



paragon  
Community Housing Group Limited

*your  
guide  
to*

# Search Moves Allocations Policy 2014



**The housing allocations policy is a fair and transparent way of deciding who should be allocated social housing. This leaflet contains important information. It is a summary of the main changes to the policy which take effect from July 2014. The full common allocations policy can be seen on our website at [www.paragonchg.co.uk/publications/policies](http://www.paragonchg.co.uk/publications/policies)**

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## **What registers are covered by the policy?**

- Elmbridge Borough Council – Housing Needs Register
- Spelthorne Borough Council – Housing Needs Register
- Paragon Community Housing Group – Transfer Register for Elmbridge and Spelthorne (note – also open to qualifying RuTCHT tenants)
- A2Dominion Group – Transfer Register for Elmbridge and Spelthorne Search Moves Scheme

The Localism Act gave local authorities the power to determine who does and who does not qualify to be on the Housing or Transfer registers.

Since the government has also produced guidance on its expectations of local policies.

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## **What are the key changes?**

- Changing criteria for those who qualify to join, or remain on the housing or transfer register. There is now a longer residence period or connection required, and thresholds have been introduced for income and savings, above which someone is no longer eligible as they have means to resolve their own housing needs.
- Changes to the banding system.
- Changing criteria used to determine if households are overcrowded, and the size of property they will be considered for.
- A penalty demotion of banding for applicants refusing 2 offers within twelve months.

It is important for you to read this document and to keep it safe for future reference.

All applicants will have their case re-assessed against the new policy provided they re-apply by 14 July as instructed.

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## Do I qualify?

Some people do not qualify because of their immigration status, this has not changed.

Under the new policy applicants in the following groups do not qualify – they would not be eligible to apply as new applicants and their applications would be removed at reassessment from any register they may currently be on:

- Applicants who have committed tenancy fraud or knowingly submitted fraudulent applications do not qualify for a period of 5 years (increased from 2 years).
- Applicants with a joint household income greater than £50,000 gross.
- Applicants with savings or assets worth over £30,000.
- Applicants who own, or part own a property, in the UK or abroad, which could meet their needs or be sold and the proceeds used to meet their needs.
- Social housing tenants on introductory tenancies.
- Applicants who have committed ‘unacceptable behaviour’ – behaviour which would allow a landlord, acting reasonably, to obtain any form of possession order against a tenant. Those excluded in the past may reapply if they can demonstrate improved behaviour, and this will be considered along with the needs of the applicant’s other household members.

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## Changes to the local connection

Only applicants who can meet one of the requirements below will qualify to be included on the register.

**Current residence** – Applicants who currently live in the borough of Spelthorne or Elmbridge and have done so for at least the last 3 years.

**Previous residence** – Applicants who, as an adult, have lived continuously in the borough of Spelthorne or Elmbridge for 5 or more years out of the last 10.

**Family** – Applicants who have immediate family (mother/father/brother/sister/adult son/adult daughter) who are currently living in the borough of Spelthorne or Elmbridge and have done so for at least 5 years.

**Work** – Applicants who have a permanent job in the borough of Spelthorne or Elmbridge (at least 18 hours a week and an existing contract of 12 months or more).

**Special Circumstances** – Applicants who have a connection with the borough of Spelthorne or Elmbridge such as a need to be near specialist medical or support services which are only available in a particular location.

**Please note** – Members of the regular Armed Forces applying within 5 years of their discharge; bereaved spouses and civil partners (where the deceased partner was a regular serving member and death attributable to service) and serving or former members of the reserve forces who require housing as a result of serious injury, medical

condition or disability sustained as a result of their service will not be subject to the local connection tests above.

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## Changes to the banding system

There are 4 bands in the new allocations policy. Band E (no local connection) has been removed as these applicants no longer qualify.

- **Band A** – Emergency/priority
- **Band B** – Urgent need to move
- **Band C** – Identified need to move
- **Band D** – Low/no deemed need

There has been a change in the priority date for applicants assessed as Band B from the date of registration, to the date on which they moved into Band B. For example an applicant who applied in March 2009, but who only moved to Band B in May 2014, would take May 2014 as their new priority date.

There has been no other change to priority dates for the other Bands, Band A remains the date that the applicant moved to Band A; for C and D it remains the date the applicant joined the register.

A summary of the categories which are used to determine the Band awarded follow at the end of this leaflet.

## Assessing overcrowding

In order to assess a household's bedroom need the following table is used:\*

Household Description	Bedroom Need
Adult person – single	Bedsit/one bedroom
Adult couple	One bedroom
An overnight carer	One bedroom
Two persons/children of the same sex with less than a 10 year age gap	One bedroom
Two persons/children of the same sex with more than a 10 year age gap and both under 16	One bedroom
Two persons/children of the same sex with more than a 10 year age gap and at least one is over 16	Two bedrooms
Two persons/children of different sex where both are under 10 years of age	One bedroom
Two persons/children of different sex, of whom at least one is over 10 years of age	Two bedrooms

\* It should be noted that a child will be deemed to have a 'need' from birth.

A single adult within the household (who is not the applicant) would only be entitled to a separate room if there were no other person with whom they could share as per the table, however that adult would not be expected to share with their own child.

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## **Preference for working households**

Approximately 10% of all vacant properties will be advertised specifically for working households, indicated by a 'W' icon on the advert. Only households who met the employment criteria will be eligible to bid on these properties, and will then be shortlisted as per priority date and band. A higher percentage may apply on new developments or where there is a local lettings plan in place. The definition of work for this purpose is a permanent job or temporary contract of 12 months or more, of 18 hours or more per week.

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## **Right of review**

If you disagree with a decision which removes you from the Transfer Register, or dispute any revised banding, you may submit an appeal. You will need to tell us why you disagree and advise us of what new information you can provide in order for this to be re-considered.

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## **Assistance**

We have made the on-line application process as easy as we can, and ask that applicants try and apply on-line themselves, or with assistance from a trusted friend, relative or support worker.

If you need additional help please contact the Paragon lettings team on **01932 235 850** or email [lettings@paragonchg.co.uk](mailto:lettings@paragonchg.co.uk)

If there is sufficient demand we will arrange small group sessions to complete the re-application process and will book a slot for you.

If you currently receive help with bidding this can continue after re-application.

You will also still be able to bid by telephone and coupon if that is your preference.

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## Priority bandings

**Below is a summary of the Priority Bands. You should refer to the common allocations policy for full details.**

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### **Band A (Emergency/priority)**

The following applicants will fall into this banding:

- An applicant is assessed as having an “emergency” medical or welfare need to move including grounds relating to a disability and this is seriously affected by their current housing.
- An applicant’s life would be in immediate danger if they continued to live in their current accommodation and this has been substantiated.
- An applicant is a tenant of any tenure who needs to move because their home is to be demolished or redeveloped within the next six months.
- An applicant is a social housing tenant in the Search Moves area and is residing in an adapted property in the sub region and the adaptations are no longer required.
- An applicant is occupying a property that is subject to a compulsory purchase order and there is a statutory duty upon one of the partners to house them.
- An applicant is assessed as statutorily overcrowded as set out in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 (but only where the applicant has not worsened their housing situation without good reason).
- An applicant has been nominated via the National Witness Mobility Service.
- An applicant is a social housing tenant in the choice based lettings (CBL) area and is under occupying a high demand property and will move to a lower demand/smaller property (also refer to the Perfect Fit under-occupation scheme for Paragon tenants).

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## **Band B** **(Urgent need to move)**

The following applicants will fall into this banding:

- An applicant is assessed as having an “urgent” medical or welfare need to move and this is seriously affected by their current housing.
- An applicant needs to move because of harassment or threat of violence but not judged as serious as Band A.
- An applicant has been accepted as homeless and the full duty to secure accommodation has been accepted by Spelthorne Borough Council or Elmbridge Borough Council but not discharged.
- An applicant is overcrowded and requires two or more additional bedrooms.
- An applicant is a social housing tenant in the CBL area and is under occupying a property in the Sub-Region.
- An applicant’s accommodation lacks basic facilities, i.e. kitchen, bathroom or toilet and this cannot be provided by the landlord/owner within a reasonable timescale.
- An applicant’s accommodation has been assessed under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System as not reasonably suitable for occupation and cannot be rectified by the owner/landlord at a reasonable cost or timescale.
- An applicant is living in supported housing and has a local connection with Spelthorne or Elmbridge and is assessed as no longer needing support and the accommodation is needed by other applicants.
- An applicant is pregnant or has at least one dependent child and is living in accommodation where the facilities are shared with others and they lack at least one bedroom.
- An applicant needs to move because their home is to be demolished or redeveloped within the next twelve months.

- Care Leavers with Children's Services in Surrey who it has been agreed have a local connection with Spelthorne and Elmbridge during the time they were in Care and who are aged 18 to 21 years, in housing need and suitable for independent living.
- An applicant is unintentionally threatened with homelessness and has a priority need (within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and this has been validated and acted upon by the Housing Options Team and there are no other prevention options available.
- Urgent need for serving members of the regular Armed Forces and their families where:
  - i. Service is coming to an end within 12 months or has come to an end in the preceding 12 months, and...
  - ii. They are losing or have recently lost MOD accommodation, and...
  - iii. A specific need to move to the Borough for employment or family reasons, and...
  - iv. Insufficient funds to pursue other options.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the armed forces where:
  - i. Bereavement within last 12 months, and...
  - ii. They are losing/have recently lost their MOD accommodation, and...
  - iii. A specific need to move to the Borough, and...
  - iv. Insufficient funds to pursue other options.

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## **Band C** **(Identified housing need)**

The following applicants will fall into this banding:

- An applicant is assessed as having an “identified” medical or welfare need to move including grounds relating to a disability and this is seriously affected by their current housing.
- An applicant has been assessed as homeless but is not in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- An applicant has been assessed as intentionally homeless but is in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and there has been no change in circumstances.
- An applicant is overcrowded and requires one additional bedroom.
- Singles over 35 without children who share facilities with others.
- Couples, without children and who share facilities with others.
- An applicant has some other compelling need to live in the Borough of Spelthorne or Elmbridge which if not met, will cause hardship.
- Identified need for serving members of the regular Armed Forces and their families where:
  - i. Service is coming to an end within 12 months or has come to an end in the preceding 12 months, and...
  - ii. They are losing or have recently lost MOD accommodation, and...
  - iii. Insufficient funds to pursue other options.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the armed forces where:
  - i. Bereavement within last 12 months, and...
  - ii. They are losing/have recently lost their MOD accommodation, and...
  - iii. Insufficient funds to pursue other options.

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## **Band D**

### **(Low and no deemed housing need)**

The following applicants will fall into this banding:

- An applicant does not fit into any of the categories in Band A, B or C.
- An applicant has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances within the last three years to get more priority on the housing register.
- An applicant has given up accommodation within the last three years that was suitable for their needs and by doing so, has knowingly worsened their housing circumstances.
- An applicant can afford to buy or part-buy a property in the private sector that is suitable for their needs.
- Can afford to rent privately without recourse to means tested benefits.
- An applicant has an asset that could be used to obtain accommodation suitable for their needs.
- An applicant owned property suitable for their current needs but transferred or sold the property within the last 3 years when it was reasonable for them to continue to live there.
- Applicant has bid on and refused two or more properties within a 12 month period and refused them for no good and evidenced reason.



**paragon**

Community Housing Group Limited



Richmond upon Thames  
Churches Housing Trust



Elmbridge  
Housing Trust

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Elmbridge Housing Trust and Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust are members of the Paragon Community Housing Group.

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## Your Needs

If you would like to receive this information in another format such as large print, Braille or audio, call the Design & Communications Manager on:

T 01932 235 722

[www.paragonchg.co.uk](http://www.paragonchg.co.uk)

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