charge. This includes information on how to apply for housing and where to get help to make an application if the applicant cannot do so without assistance.

1.2 **Governance**

1.2.1 The Scheme is subject to a sub-regional agreement. This agreement ensures that the Scheme is up-to-date and meets national best practice guidelines. The Scheme is managed by a sub-regional Project Group made up of representatives from the Ashfield and Mansfield District Councils, RP’s and other stakeholders.

1.2.2 The Project Group meets quarterly to review and monitor the Scheme. It also monitors the effectiveness of the Lettings Policy, ensuring it meets the stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.
2. **Statement of Choice**

2.1 The participating landlords are fully committed to enabling an applicant to play an active role in choosing where they want to live, whilst continuing to house applicants in the greatest housing need.

2.2 The Scheme enables all eligible applicants the freedom to apply for accommodation in either or both the Ashfield or Mansfield areas.

2.3 In addition to giving an applicant the choice of where to live, they will also have access to information and advice on other housing options within the Ashfield and Mansfield areas. They will receive help in finding the accommodation that best suits their housing needs.

3. **Legal Framework**

3.1 Legal requirements

3.1.1 The Policy complies with the legislation and Codes of Guidance relevant to the allocation of social housing.

3.1.2 The Policy has been developed with regard to:

- the Homeless Strategy published by the relevant local authority under Homelessness Act (2002), and
- the Tenancy Strategy published by the relevant local authority under Localism Act (2011)

3.2 **Equality and Diversity**

3.2.1 Everyone has their own unique needs, skills, qualities and abilities. The Participating Landlords believe that this diversity must be valued so that everyone can play a full and active part in life, free from fear and discrimination.

3.2.2 Strong communities will thrive and prosper if individuals and groups are treated fairly, with respect, and given access to rights and services. The Participating Landlord’s aim is to create an environment where this is possible and to put equality and diversity at the heart of everything they do. As an example, an applicant who is co-habiting, or in a civil partnerships, will be treated in the same way as a married applicant.
4. Aims & Objectives

4.1 Key Aims & Objectives for the Lettings Policy

4.1.1 The overall aim of the Policy is to ensure that all social housing within the Ashfield and Mansfield areas is allocated fairly and objectively to those with the greatest housing need. Regard will be taken to any legislative requirements; related case law; local strategies and Codes of Guidance issued by Government Departments or Agencies.

4.1.2 This Policy has been developed with a view to meeting the following principles and key objectives:

- Meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing;
- To provide an applicant with the ability to be able to make informed choices about where they want to live;
- To improve local, regional and national mobility and to encourage balanced and sustainable communities;
- To ensure that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently irrespective of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief and age;
- To operate a choice based lettings system that is simple, easy to understand, transparent, open and fair;
- To ensure all Participating landlords work within the same framework and objectives;
- To assist vulnerable applicants in accessing the Homefinder Scheme.
5. **The Housing Register**

5.1 **Eligibility – Who can apply for Housing**

5.1.1 Homefinder operates an open Housing Register that, subject to certain exclusions outlined below, will be open to everyone over the age of 16, who are eligible for social housing in the UK.

5.1.2 Applications cannot be accepted from households that include:

- 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 of Rights of Residence Directive and Statutory Instruments.

5.2 **Joining the Housing Register**

5.2.1 To join the Housing Register, an applicant must fill in an application form. These forms are available on-line or at an office of one the participating landlords. Homefinder staff may also complete the application on behalf of the applicant over the telephone.

5.2.2 An applicant is required only to apply once to the Housing Register to be considered for re-housing anywhere within the Ashfield and Mansfield areas for social housing.

5.2.3 An applicant can only be considered on one housing application. Where an applicant appears on two or more housing applications Homefinder will consider their primary application to be where they are the main or joint applicant. The applicant will be removed from housing applications where they appear as a household member.

5.3 **Joint applications**

5.3.1 Joint applications will be accepted provided both applicants are eligible, aged 16 or over.

5.4 **Exclusion from the Housing Register**

5.4.1 Whilst an applicant may be eligible to join the Housing Register they may be excluded from the Register if they, or a member of their household, has acted in a manner that makes them unsuitable to be a social housing tenant.

5.4.2 In making this assessment Homefinder will consider an applicant’s previous behaviour. Homefinder will consider all behaviour that would adversely affect the ability of other tenants and residents to peacefully enjoy their home and neighbourhood. Homefinder will consider:

- when the incident(s) occurred
- the frequency and seriousness of the incident(s)
- the applicant’s circumstances at the time
- the action(s) the applicant has taken to prevent similar incidents reoccurring.
5.4.3 In making this assessment Homefinder will have overall regard to

- All unspent criminal convictions (excluding minor motoring offences), and/or
- Enforcement action taken in respect of anti-social behaviour, and/or
- The conduct of the applicant during any previous social housing tenancy, for example failure to pay their rent and/or other charges.

5.4.4 An applicant will normally be excluded from the Housing Register if they have relevant unspent conviction(s) or history of anti-social behaviour within the previous three years. For example an applicant who has been convicted for the supply of, or the intent to supply illegal or controlled drugs; burglary or theft from a residential or commercial dwelling; arson; violence against a person, including domestic violence.

5.4.5 An applicant will normally be excluded from the Housing Register if they owe a social housing debt of £1000 or more. A social housing debt includes rent arrears, legal costs, recharges and other tenancy charges.

5.4.6 An applicant who considered by Homefinder to be unable to sustain a tenancy will also be considered for exclusion.

5.4.7 An applicant who has previously been deemed not to qualify may make a fresh application if they consider they should be treated as qualifying, but it will be for the applicant to show that the reason for their exclusion is no longer relevant.

5.4.8 An applicant will normally be excluded from the Housing Register if they have knowingly given false information or withheld relevant information relevant to their Housing Application.

5.5 Declaration

5.5.1 When an applicant applies for housing, they must confirm that:

- the information they have provided is complete, true and accurate
- they will notify their administering Local Authority (Ashfield District Council or Mansfield District Council) of any change in their housing circumstances.
- they understand that information will be shared with all the participating landlords and with other relevant organisations in order to complete or verify information or to prevent fraud or protect public funds in other ways
- they consent to the participating landlords making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information disclosed within the Application is correct; or to provide the information where this is necessary to complete any assessment of housing need
- they agree to provide any documentation required to establish their eligibility to register for housing.

5.6 Social Housing Applicants from outside Ashfield and Mansfield

5.6.1 Persons applying to the Housing Register, who currently live in Local Authority or RP accommodation outside of the Homefinder area will be treated as “general applicants” and not “transfer applicants”.
5.7 False Information

5.7.1 Under The Housing Act (1996) it is a criminal offence for anyone to knowingly give false information or to withhold relevant information if reasonably required to give it, on any matter regarding the allocation of housing (see section 5.4.8).

5.8 Housing Register Review

5.8.1 To maintain an up to date Housing Register, Homefinder will operate an annual Housing Register Review.

5.8.2 If an applicant does not respond to the annual Housing Register Review by the prescribed deadline, the applicant may be removed from the Housing Register.

5.9 Cancelling applications

5.9.1 Applications may be cancelled in circumstances such as those listed below. Circumstances include, but are not limited to the following:

- A written request to do so has been received from the applicant (or their advocate).
- Where an applicant does not renew or maintain their application through the review process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address.
- The applicant has been re-housed by any of the participating landlords.
- Notification has been received from an executor or personal representative that the applicant is deceased and s/he was the sole applicant.
- It is discovered that an applicant has given false or misleading information in their application.
- Evidence is obtained that confirms the applicant is no longer eligible.
- Information requested remains outstanding after reminders.

5.9.2 An applicant will be informed of the reason(s) why their application has been cancelled and of their right to request a review of the decision (see Section 12 - Reviews).

5.9.3 An applicant whose application has been cancelled can apply to rejoin the Housing Register. The applicant’s effective date will normally be the date the new completed application was received, see Section 6.3.

5.10 Data Protection

5.10.1 An applicant’s personal information will be held and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The Participating landlords will not disclose such information to any unauthorised person or body. Where appropriate Participating landlords will use such information in carrying out its various functions and services. Participating landlords may also use this data in connection with the prevention or detection of fraud or other crime.
5.11 **Cross boundary moves**

5.11.1 Participating landlords will allow for cross boundary moves. This will make it easier for an applicant living in one Local Authority’s district to apply for and be allocated accommodation in the district of the other Local Authority.

5.11.2 Should inward migration significantly exceed outward migration the local authority experiencing significant inward migration may restrict bidding to applicants with a local connection to the local authority area. In such cases, properties will be clearly advertised to show a local connection rule applies. Cross boundary moves will be monitored closely and reviewed quarterly by the sub-regional Project Group.

5.12 **Councillors and Involvement in decision-making**

5.12.1 Elected Council Members cannot take part in the assessment and letting process. This does not prevent them seeking, or providing information, on behalf of their constituents, or being involved in future developments of this Policy.
6. **Assessment of Housing Need**

6.1 **Introduction**

6.1.1 All applications will be initially assessed. They will then be placed in a housing needs band according to their individual circumstances.

6.1.2 Upon receipt of all the required information, the applicant will be notified of which housing needs band they have been placed in, normally within 10 working days.

6.2 **Assessing applications**

6.2.1 All completed housing applications will be assessed in accordance with the Homefinder Lettings Policy.

6.2.2 An eligible applicant will be placed in one of five Housing Needs Bands (Bands 1-5), based upon their individual circumstances and the information they provide.

6.2.3 Band 1 is for applicants with severe housing needs and Band 5 is for applicants with no housing needs.

6.2.4 All participating landlords will operate the five Band system and where an applicant is placed in one of the five Bands.

6.2.5 Upon completion of the assessment the applicant will receive a Registration Letter. The letter will:

- Identify the band and the reason why the applicant has been placed in the band. If the applicant has identified a medical or welfare need they will be advised separately, after the assessment has been made.

- Provide them with their unique reference number.

- Confirm the applicant’s effective date.

- Give details of the Appeal and Review procedures.

- Inform the applicant that if they have been temporarily suspended from bidding or have reduced preference, *(see Section 6.8)* and provide the reasons why.

- Detail the Local Authorities where the applicant has a local connection.

6.2.6 If there are any changes to an applicant’s circumstances they must notify the assessing Local Authority, as soon as those changes occur.

6.3 **Deciding the effective date**

6.3.1 An applicant’s effective date will usually be the date on which the application is received, except in such circumstances where:

- They are moved into a higher band, when their effective date will then be the date their circumstances changed.

- They are given priority on medical or welfare grounds, when their effective date will be when they applied for this award.

- They are accepted as homeless, when their effective date will be the date when they applied as homeless, unless they already qualify for Band 1 with an earlier date.
6.4 Local connection to the Ashfield and Mansfield areas

6.4.1 The participating landlords recognise that the housing needs of local people will take priority over those that live outside of the Homefinder area and have no local connection to either the Ashfield or Mansfield districts.

6.4.2 An applicant will be classed as having a local connection to the Homefinder area if they fit into one or more of the following categories:

- They live or have lived in the Homefinder area for a period of six months during the previous 12 months
- They live or have lived in the Homefinder areas for three years during the previous five years
- They previously lived in the Homefinder area and lived here for five years or longer
- They have close family connections with someone living in the Ashfield and Mansfield areas. A close family connection is defined as a parent, child, or legal guardian
- Their regular place of work is located within the Homefinder area. Casual, temporary or contract work less than 12 months in duration does not qualify
- For applicants currently in HM Armed Forces the length of time spent in HM Armed Forces accommodation will be disregarded for the purpose of establishing a local connection to the Homefinder area
- Through Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008), persons serving in HM Armed Forces establish a local connection through residence or employment in the same way as a civilian person
- Persons who have been placed in accommodation within the Homefinder area by a specialist housing provider (for example women’s refuges)
- Persons who have a connection to the Homefinder area because of exceptional circumstance(s). This may include the need to access specific medical treatment or support.

6.4.3 The local connection rule will not apply to an applicant who has been assessed as having an urgent housing need due to an imminent risk of violence or to those who are part of a witness protection scheme.

6.4.4 Homefinder will award a local connection to the following applicants:

- members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
- bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
- serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
6.5 Local connection to a particular district

6.5.1 To ensure local housing needs are met, some properties advertised through Homefinder may be advertised as available only to applicants with a local connection to an individual Local Authority area.

6.5.2 The local connection criteria to an individual Local Authority area will be the same as the criteria for local connection to the Homefinder area. However, the local connection will only relate to that specific Local Authority area.

6.6 Applicants with no local connection

6.6.1 The Homefinder area is a high demand area where demand for social housing exceeds supply. For this reason an applicant who lives outside of the Homefinder area and has no local connection to it, cannot expect the same priority for housing as applicants with a local connection.

6.6.2 An applicants living outside the Homefinder area will be assessed in the same way as other applicants to establish their housing need band. If an applicant has no local connection to the Ashfield and Mansfield areas, the application will then be placed one band lower than the assessment. If an application is assessed in Band 5, they will stay in Band 5.

6.7 How local connection is determined

6.7.1 For the purposes of determining local connection, living in the Homefinder area means living in permanent accommodation and will not include:

- occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on a residential site; or
- occupation of a holiday letting which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday.

6.8 Reduced preference

6.8.1 Homefinder will reduce preference to the following groups of applicants:

- An applicant with significant financial resources (see Section 6.9)

- Where the behaviour of the applicant (or member of his household) affects their suitability to be a tenant, but the behaviour is not to the extent that the applicant would be excluded from the Homefinder Scheme.

6.9 Significant financial resources

6.9.1 Where an applicant applies to join the register and they have been assessed as being in housing need (either Band 1, Band 2 or Band 3), but the applicant has sufficient resources to buy their own property, they may be placed in Band 4 owing to the financial resources available to them.

6.9.2 The decision to reduce preference for this reason will be based on a financial assessment. This will take into account the applicant’s income, savings, capital and/or interest held (and which could be redeemed) in a current home or other property along with their ability to get a mortgage and the size and type of property needed.
6.10 Behaviour

6.10.1 An applicant who has a housing related debt to any social housing landlord and consistent and regular repayments have not been maintained, and they have a Housing Need they will be placed into Band 4 to reflect the reduced preference. In the absence of a Housing Need they will be placed into Band 5.

6.10.2 Homefinder expects that all repayments have been consistent with the agreement made by the applicant and the relevant social housing landlord. Regular repayments must have been made for a minimum period of 12 months.

6.10.3 An applicant who has a housing-related debt with their current private landlord and has a housing need will be placed in Band 4 to reflect their reduced preference. In the absence of a housing need they will be placed into Band 5.

6.10.4 Homefinder will normally consider the last five years housing history of the applicant. Homefinder retains the right to look beyond this timescale in exceptional circumstances.

6.10.5 Where an applicant (or members of their household) is eligible to join the Housing Register but has:

- committed minor acts of anti-social behaviour;
- deliberately damaged a property and action has been taken against them;
- harassed an employee of a Local authority or PRP,

they will be placed into Band 4 (unless there is no Housing Need then they will be placed into Band 5).

6.10.6 This is not a blanket Policy. In exceptional circumstance, where an applicant has been assessed as having a Band 1 need they may not be demoted to Band 4.

6.11 Reduced preference, reviews and exceptions

6.11.1 An applicant will be notified of any reduced preference given and they are entitled to ask for a review of this decision (see Section 12). The applicant will also be informed if there is any action they can take to improve their situation. Decisions will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis, except in the case of an applicant in rent arrears, where the debt has been repaid in full, will be entitled to request a review of the decision.

6.12 Deliberately worsening circumstances

6.12.1 Where there is evidence that an applicant has worsened their circumstances by deliberately taking action or failing to take an action in order to qualify for higher housing need band they will be placed in Band 4. This decision may be reviewed after a period of at least 12 months.
7. **Banding Scheme**

7.1 All applications will be assessed on their individual circumstances and placed into one of five bands based on the outcome of the assessment. Band 1 has the highest priority and Band 5 the lowest. An applicant is prioritised in each Band based on their ‘effective date’ (see 6.3).

The bands are outlined below.

### Band 1

- An applicant to whom a local authority within the Homefinder partnership has accepted a statutory homelessness duty *(Section 8.2)*
- An applicant in a property subject to an Emergency Prohibition Order, or Demolition Order *(Section 8.5)*
- An applicant who was a social housing joint tenant and has been left in occupation at the end of the tenancy and who is under occupying their current property *(Section 8.6)*
- A Social Housing tenant ‘succeeding’ to a tenancy where the property is not suitable for their needs *(Section 8.7)*
- An applicant who does not have a right to succeed to a Social Housing tenancy but is left in occupation, but the property is not suitable to their needs and they meet the agreed criteria *(Section 8.7)*
- An applicant identified for a ‘Move on’ nomination from an agreed agency and ready to move and able to sustain a tenancy *(Section 8.9)*
- An applicant assessed as having a severe medical need *(Section 8.15)*
- An applicant assessed as having a severe welfare need *(Section 8.16)*
- An applicant in tied accommodation who qualifies under the Rent Agricultural Act 1976 *(Section 8.20)*
- Current or former members of the Armed Forces, including Reserve Forces with a service related injury *(Section 8.21)*
- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner *(Section 8.21)*
- An applicant in Band 2 with two or more needs
Band 2

- An applicant threatened with homelessness within 3 months who is likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own (Section 8.4)

- A Social Housing tenant within the Homefinder area who is under occupying and is willing to move to a sheltered housing complex (Section 8.6)

- A Social Housing tenant within the Homefinder area who is under occupying by two or more bedrooms (Section 8.6)

- An applicant or member(s) of their household who need to relocate as they have been offered or they have recently taken up an offer of full time employment or apprenticeship in the Homefinder area (Section 8.12)

- An applicant whose household is overcrowded by two or more bedrooms (Section 8.14)

- An applicant assessed as having a moderate medical need (Section 8.15)

- An applicant assessed as having a moderate welfare need (Section 8.16)

- An applicant who has been rough sleeping for 4 weeks or more (Section 8.19)

- An applicant assessed as meeting Band 1 criteria but with no local connection to the sub-region (Section 6.6)

- An applicant in Band 3 with three or more needs
Band 3

- An applicant who has been assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, but is not in priority need or intentionally homeless (Section 8.5)

- A Social Housing tenant in the Homefinder area who is under occupying by one bedroom (Section 8.6)

- An applicant living in poor housing conditions (Section 8.10)

- An applicant who has No Fixed Address (Section 8.11)

- A ‘Golden Transfer’ tenant who has been a tenant for two years, has a clear rent account for 12 months, no record of any other breaches of their tenancy and no anti-social behaviour record (Section 8.13)

- An applicant whose households are overcrowded by one bedroom (Section 8.14)

- An applicant assessed as having a low medical need (Section 8.15)

- An applicant assessed as having a low welfare need (Section 8.16)

- An applicant served with valid Notice to Quit (Section 8.17)

- An applicant with young children living in a flat above ground floor and/or lacking access to a garden (Section 8.23)

- An applicant assessed as meeting Band 2 criteria but with no local connection to the Homefinder area.
Band 4

- An applicant whose behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household, affects their suitability to be a tenant *(Section 6.10)*
- An applicant assessed as meeting Band 3 criteria but with no local connection to the Homefinder area
- An applicant living in supported housing accommodation that is not ready to move or able to sustain a tenancy *(Section 8.9)*

Band 5

- An applicant in properties requiring repairs that are able to be carried out
- An applicant who is in accommodation that meets their needs
- Owner occupiers *(Section 8.18)*
- An applicant with significant financial resources who is financially able to purchase accommodation suitable for their housing needs *(Section 6.9)*
- An applicant in tied accommodation who is not required to leave
- An applicant who reside in a Caravan and boat *(Section 8.22)*
- An applicant who is currently in prison *(Section 8.11)*
8. **Housing Priority**

8.1 **Deciding who has priority on the register**

8.1.1 Each applicant will be placed in one of the five bands following an assessment of their household’s circumstances.

8.2 **Applicants owed a statutory homelessness duty**

8.2.1 An applicant who is owed a statutory homelessness duty by a Homefinder local authority will be placed in Band 1.

8.2.3 If an applicant fails to bid for suitable properties or has bid for unsuitable properties, the Local Authority which accepted the statutory homelessness duty will review the application. Following this review, the Local Authority may place suitable bids on the applicant’s behalf.

8.2.4 If an applicant is bidding for suitable properties but has been unsuccessful, the applicant will continue to be able to participate in bidding for properties after their application has been reviewed.

8.2.5 In exceptional circumstances, a direct let of accommodation may be made to an applicant in order to discharge a statutory homelessness duty. (See Section 9.8)

8.2.6 Homefinder landlords will have regard to the statutory homelessness duties placed upon local authorities; for example, with regard to suitability of a qualifying offer of accommodation.

8.3 **Other homeless households**

8.3.1 A Homeless applicant, who is found not to be statutorily homeless, will be placed in Band 3.

8.4 **Prevention of homelessness**

8.4.1 An applicant in the Homefinder areas threatened with homelessness within three months will be placed in Band 2 provided that the applicant meets the following conditions. The applicant:

- Is likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress;
- Is likely to be in priority need; and
- Has exhausted all reasonable prevention options.

8.5 **Applicants in properties subject to Emergency Prohibition Orders**

An applicant in a property subject to an Emergency Prohibition Order under the Housing Act (2004), or Demolition Order with written confirmation from a Participating Landlord within the Homefinder area, will be placed in Band 1.
8.6 Tenants under occupying social housing

8.6.1 A current Social Housing tenant in the Homefinder area who is under occupying their home, will be prioritised according to the extent of under occupation. This priority will only be offered to a tenant who wants to move to a smaller property.

8.6.2 An applicant under occupying by two or more bedrooms will be placed into Band 2, whilst an applicant who is under occupying by one bedroom will be placed into Band 3.

8.6.3 An applicant who is under occupying by one or more bedrooms is willing to move into a sheltered housing complex and meets the eligibility criteria for such properties will be placed into Band 2. The Band 2 priority only applies for properties within a sheltered housing complex.

8.6.4 Homefinder will discuss downsizing requirements with applicants in order to award the appropriate band; for example, an applicant under occupying their property by two bedrooms but only wishing to downsize by one bedroom will be placed in Band 3.

8.7 Rights of succession

8.7.1 Rights of succession apply if an applicant qualifies to ‘succeed’ to a tenancy when the tenant dies, but the property is bigger than the applicant needs. As a result, they may be asked to move to more suitable accommodation.

8.7.2 To succeed to a tenancy an applicant has to meet certain rules. Usually they must be related to the tenant, or be their partner, and have lived in the property for a certain time. The rules for this are in the tenancy conditions for the property.

8.7.3 An applicant qualifying to succeed to a tenancy will be placed in Band 1.

8.7.4 When an applicant does not have a Right To Succeed to a tenancy, but is left in occupation on the death of the tenant, their landlord may consider whether the applicant can be considered for Band 1. Each case will be assessed and the applicant must meet any of the following circumstances:

- They have been living with the tenant for a year before the tenants death, or;
- They have been looking after the tenant for a substantial period of time (for example, 12 months or more) or:
- They have accepted responsibility for the tenant’s dependants.

8.7.5 If an applicant who has ‘succession’ priority has not expressed an interest within six months of their application their case will be reviewed. Their landlord then may express an interest in suitable properties on their behalf. If three offers of a new home are refused, the landlord may review an applicant’s situation and serve a Notice Seeking Possession.
8.8 Relationship breakdown of secure tenancy

8.8.1 A Social Housing tenant, who was a joint tenant and suffers a relationship breakdown and their former partner moves out, would be placed in Band 1 if they qualify to move to a smaller property. This would be time limited to six months and then be subject to review if they have not expressed an interest during this time.

8.8.2 If the applicant qualifies to be offered their current property, consideration will be given to granting them the tenancy. This letting would not be classed as part of the Homefinder Scheme.

8.9 'Move on' nomination agreements

8.9.1 An applicant who is currently living in supported housing accommodation and specific 'Move On' arrangements exist with Ashfield District Council or Mansfield District Council, such as the Leaving Care Protocol, will be placed into Band 1 upon referral from the agreed agencies. An applicant must have been identified by the provider as "ready to move" and able to sustain a tenancy. Each case will be considered individually. The referral should also include details of a Move-On package of support.

8.9.2 An applicant placed in Band 1 because they are ready to move on from supported housing will be made one suitable offer of accommodation. If the applicant refuses the offer their 'Move On' priority will be withdrawn and their housing need band will be reassessed.

8.9.3 An applicant who is currently living in supported housing and found 'intentionally homeless' within the previous 12 months will not be considered for Move-On priority.

8.9.4 An applicant living in supported housing accommodation that is not ready to move or able to sustain a tenancy will be placed in Band 4.

8.10 Poor housing conditions

8.10.1 An applicant who is currently occupying accommodation that is lacking in cooking, washing, toilet or heating facilities will be placed in Band 3.

8.10.2 An applicant who is sharing cooking, washing, toilet or heating facilities with people who are not members of their household will be placed into Band 3.

8.10.3 An applicant whose property is in disrepair will require an assessment of the property. This would be carried out by the relevant local authority’s Private Sector Housing team before any priority is awarded.

8.11 No fixed address

8.11.1 Where an applicant has no fixed address, for example persons who are living with friends, they will be placed into Band 3. This does not apply to an applicant currently in prison who will be placed in Band 5.

8.11.2 An applicant living with parents or other family members will be placed in Band 3 if they have returned to the family home after living in independent accommodation or they have provided written evidence confirming they have been asked to leave the family home. In other circumstances, an applicant living in the family home will be placed in Band 5.
8.12 An applicant offered employment or apprenticeships

8.12.1 If an applicant has a specific need to relocate as they have been offered or they have recently taken up an offer of full time employment or apprenticeship in the Homefinder area their needs will be assessed by the Homefinder Assessment Panel. An applicant will be required to provide written confirmation from the employer.

8.12.2 An applicant assessed as having a specific need for these reasons will be placed in Band 2.

8.12.3 Should an applicant lose their job before they have been able to move, or the job offer be withdrawn, their application will be reassessed.

8.13 ‘Golden Transfer’ tenants

8.13.1 Current Social Housing tenants who want to move to another property will be placed in band 3 upon the following conditions being met;

- they have been tenants with same landlord within the Homefinder area for two years or more; and
- they have no current rent arrears and have kept a clear rent account for 12 consecutive months, and
- they have no record of any other breaches of their tenancy and no anti-social behaviour record.

8.13.2 Should an applicant breach any of these conditions, after being assessed as a ‘golden’ transfer tenant, then their application will be reviewed. They will then be placed in the band appropriate to these new circumstances.

8.14 Overcrowding

8.14.1 An applicant will be placed in Band 2 if they are overcrowded by two or more bedrooms. An applicant will be placed in Band 3 if they are overcrowded by one bedroom.

8.14.2 Overcrowding priority will not be given if someone moved into the applicant’s household making them overcrowded. It will also not normally be given if the applicant moved into accommodation knowing that by doing so they would become overcrowded.

8.14.3 Overcrowding priority will only be awarded if an applicant is the main carer for children. The property must also be the children’s main residence.

8.14.5 Homefinder will use the property eligibility table (section 10.6) to assess the number of bedrooms an applicant needs. Homefinder will also take into account the bedroom standard criteria (section 10.4) to assess if an applicant is considered overcrowded.

8.14.5 When assessing an applicant’s eligibility for priority on grounds of overcrowding, Homefinder will have regard to the action(s) taken by the applicant to find suitable alternative accommodation to remedy their overcrowding. Homefinder will take account of the applicant’s ability to access accommodation in the private rented sector.
8.15 Medical grounds

8.15.1 An applicant may be awarded priority on medical grounds. If an applicant indicates a move will benefit their health or a member of their household’s health, their circumstances will be assessed. Evidence will be required to support the applicant’s case.

8.15.2 In deciding the level of medical need an applicant has, Homefinder will consider if the provision of adaptations to their current property will assist with improving their housing circumstances.

8.15.3 An applicant requiring a move on medical grounds will have their circumstances assessed. Priority will then be awarded at one of the three appropriate levels as shown below:

Severe
An applicant cannot continue to live in their current accommodation because they have an urgent medical need and/or disability. (See table 8.15.6)

Moderate
An applicant requires suitable alternative accommodation. This is because their medical condition and/or disability is having a negative affect on their ability to live in their present accommodation. (See table 8.15.6)

Low
An applicant is assessed as needing a move to suitable alternative accommodation. This is because the move would improve their health. (See table 8.15.6)

8.15.4 An applicant seeking a move on medical grounds will initially have their circumstances assessed by their administering Local Authority. If, following the initial assessment, the applicant is assessed as having a severe or potentially severe medical need their application will be considered by the Homefinder Assessment Panel.

8.15.5 The effect that an applicant’s housing has on their medical condition will determine which band they are placed in.

8.15.6 The table below is used as a guide to determine priority:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical condition</th>
<th>Severe</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect on housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Band 1</td>
<td>Band 2</td>
<td>Band 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Band 2</td>
<td>Band 2</td>
<td>Band 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Band 3</td>
<td>Band 3</td>
<td>Band 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.16 Welfare grounds

8.16.1 An applicant with care or support needs, or other serious and enduring social needs may be awarded priority on welfare grounds.

8.16.2 Priority will be awarded at one of the three appropriate levels as shown below:

**Severe**
There is a critical and immediate risk to the welfare of a member of the household.

Examples include:

- Where an applicant needs to provide essential support to carry out day to day activities such as washing, dressing and cooking and the support is not available by any other means.

- Where there is a need to protect a vulnerable person and there is a firm recommendation for rehousing from a statutory agency.

**Moderate**
There is a significant risk to the welfare of a member of the household.

Examples include:

- A social housing tenant referred by a partner landlord who is under-occupying their current accommodation by one bedroom and is at risk of losing their tenancy because of financial hardship.

- An applicant who is experiencing serious financial hardship and is unable to sustain their current accommodation through no fault of their own.

- Victims of harassment and abuse who remain in their current accommodation, but where the situation is having a serious detrimental effect on their well-being.

- Where an applicant needs to provide necessary support to carry out day-to-day activities such as washing, dressing and cooking and the support is not available by any other means.

**Low**
There is an identified concern to the welfare of a member of the household where there is clear supporting evidence to show that the welfare concern can be alleviated through their rehousing.

Examples include:

- An applicant who is socially isolated and a move to access identified support network would improve their emotional well-being.

8.16.3 An applicant seeking a move on welfare grounds will initially have their circumstances assessed by their administering Local Authority. If, following the initial assessment, the applicant is assessed as having a severe or potentially severe welfare need their application will be considered by the Homefinder Assessment Panel.
8.16.4 If an applicant or member of their household has a severe welfare issue then they will be placed into Band 1. If an applicant or member of their household has a moderate welfare issue, they will be placed into Band 2 and those with a low welfare issue assessment will be placed into Band 3.

8.16.5 Homefinder participating landlords are not able to offer immediate emergency accommodation. Where it is unreasonable for an applicant to remain within their current accommodation, for example they are experiencing domestic violence, Homefinder will refer the applicant to the appropriate local authority’s homelessness service. Homefinder will not carry out a Welfare or Medical assessment for applicants who have been awarded a statutory homeless duty.

8.16.6 An applicant awarded welfare priority will normally be restricted to rehousing in their administering local authority area unless Homefinder accepts that the applicant has a clear welfare need for rehousing in the neighbouring local authority area, and that this welfare need cannot be met by rehousing the applicant within their current administering local authority’s area,

8.17 Notice to Quit

8.17.1 An applicant in tied accommodation or in an assured shorthold tenancy who have received a legal ‘Notice to Quit’ from their landlord will be placed in Band 3 if there is less than two months before the notice expires.

8.18 Owner occupiers

8.18.1 The Government believes that authorities should avoid allocating social housing to people who already own their own homes. Where they do so, this should only be in exceptional circumstances; for example, for elderly owner-occupiers who cannot stay in their own home and need to move into sheltered accommodation.

8.18.2 In accordance with the Code of Guidance 2012, owner-occupiers will be placed in Band 5 unless they have exceptional housing needs.

8.18.3 Homefinder considers an applicant to be in exceptional housing need if they are in Band 1.

8.18.4 For owner-occupiers with an exceptional housing need, Homefinder will undertake a financial assessment to determine if they can purchase suitable accommodation to meet their housing needs. This assessment will include any potential equity released through the sale of a property. If the financial assessment determines the owner-occupier is able to purchase suitable accommodation they will remain in Band 5.

8.19 Rough Sleepers

8.19.1 An Applicant who have been rough sleeping for a period of four weeks or more within the Homefinder area, who have previously received and followed Housing Options advice, and for whom confirmation of rough sleeping has been received, will be placed in Band 2.
8.20 Qualifying Agricultural Workers (Protection under the Rent Agricultural Act (1976))

8.20.1 Agricultural workers who are provided with accommodation as a condition of their employment may be protected against eviction even if their employment comes to an end.

8.20.2 A qualifying agricultural worker can only be asked to leave their accommodation following a decision by an Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee (ADHAC).

8.20.3 If an ADHAC decides that a worker must leave their accommodation, the local housing authority must use their best endeavours to offer housing to the worker. In such cases, the applicant will be placed in Band 1.

8.21 Armed Forces

8.21.1 An applicant who falls within one of the reasonable preference categories and the applicant is in urgent housing need and who meets one of the following criteria will be placed into Band 1.

- serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

- former members of the regular forces

- bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service

- existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

8.21.2 If an applicant is not successful in bidding for properties prior to being discharged, they will then be required to be assessed under homelessness provisions in Part VII of The Housing Act 1996.

8.22 Mobile Homes, Houseboats or Caravans

8.22.1 An applicant living in a caravan, mobile home or houseboat will be placed in Band 5 if there is no other housing need.

8.23 Young children

8.23.1 An applicant with a dependent child under the age of five who is living in a flat above ground floor, or where the property lacks access to a garden will be placed in Band 3. In making this assessment Homefinder will consider whether an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances
9. Finding a Home through “Homefinder”

9.1 Advertising Properties

9.1.1 All Participating landlords will advertise their properties as widely as possible.

9.1.2 Properties within the Scheme will be advertised using the following methods:
   • The Homefinder website: www.amhomefinder.co.uk
   • Local Council Offices
   • A Property Newsletter

9.1.3 Property adverts should contain as much information as possible in order to help the applicant decide if the property is likely to be suitable or their needs. For example:
   • Location;
   • Property type (flat, bungalow etc);
   • Number of bedrooms
   • Rent payable;
   • Details of any property adaptations

9.2 Expressing an interest in advertised properties

9.2.1 If an applicant meets the eligibility criteria of an advert they may apply for an available property at any time within the bidding cycle. The bidding cycle will run from 00:01 hours Wednesday to 23:59 hours the following Monday.

9.2.2 An applicant will be able to express an interest in up to two eligible properties per bidding cycle.

9.2.3 An applicant who is unable to participate in bidding or has an identified support need may be offered assistance to use the Scheme.

9.2.4 If an applicant placed in housing need band 1 or 2 fails to bid for suitable properties the administering local authority may review the applicant’s housing application. Normally the review will take place 6 weeks after the band was awarded. The purpose of the review is to provide appropriate advice and support, to ensure the applicant is placing bids so that they are rehoused in a timely manner.

   The review will consider the following points
   • Suitability of the applicant’s current accommodation
   • The availability of suitable accommodation within the Homefinder area
   • Any change in the applicant’s circumstances, for example, medical or support needs.

9.2.6 The review outcome may recommend additional actions to find suitable accommodation. This may include the following
   • Provision of tenancy support or referral to appropriate support agency
   • Bids for suitable properties being placed on behalf of the applicant

9.2.7 Homefinder may place restrictions on an applicant which will mean that an applicant can only bid for properties in one of the Ashfield or Mansfield areas. Examples of such restrictions are applicants who are owed a statutory homeless duty or who are being re-housed from ‘Move-On’ accommodation.

9.2.8 In some circumstances Homefinder may restrict the type of property or area an applicant can apply for. Homefinder will do this if there are concerns about the risks the applicant may pose, or which are posed to the applicant in a specific location or property type.
9.3 **Multiple property adverts**

9.3.1 Where there are multiple properties available within a new development, they may be advertised within one advert, rather than individual property adverts. In such circumstances, the multiple advert will clearly state the number of properties available.

9.3.2 Where a bid is placed for a multiple property advert, this bid will be counted as one of the two available bids.

9.4 **Selection process**

9.4.1 At the end of the bidding cycle a shortlist of eligible applicants expressing an interest in the property will be produced. The shortlist will normally be ordered according to housing need band. Band 1 being the highest and Band 5 being the lowest priority band. If more than one applicant within a housing need band bids for a property the applicant with the earliest effective date will be placed above applicants within that band with a later effective date.

9.4.2 The partner landlord will check that the applicant at the top of the shortlist is still eligible to be considered for the tenancy. If the applicant remains eligible they will be contacted by the landlord. If the applicant is not eligible the landlord will consider the next applicant on the shortlist.

9.4.3 An applicant may not be eligible to be considered for the tenancy if they have:

- made false declarations or failed to disclose relevant information;
- a change in their circumstance which adversely affects their eligibility for the property;
- an issue identified that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant.

In such circumstances the applicant’s housing application will be updated with the reasons why they are ineligible to be considered for the tenancy.

9.4.4 When the partner landlord has identified an applicant eligible to be considered for the tenancy the applicant will be made a provisional offer of the tenancy. The applicant will be given a reasonable amount of time to decide whether to accept the provisional offer, this will normally be 3 working days, from the date of the letter.

9.4.5 If applicant fails to respond to the provisional offer of the tenancy the partner landlord will consider this to be a refusal of the offer and the landlord will contact the next eligible applicant.
9.5 Refusals

9.5.1 Where a property is refused by an applicant, the next applicant on the shortlist will be considered.

9.5.2 If an applicant refuses a suitable offer of a tenancy the administering local authority may review the applicant’s housing application. The purpose of the review is to provide appropriate advice and support, to ensure the applicant is managing their bids effectively so that they are rehoused in a timely manner.

The review will consider the following points:

- Suitability of the applicant’s current accommodation
- Reason for refusing offer(s) of suitable alternative accommodation
- Any change in the applicant’s circumstances, for example, medical or support needs.
- Applicant’s bidding history

9.5.3 The review outcome may recommend additional actions to find suitable accommodation. This may include the following:

- Provision of tenancy support or referral to appropriate support agency
- Bids for suitable properties being placed on behalf of the applicant

9.5.4 Following the review, if the applicant refuses a further offer of suitable accommodation Homefinder may demote the applicant to Band 4 for a minimum period of 6 months. At the end of the period, or if there is a significant change in the applicant’s circumstances, the applicant may ask for their housing application to be reassessed.

9.5.5 If a statutory homeless applicant refuses a final offer of suitable accommodation there will be no further duty owed to them. The refusal will be regarded as discharging the Local Authority’s homelessness duty. In these circumstances an applicant’s housing need band will be reassessed.

9.6 No interest in an advertised property

9.6.1 If there are no successful bids for an advertised property the property should be re-advertised and the criteria for selection will be reviewed.

9.7 Feedback

9.7.1 Feedback on recent lets will be displayed on the Homefinder website. Information will include:

- Property size and type;
- Location;
- Number of applicants that bid on each property;
- Band of the successful applicant; and
- Effective date of the successful applicant.

9.7.2 The feedback will cover all properties let through Homefinder, including direct lets (see section 9.8).
9.8 Direct Lets

9.8.1 In some cases, properties will not be advertised and will be offered through a ‘direct let’ process, for example where it is required:

- To decant an existing social housing tenant of a partner landlord in an emergency situation
- To provide temporary accommodation to fulfil a local authority’s duty under the homelessness legislation
- To discharge a statutory homelessness duty
- For someone who needs to be moved immediately on grounds of safety
- To be let to a former social housing tenant who has been left in occupation at the end of a joint tenancy and the property is suitable for their needs
- To be let to an existing social housing tenant who requires specific adaptations that can not be carried out at their property and the direct let property is considered suitable for their needs
- To be let to an applicant who qualifies to succeed to a social housing tenancy but is not eligible to succeed (as there has already been one succession) and the property is suitable for their needs.

9.8.2 Direct let properties will be advertised for information purposes only. Applicants will not be eligible to bid for the property.
10. **Offers of accommodation**

10.1 **Choice of area**

10.1.1 An applicant is able to bid on properties in any of the Ashfield or Mansfield areas. This is subject to certain restrictions below.

10.1.2 An applicant may be restricted on bidding on some properties unless they have a local connection to a village or local area. These properties will be clearly shown in the labelling criteria.

10.1.3 A statutory homeless applicant will be limited to bidding for properties in the Local Authority area where they have been accepted as homeless. However, in cases where an applicant has been accepted as homeless due to violence, such a restriction may be removed to allow bidding on properties in both the Ashfield and Mansfield areas.

10.1.4 An applicant identified as a ‘Move On’ nomination in Band 1 will also be restricted to bidding in the Local Authority area they come from. However, there might be some exceptions agreed where support can be better met by enabling them to be re-housed in the other Local Authority area.

10.1.5 An applicant awarded welfare priority will normally be restricted to rehousing in their administering local authority area unless they can demonstrate a need for rehousing in the neighbouring local authority area.

10.2 **Offering a tenancy to an applicant having a housing-related debt**

10.2.1 An applicant who has a current housing debt to a private rented landlord or a social housing landlord will not normally be offered a tenancy until the debt is cleared in full.

10.2.2 An applicant with a housing-related debt from a previous social housing tenancy will not normally be offered a tenancy until the debt is cleared in full.

10.2.3 Exceptions to the above rules will be homeless applicants to whom a partner landlord has accepted a full statutory duty. Homefinder will also consider other cases where an applicant has an urgent need for suitable alternative accommodation and is currently taking action to clear the debt.

10.3 **Type of Tenancy offered**

10.3.1 An applicant who is under 18 years of age will not normally be offered accommodation, except in circumstances where there is a statutory homeless duty; they are care leavers or are moving on from supported accommodation.

10.3.2 Where a property is offered to an applicant who is under 18 years of age it will be under an equitable tenancy. The tenancy agreement forms part of this contract, which allows the minor to enter into possession of the property.

10.3.3 Homefinder participating landlords will have regard to the Tenancy Strategy for the relevant local authority when deciding the appropriate tenancy to offer an applicant.
10.4 **Bedroom Standard**

10.4.1 An applicant requires a separate bedroom for each of the following

- Married or cohabiting couple
- Adult aged 16 years or more
- Two children under 16 years of age of the same sex
- Two children aged under 10 years regardless of sex

10.4.2 The bedroom standard will be used to assess an applicant’s housing needs band on the basis of their under-occupancy or overcrowding.

10.4.3 Homefinder will not use the bedroom standard to determine the size of property that the applicant is eligible to bid for. Homefinder’s Property Eligibility Table (see section 10.6) gives the applicant greater choice in deciding which properties are suitable for their household’s needs, in terms of size and affordability.

10.5 **An Applicant requiring extra room**

10.5.1 An applicant can request the need for an extra bedroom because of medical or social needs. Supporting evidence will be required and an assessment made.

10.6 **Property Eligibility Table**

10.6.1 The size and type of property that Homefinder normally offers an applicant will depend on the size of the applicant’s household.

10.6.2 An applicant aged under 60 years of age may be considered for ground floor accommodation which includes a support service, for example bungalows. This eligibility is dependent upon the outcome of a Needs / Medical assessment being carried out by a Participating Landlord.

10.6.3 For the purpose of the following Eligibility Table we will consider an applicant, joint applicant or household member who is pregnant as having a dependent child.

10.6.4 Homefinder aims to make the best use of the limited social housing in the sub-region, for example, an applicant who only has overnight access rights to a dependent child will only be considered as a ‘single person’ or ‘couple’.
This table is to be used as a general guide only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elderly Bedroom</th>
<th>General Needs Bedroom</th>
<th>1 Bedroom Flat</th>
<th>1 Bedroom Bungalow</th>
<th>1 Bedroom House</th>
<th>2 Bedroom Flat</th>
<th>2 Bedroom Bungalow</th>
<th>2 Bedroom House</th>
<th>3 Bedroom Flat</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two non-cohabiting adults both aged under 60</td>
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<td>Two non-cohabiting adults with one aged over 60 years</td>
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<td>A household with one child</td>
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<td>A household with two children</td>
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<td>A household with three children</td>
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<tr>
<td>A household with four or more children</td>
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10.7 Sheltered Properties

10.7.1 An applicant's suitability for sheltered properties will be dependant upon an assessment of need. An applicant will be informed if they are considered suitable for such properties.

10.7.2 Landlords within the Scheme have different age restrictions for sheltered housing. The minimum age for an applicant for sheltered housing, will be clearly stated when each property is advertised.

10.8 Bungalows

10.8.1 Bungalows will normally be advertised for applicants aged over 60 years of age or for applicants with disabilities. Across the Homefinder area there is differing demand and stock levels. Therefore, it will be clearly stated in the advertisement if there is any age restriction for such properties.

10.9 Properties with adaptations

10.9.1 Adapted properties will clearly be labelled on the adverts. Where a property has been adapted, an applicant who has a specific requirement for the adaptation may be prioritised over an applicant who does not require the adaptation.
11. **Local Lettings Policies**

11.1.1 A participating landlord may, for specific management reasons advertise a property, or group of properties under a Local Lettings Policy. For example, a Local Lettings policy may be introduced to address issues such as child density, anti-social behaviour or community cohesion.

11.1.2 When a local lettings policy is to be implemented it will be made public on the Homefinder website. All local lettings policies will take into account local factors such as, the size and composition of the Housing Register, the stock profile, and the supply and demand of vacant properties.

11.1.3 All local lettings policies will be agreed by the Homefinder Project Group who will also monitor the outcomes of the Local lettings Policy. The Homefinder Project Group will review whether the Local Policy has been successful in meeting its aims or requires continuation.

11.1.4 A participating landlord may have agreements that a proportion of their own properties will be allocated to their own tenants and in such a case these properties will be advertised accordingly.
12. Reviews and complaints

12.1 Right to request a review

12.1.1 An applicant has the right to request a review of decisions made about their application for housing. These include decisions to exclude them from the housing register; the level of priority awarded; or the way in which their application has been dealt with.

12.1.2 A request for a review should be made in writing by an applicant to either Ashfield Homes Ltd or Mansfield District Council within 21 days of the date of the decision.

12.1.3 Where an applicant requests a review of a decision of a partner landlord to skip them for an offer of accommodation on grounds of eligibility or suitability, the partner landlord is not obliged to hold the property pending the outcome of the review. If the review is upheld, and therefore the applicant was eligible for the offer of accommodation, the applicant can be considered for a direct let of accommodation.

12.1.4 Reviews will be carried out by an Homefinder officer who is more senior in authority to the officer who made the original decision. The officer carrying out the review will be employed by any of the Homefinder landlords, the decision being made in agreement with the local authority that administers the applicant’s application.

12.2 Complaints

12.2.1 If an applicant is unhappy with the way their housing application has been dealt with an applicant should raise this as early as possible with whichever local authority or RP has been dealing with their applicant.

12.2.2 Each Local Authority and RP have their own formal complaints procedure. If an applicant continues to feel dissatisfied, the applicant should request a formal Complaint Form from the relevant participating landlord.

12.2.3 If an applicant is not satisfied with the process or outcome having exhausted the review or complaints procedure, the applicant may send a written complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

12.2.5 The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

   The Housing Ombudsman Service
   81 Aldwych
   London, WC2B 4HN
   Tel: 0300 111 300
   Email: www.info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Appendix 1

Contact details for each Partner

Ashfield District Council
Urban Road
Kirkby-in-Ashfield
Nottinghamshire
NG17 8DA
Telephone: 01623 450000
Website: www.ashfield-dc.gov.uk

Mansfield District Council
Civic Centre
Chesterfield Road South
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG19 7BH
Telephone: 01623 463463
Website: www.mansfield.gov.uk

Ashfield Homes Limited
Broadway, Brook Street
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Nottinghamshire
NG17 1AL
Telephone: 01623 608889
Website: www.ashfieldhomes.co.uk
Appendix 2 - Glossary of Terms

Adapted Property
This is a property that has been adapted for a person with disabilities.

Age criteria
This will describe a property that is restricted to being let to people of a certain age.

Applicant
The term “applicant” within this policy refers to all Main applicants, Joint applicants and all members of an applicant’s household.

Armed Forces
“Regular Forces” includes members of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force.

“Reserve Forces” means the Royal Fleet Reserve, The Royal Navy Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Assessment Panel
The Panel consists of representatives from Homefinder participating landlords. The role of the Panel is to assess applicants who have potential high priority on medical or welfare grounds. The Panel also consider possible exclusions from the Housing Register.

Assignments
This is where a tenant has the right to pass on their tenancy to a member of their family who would be entitled to succeed to the tenancy of their property in the event of their death. A tenant will need the landlord’s permission to do this.

A court order might also be made in certain circumstances transferring a tenancy from one partner to another in the event of a relationship breakdown

Bands
An applicant will be placed into one of the five housing need bands dependant on their housing needs priority

Bedroom Standard
Homefinder has regard to the Bedroom standard in the Code of Guidance for Allocations (2012) as the minimum standard. The property eligibility and overcrowding priority awards are based on this minimum standard.

Bids/Bidding
When a vacant property is advertised, an applicant will submit an expression of interest called a bid. The process will be called bidding.

Bidding cycle
This is the length of time vacant properties are advertised for. This will be from 00:01 hours on a Wednesday to 23:59 hours on the following Monday.

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)
CBL is the process of letting social housing. It allows applicants for social housing (and existing tenants seeking a move) to apply for available vacancies which are advertised widely (e.g. in the local newspaper or on a website). Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can bid (i.e. apply) for any home to which they are eligible (e.g. a single person would not be eligible for a three-bedroom house).
Decant
Where a tenant has to move out of their home during major improvements or repairs, and they have been offered temporary or permanent re-housing

Dependant Child
A dependant child is aged under the age of 16 years, or under the age of 18 years whilst in full-time education or full-time training. A household member aged over the age of 18 may be treated as a dependant if they are unable to live independently.

Direct let
This is when a property is offered to a household without it having been advertised.

Effective date
The date that Homefinder has accepted that an applicant’s participation within a specific Housing Need band commences.

Eligibility
The term used to describe factors that match an applicant to a property. For example, the size of an applicant’s household and the number of bed spaces in a property.

Golden Transfer tenant
The term given to a tenant who wants to move and has a good tenancy record.

Homefinder area
The geographical area within the political administrative boundaries of both Ashfield District Council and Mansfield District Council.

Housing Register
The Housing Register is the list of people who have applied to a Local Authority for housing. Only people on the Housing Register can get permanent accommodation from them, or be referred by them to a Registered Provider (RP).

Labelling criteria
The phrase used to refer to the information about properties advertised through the Scheme.

Lettings Policy
This explains the rules that determine how the Councils and the Registered Providers let their properties within this scheme. The policy also outlines other housing options.

Low cost home ownership
Low cost home ownership (LCHO), which is sometimes referred to as shared ownership (part-rent, part-buy) or share equity, offer those eligible the opportunity to purchase part of their home and begin building their own equity.

There are a number of schemes designed to help people buy an affordable home:
- New Build HomeBuy (shared ownership)
- Social HomeBuy
- Rent to HomeBuy
- HomeBuy Direct

These schemes are to help first time buyers, key workers and social tenants who would otherwise be unable to buy a home. Each region in England has a designated HomeBuy Agent who will assess your application and advise you of the options for which you are eligible.

East Midlands Housing Association is the designated HomeBuy Agent for Nottinghamshire. Their contact address can be found in Appendix 2
**Mutual exchange**
An exchange of accommodation between two social housing tenants that relies on each tenant moving permanently into the other tenants home, subject to the landlords prior agreement.

**Nomination**
The term is used when a local authority provides the name and details of an applicant to a PRP landlord for an offer of housing.

**Owner occupier**
An applicant who owns their property outright or who has a financial interest in a property that is currently subject to a mortgage.

**Participating Landlords**
These include, Ashfield District Council, using Ashfield Homes Ltd to manage its homes, Mansfield District Council, and participating Private Registered Providers of Social Housing with properties in the Homefinder areas

**Private Registered Providers (PRP’s)**
Private Registered Provider of Social Housing (PRP’s) are government-funded not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable housing. They include housing associations, trusts and cooperatives. They work with local authorities to provide homes for people meeting the affordable homes criteria. As well as developing land and building homes, PRP’s undertake a landlord function by maintaining properties and collecting rent.

**Reduced preference**
This is where an applicant priority is reduced as a result of either their financial resources; outstanding rent arrears, or committed acts of anti-social behaviour.

**Shortlist**
A list of applicants that have expressed an interest in a particular property advertised through Choice Based Lettings.

**Social housing**
The term used for affordable rental accommodation owned by a local authority or a Private Registered Provider (PRP).

**Statutorily homeless**
Statutory homeless applicants are those who have been assessed under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by The Homelessness Act 2002. To be statutorily homeless a local authority has to be satisfied the applicant is homeless, eligible for assistance and has a priority need, and did not become homeless intentionally.

**Sub-region**
The term “sub-region” in this policy refers to the Ashfield District Council and the Mansfield District Council Administrative areas.

**Succession of tenancy**
When a tenant dies, providing there has not been a previous succession, the tenancy will normally automatically pass to any joint tenants, a partner or a close member of the tenant's family who has been living with them for at least one year.

**Sustainable communities**
The Department for Communities and Local Government says a sustainable community is a place where people want to live and work now and in the future.