



Property Pool Plus

Property Pool Plus Policy - Overview of significant change proposals.

The proposed policy includes three changes which are considered significant as they will impact a relatively large number of existing applicants registered with the scheme. These changes are:

1. Band A - Additional Preference (Policy Reference 4.2.3).

The local authority intends to add a new category to the existing Band A additional preference criteria. This is as follows:

“Those moving on from local authority contracted / grant funded short-term supported housing / hostels which is provided under the local authority homelessness provision, where support is no longer required. Any qualifying young person meeting this criteria who is defined as a child in need as a result of a statutory assessment carried out in accordance with Children Act 1989, section 17 by the local authority, will have their band effective date backdated to the date they moved into the supported accommodation / hostel. All other applicants meeting this criteria will not be awarded a backdate to their band effective date and the usual scheme rules will be applied in this respect.”

Applicants meeting this criteria are currently placed in Band B Reasonable Preference, where they receive the benefit of a backdate of their band date, to the date they moved into the supported accommodation. This change will result in people meeting this criteria being placed in Band A under the new proposals. However, the increase in priority from Band B to Band A will be limited as a backdate to the band date will no longer be applied, except in child in need cases.

2. Discretion (See Policy reference 4.6.0).

The local authority intends to make the following changes to the section of the policy which explains how discretion may be applied:

- A. The explanation of the way in which discretion may be applied has been clarified, including the considerations which will be made when

deciding whether to apply discretion. This is detailed in 4.6.1 of the proposed new policy as follows:

“Discretion about being made qualifying, being made a direct offer of social rented housing, or being awarded additional preference will be exercised only by the Local Authority’s Senior Officer. When assessing whether discretion should be applied, the Local Authority Senior Officer will consider:

- i. What the exceptional circumstances are. They should be unusual or remarkable circumstances which indicate that the applicant’s housing needs are more urgent than other applicants.*
- ii. What will be the consequences if no discretion is exercised? This will include considering how serious the potential consequences are and how likely each potential consequence is.”*

B. A further example of an exceptional circumstance where discretion may be applied to an individual case has been added. This is where a direct let is necessary to resolve an exceptional and urgent welfare need of an applicant or a member of their household. The section of the policy has also been revised to make clear that the circumstances under which discretion may be applied are not limited to those circumstances detailed in the policy. For full details see section 4.6.2 of the proposed new policy.

C. New criteria has been added to allow local authorities to vary the scheme in certain circumstances to:

- *“Provide for a period of direct lets to particular categories of people. Any decisions to do so will be made where it is considered necessary to meet local housing needs and taking into account the local authority’s current tenancy and homelessness strategies.”*

Implementing a period of direct lets means that an agreed proportion of properties which would normally be advertised through Property Pool Plus for registered applicants to bid on, would be allocated directly to applicants in urgent housing need. These properties would not be advertised through Property Pool Plus which will result in fewer properties being available to bid on through the scheme.

- *“Implement pilot trials of new ways of working to inform future service delivery and potential scheme improvements to meet local housing needs. Any such variation would only be implemented where there would be no perceived negative impact on the other partner local authorities.”*

“The implementation of any variation to the scheme as described above would be subject to a separate delegated decision by the individual local authority implementing the change. Full details of any such variations to the scheme will be published on the website www.propertypoolplus.org.uk”

For full details see sections 4.6.4 and 4.6.5 of the new policy.

3. Cross Boundary Mobility Cap (See policy ref 4.3.0).

The local authority intends to implement a 5% net cross boundary mobility cap on properties being allocated to people who are not residents of that individual local authority area. When the cap is reached the individual local authority will have the option to advertise properties giving preference to current residents of that local authority area to maintain a maximum of 5% net inward migration. Where properties are advertised giving preference to local authority residents under this provision, exemptions will be afforded to some members of the Armed Forces community, Domestic Abuse victims and those leaving the care of the scheme partner local authorities.

For full details see section 4.3.0 of the new policy.