

IMPACT HOUSING

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS
PROCEDURE

Effective from July 2007

Choice Based Lettings Procedure

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CHOICE BASED LETTINGS PROCEDURE

FEBRUARY 2008

1. **Introduction**

This procedure document links to the Choice Based Lettings Policy. .

Through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme Impact aims to:

- House people with a serious housing need.
- Give people as much choice and control as possible over where they live.
- Contribute to sustainability, neighbourhood regeneration and social inclusion.
- Ensure that properties are let fairly and that legal obligations are fulfilled.
- Ensure that properties are let quickly and efficiently.
- Be non-discriminatory and promote equality of opportunity in housing services.

2. **Scheme Overview**

2.1 **Registration**

Impact operates a single housing register, which any person must join to be considered for the Associations general needs housing. Anyone aged 16 or over can join the register, including people living outside the county. People applying from outside the county will be treated as per local applicants when assessing housing need/ banding. In some circumstances applications to join the register may be refused, for example, if there are serious concerns about anti-social behaviour or a history of large rent arrears.

2.2 Advertising

Vacant properties are advertised on a fortnightly cycle in local newspapers, on the Associations website and by poster at designated sites. Anyone who is registered can bid for an advertised property suitable to their needs.

2.3 Lettings Criteria

The scheme sets criteria stating what size and type of household will be considered for any particular property type. For example, the criteria include rules on minimum and maximum household sizes, minimum age, requirements for ground floor accommodation and requirements for support. The advert sets out the letting criteria for each property.

2.4 Letting Bands

To ensure that reasonable preference is given to people in urgent housing need, a banding system is used to prioritise people on the housing register.

Impact uses three bands:

Band 1	Highest priority/need.
Band 2	Medium priority/need.
Band 3	Low priority/need.

Bids received for properties will be sorted into priority order using the above bandings and offers normally made to those with the highest priority. Where there is equal priority (ie: bids from people in the same band), then offers will be determined by the following factors:

- Local connection
- Earliest date priority awarded (Band 1 applicants only).
- Earliest date of Registration.

People registered in Band 1 have a limited period to bid for properties (6 months). If no bids are received in this period the matter will be reviewed and the person(s) may lose their priority banding.

2.5 Move on From Supported Housing

People moving on from Supported Housing participate in the scheme, as per other persons. To ensure a reasonable level of move on residents of Supported Housing are given high priority – An annually reviewed minimum of expected move on is agreed for Supported Schemes managed by Impact and by partner agencies at accommodation owned by the Association.

A move to a General Needs tenancy from a Supported Housing scheme may depend on an appropriate and agreed Support Package.

2.6 Quotas/Equality Targets

To help ensure that access for harder to reach/more vulnerable groups is improved, minimum baseline annual lettings targets are set for the following groups/persons:

- Statutory homeless households
- People moving on from Supported Housing
- People with disabilities
- People from the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community

To ensure reasonable access for Impact's existing tenants a baseline figure is also set for the number of transfers each year.

2.7 Vulnerable People/Hard to reach groups

Links are established with other agencies and groups working with vulnerable, or harder to reach people. These include local authority homeless departments, social services and voluntary and community groups. Copy advertisements are provided to these organisations directly and clients of the organisations offered additional advice and assistance.

The scheme allows 'supported bids' to be made ie: staff working with more vulnerable people to make bids on their behalf.

Through this procedure it is aimed to ensure that regular contact is maintained with agencies supporting clients who have joined the scheme and that these agencies are kept informed and involved at all stages of the lettings process.

3 Scheme Administration : Staffing and Key Tasks

3.1 Staffing and key tasks

3.11 A designated member of staff, based within the housing management function, acts as Scheme Administrator with specific responsibility for ensuring efficient and effective administration of the scheme. Key elements of this role include:

- Co-ordinating the advertising of properties.
- Generating and disseminating the results of bids for properties.
- Monitoring the results of offers, lettings made and producing reports.
- Monitoring applicants bidding history, refusals of offers and dealing with issues as per this procedure.

3.12 A member of staff also acts as Deputy Scheme Administrator. This person supports the Administrator in their role, and deputises in their absence. They also co-ordinate annual reviews of the Housing Register.

Other tasks detailed in this procedure are carried out by generic housing management staff based within the three area teams. Each team has a responsibility for dealing with the day to day administration of the scheme (other than those tasks carried out by the Scheme and Deputy Scheme Administrator), within its area of operation, including sending out and processing Registration forms, receiving bids, offering properties and starting tenancies. Within each team will be a designated Housing Officer with an enhanced role within the scheme.

The allocation of key tasks within each team is as follows:

Task	Housing Admin	Designated HO	Patch HO/SHA	All
Dealing with requests for registration forms				✓
Receiving completed registration forms, initial logging to IBS and initial check of forms and references	✓			
Full check of forms and references, investigating any issues, determining exclusions and banding applicants		✓		
Generating and sending out registration acceptance letters.		✓		
Dealing with refused applications		✓		
Preparing information for advertisements including property photographs and labelling criteria			✓	
Taking bids and inputting to IBS				✓
Receiving bid results, making offers and carrying out viewings			✓	
Starting tenancies			✓	

3.2 I.B.S. System

3.21 Detailed guidelines on usage of the I.B.S. Choice Based lettings System is given in the separate guidance notes, hyperlinked as Appendix 1 to this procedure.

3.22 Details of the standard letters used within the procedure are hyperlinked as Appendix 2.

4. **Registration Requests And Initial Processing**

4.1 How Applicants Register

4.11 Applicants can obtain a Registration Form by telephone, in person from local Area Offices or on line. Forms can be obtained by any person (eg: someone requesting a form on behalf of another person), including staff from other agencies that are supporting the applicant.

4.12 Applicants will register by providing a fully completed Registration Form, references and any other supporting documentation detailed in this procedure. Registration forms can be obtained on line via Impacts website but have to be printed, completed and returned to an Area Office.

4.2 Providing The Registration Form/Assistance with Completion

4.21 Any member of the Housing Management team can provide the Registration Form. The form must be provided with the Choice Based Lettings Scheme information leaflet and the Reference form (form TSA1). Other agencies will also keep registration packs to provide to applicants.

For monitoring purposes applicants obtaining forms from Impact should be asked for their name and address, their ethnic origin and whether they, or any member of their household consider themselves disabled. This information should be recorded on the appropriate form and held on the office 'Registration Form Request' file.

4.22 When providing a Registration Form staff should seek to identify any difficulties with completion of the form, and must advise that assistance can be given. If assistance is required, then, if possible, the form should be completed with the applicant at the point of request. If this is not possible then the applicant should be offered an appointment within 5 working days of the request to complete the form. The applicant should also be informed that another person can complete the Registration Form on their behalf.

- 4.23 Where a Registration Form has been completed with the applicant at point of request, references will be required before the application can be assessed. The applicant should be advised to retain the Registration Form and obtain the necessary references. Further details on references are given in Section 5.

Any issues that a person may have obtaining references should be discussed and an agreement made where any problems exist. Staff may agree to request references on behalf of the applicant if the person is vulnerable and/or would have a problem doing this.

4.3 Registration Requests: Homeless Applicants

- 4.31 If when a Registration Form is requested the applicant states that they are homeless then they must be advised that an appointment with the Local Authority Homeless Persons Section, is necessary. This is in order that the applicant's homeless status can be assessed. Staff should offer to make an appointment when first contacted by the applicant. The applicant must be advised that if this assessment is not carried out, then they can not be classified as statutory homeless within the terms of this procedure, which may affect their priority within the scheme.

The Homeless Persons Section should provide written confirmation of their decision, if the applicant is assessed as homeless and in priority need. Written confirmation must be provided to Impact, by the applicant, with the completed Registration Form.

4.4 Eligibility Criteria

- 4.41 Applicants aged 16 and over can apply to be registered. Normally applicants under 18 will only be offered a tenancy on the condition of accepting a support package.
- 4.42 The scheme applies to existing Impact tenants ie: there are no separate arrangements, apart from management transfers on the grounds of serious harassment etc, for tenants wishing to transfer to another property. To register, existing tenants must normally have held their current tenancy for a minimum of six months and must have conducted their tenancy in a satisfactory manner.
- 4.43 General needs tenants who have starter tenancies on permanent accommodation may apply to join the scheme after six months occupancy but will not, unless an exceptional circumstance is agreed

by the Chair of the Residents' Committee, be able to express an interest in a property until they become a secure tenant. Tenants in temporary accommodation from which move on to permanent accommodation will be required (eg Carleton Hall Walk homelessness accommodation) may apply to join the register immediately and will be able to participate fully in the scheme from this point.

- 4.44 Under the terms of the Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 persons subject to immigration control cannot be let a home. If an applicant indicates that they are from abroad and their status is not obvious, staff will need to take copies of a passport and immigration status letter from the Home Office to determine eligibility.

The address for enquiries about immigration status is:

Immigration Status Enquiry Unit
3rd Floor
Appollo House
Wellesley Road
Croydon
Surrey
CR9 2BY

Telephone: 0870 606 7766

indpublicenquiries@ind.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

5. **Returned Registrations**

5.1 **Initial Checks and Date of Registration**

- 5.11 Returned Registration Forms should be passed in the first instance to a Housing Assistant (Admin) who is responsible for initial checking. The form should be date stamped on receipt, then checked against current applications on the IBS system to prevent duplication. If an application already exists the Housing Assistant (Admin) will contact the applicant to discuss this.

- 5.12 The Housing Assistant (Admin) will check the form and other documentation. If the form is not complete, references not provided or other supporting documentation outstanding, then the Housing Assistant (Admin) should contact the applicant as soon as possible to obtain the missing information. If the Registration or Reference Forms are incomplete then the Housing Assistant (Admin) should call the applicant and/or the referee and complete the form(s) over the telephone. If this is not possible then the form should be returned to

the applicant with a letter detailing the information required. The form is not logged to the IBS system.

If the Reference Form has not been received but the applicant has advised that it is being completed, then the Registration Form should be held (but not logged to IBS) for a period of 4 weeks. If the Reference is not received after this time then the Registration Form should be returned to the applicant with an explanatory letter.

If a Supporter agency/other person has assisted with the Registration form, and the information is incomplete, then this agency/person should be contacted.

- 5.13 If the Registration Form is fully completed and all necessary information received then the details from the form should be input to the IBS system by the Housing Assistant (Admin). When inputting the form the date the form was received must be logged as the date of Registration (if no entry is made the date will default to the date of input). The Registration will be put at 'pending' status. The Housing Assistant (Admin) should generate the standard Acknowledgement Letter and send this to the applicant.
- 5.14 The Housing Assistant (Admin) should check the form for any local connections and record any connection the applicant has in the appropriate box on the front of the Registration Form. The Registration Form and other related documentation should then be scanned.
- 5.15 Fully completed Registration Forms, including references must be passed to the designated Housing Officer in the team, to check. If the applicant has stated on the Registration Form that they are unable to provide references then the Housing Assistant (Admin) should pass the completed form to the Housing Officer. It is the Housing Officers responsibility to pursue references/make checks from this point and to determine an applicants banding. If an assessment of the application is difficult from the information provided then the Officer may have to interview the applicant and/or seek further third party information (as detailed in this procedure section 6).

5.2 **Registrations – References**

- 5.21 Applicants who are currently tenants, or who have previously held a tenancy, are required to obtain a tenancy reference – this applies to each applicant if the Registration is a joint one.

- 5.22 If the applicant is an Impact tenant then references are not required but the Housing Officer assessing the application must make tenancy checks to ensure that none of the possible criteria for exclusion (see 5.3), apply. A diary note must be made and linked to the application, confirming details of the check.
- 5.23 If the applicant has never held a tenancy other acceptable references may be from:
- A recognised member of the local community in which the applicant resides, and with knowledge of the applicant and any joint applicant (eg: Councillor, Town or Parish Councillor, member of Residents Organisation, member of local community group etc).
 - A professional person with knowledge of the applicant and any joint applicant.
 - A Support agency.
 - An Employer.
- 5.24 Any problems obtaining a reference should be dealt with by the Housing Officer assessing the application. Failure to provide a reference should not lead to automatic exclusion. Where references are not provided, the Housing Officer should consider the information on the Registration Form and decide what further level of investigation, if any, is appropriate. This might include:
- Meeting with the applicant.
 - Asking for a Police reference to be obtained.
 - Making checks with other appropriate organisations or contacts (eg: Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, landlords in the area in which the applicant resides etc).
- 5.25 If the references are satisfactory then the application will be banded (see section 6) and made live on the system as per section 8, unless the applicant has expressed an interest in Salterbeck or another area in which applications are considered by a local lettings panel. The procedure for referral to Lettings panels is detailed in Section 8.

5.3 References Not Satisfactory

- 5.31 If the references/information supplied gives cause for concern then the Housing Officer should consider a home visit or office interview to explore the concerns. Any visit should be undertaken as soon as possible and normally within five working days of the Housing Officer receiving the application.
- 5.32 If the references obtained and/or the Registration form indicates a level of criminal or anti-social behaviour, or a tenancy reference cannot be obtained, the applicant may be asked to obtain a Police reference.

The normal procedure for obtaining a Police reference will be to request a Reference form from the Data Protection Officer at Cumbria Constabulary (01768 217194). The applicant should be asked to complete the form and to either return it directly to the Police (the applicant will be required to make a payment with the form, which will be refunded on receipt of the reference) or to return the completed form to Impact to forward to the Data Protection Officer, with a payment (an Impact cheque will be sent with the form).

5.4 Exclusions

- 5.41 Applications may be refused, or otherwise restricted in terms of the type or location of property, where:
- There is outstanding debt on a current or previous property (see 5.51 for further guidance).
 - The applicant or their partner or a member of their household being rehoused with them has been evicted from a previous tenancy for antisocial behaviour or rent arrears or other debt or damage to property.
 - An applicant or their partner or member of their household has been convicted of drug related offences; racial harassment, domestic violence or homophobic behaviour.
 - The applicant or their partner or a member of their household to be rehoused with them has been convicted of a criminal act which if repeated would cause annoyance, nuisance, fear or intimidation.
 - There is a recent history of serious antisocial behaviour, as evidenced from landlord's references from a current or previous

tenancy; from Police references; or from evidence through knowledge of current or previous behaviour through written testimony of the Police or other professional person(s).

- False or incomplete information has been supplied on the Registration form.
- The applicant has a particular support need, which it is felt, is greater than can be met by Impact Housing Association.
- The applicant is living in temporary supported housing but is assessed as not being ready to move on. Readiness to move on is determined by the designated Housing Officer based on information received on support needs and provision, and discussions with relevant support staff. The ability to sustain an independent tenancy will be the factor which will determine any decision. Normally it will be a requirement that a person living in temporary supported housing has been resident in the accommodation for at least one month prior to registration. .
- No suitable accommodation exists in terms of family size or adaptation.

When looking at exclusion, consideration must be given to the time since any problem occurred and the level of problems in the more recent past (last two years).

- 5.42 Note that evidence of criminal convictions supported by a Police Reference would not in itself automatically result in rejection; reference should be made to the above conditions.
- 5.43 Where, having considered the matter the Housing Officer decides that the application should be accepted, then the application should be made live as per section 7.11, subject to any requirement to refer to a Local Lettings panel.
- 5.44 Where the Housing Officer considers that the application should be refused, then unless the application has to be considered by a Local Lettings panel, the Officer should generate the standard refusal letter (CBL3). The Officer will enter the reasons for refusal to the letter and send out to the applicant. The Officer will input the details of the refusal to the IBS system and then file all paperwork on the Applications Refused File. Refused applications should remain on this file for one month from the date of refusal and should only stay on file beyond this time if an appeal has been made.

A refusal lasts for a period of 24 months from the date of the letter advising of the decision. After this time the applicant may re-apply. Any future applications may again be refused if any of the above exclusion criteria apply.

- 5.45 Where the Officer considers that the application should be restricted, then the details of the restriction must be given in, or with, the standard Acceptance letter. A diary note must be made of the restriction against the person's application.
- 5.46 Any applicant refused, or accepted with a restriction, has the right to a review of the decision and to make an appeal. Further details are given in Section 12.

5.5 Exceptions

- 5.51 In the case of rent arrears or other debt, an application may be accepted where the debt is less than £250 and an agreement is in place and has been kept for at least three months.
- 5.52 Exceptional circumstances may arise (eg domestic violence) when the Resident Committee Chairs approval must be sought, with the approval of the Operations Manager, to re-house an applicant who would normally be excluded.

6. **Registrations – Second Stage Assessment - Banding**

6.1 Banding – Outline Details

Applications will be assessed by the team designated Housing Officer and placed in one of three bandings, according to the following criteria:

Band 1:

- Acute medical need (severe medical condition/disability).
- Statutory Homeless (confirmed by the Local Authority).
- Home scheduled for demolition or unfit for habitation.
- Care leavers (with appropriate support).
- Residents moving on from supported housing schemes.

- Victims of serious harassment or hate crime.
- Fleeing domestic violence.

Band 1 status is given for a period of six months. If this time limit is reached and the applicant has not been rehoused then priority is reviewed and Band 1 status may be cancelled.

Band 2:

- Urgent medical need and rehousing would make a significant improvement to health and quality of life.
- Overcrowding categories.
- Homeless or threatened with homelessness, as defined under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 but not owed a statutory duty.
- No secure tenancy.
- Home is in substantial disrepair.
- Suffering from the effects of serious anti-social behaviour.
- Social/welfare reasons including unaffordable accommodation.
- Living in housing (not supported) where rooms or amenities have to be shared with members of another household.
- A need for independence due to pregnancy.

Band 3:

- Applicants with no, or low levels of need. (Including owner-occupiers with sufficient capital to secure alternative accommodation suitable to their needs).

6.2 Banding – Detailed Assessment of Needs

6.21 Medical Need

Acute (Band 1)

- The applicant or other member of the household suffers from a severe medical condition (continuing or intermittent), which makes it impossible or dangerous:

- to climb stairs and/or
 - to reach essential amenities such as bathroom etc, and/or
 - to get into or out of their home.
- The applicants current housing is too small or lacks basic amenities for essential home treatment (eg: kidney machine).
 - There is an immediate need to move due to the medical condition.

Urgent (Band 2)

- The applicant or other members of the household suffer from a medical condition (continuing or intermittent), which causes difficulty, or discomfort when:
 - Climbing stairs, and/or
 - Using essential facilities and/or
 - Getting into or out of the home.
- The applicant or other members of the household have a mental health problem or learning disability, which exacerbate difficulties they have living in their current home.
- Rehousing would alleviate the problems experienced and make a significant improvement to quality of life.

Generally a medical condition should not be treated as a need if the person lives in accommodation suitable to the need and moving would not impact on the problem.

6.22 Homeless

Band 1

The applicant must have been assessed by the Homeless Persons Section as Statutory Homeless and in priority need.

Band 2

The applicant is homeless but not in priority need, or is threatened with homelessness. A letter is not required from the Homeless Persons Section confirming a person as non-priority homeless. Situations in which a person will be assessed as homeless include:

- People sleeping rough with no accommodation available to occupy.
- People in bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation (not supported housing).
- People leaving hospital and with no accommodation available to occupy.
- People living temporarily with friends and with no accommodation available to occupy.

People should be assessed as threatened with homelessness, if they are likely to become homeless within 28 days. Situations in which a person will be assessed as threatened homeless include:

- Persons experiencing a breakdown in the relationship with family or partner with whom they normally live.
- Persons under notice to quit and owner-occupiers experiencing mortgage foreclosure and unable to afford another mortgage.

If a person is assessed as intentionally homeless they should be placed in Band 2 unless the reasons they are deemed to be intentionally homeless would also exclude them from the Register.

6.23 Property Condition

Band 1 – Unfit for Habitation

A property assessed as unfit for habitation must be confirmed as such by the local Environmental Health Dept. Factors which determine a property as unfit include:

- not being structurally stable
- serious disrepair
- dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupants
- inadequate provision for lighting, heating and ventilation
- inadequate supply of piped wholesome water
- no suitably located WC for exclusive use of the occupants
- no bath or shower and wash hand basin, with hot and cold water
- no satisfactory facilities for the preparation and cooking of food, including a sink with hot and cold water

Band 2 – Substantial Disrepair

A property may be assessed as in substantial disrepair if one of the following apply:

- Two or more key components (kitchen units, heating system, windows, bathroom fittings, large areas of plasterwork/ceilings, wiring system, roof covering/structure) are in poor condition and in need of replacement or major repair, or inadequate for purpose (eg: no heat source in some rooms, too few kitchen units etc.)
- A number of more minor repairs, which combined, make the condition of the property unsatisfactory.

Further guidance on assessing property condition is given in literature on the 'Fitness Standard' and 'Decent Homes' held by the property Services department

6.24 Residents moving on from Supported Housing schemes

Supported Housing includes hostels, supported living schemes and shared and self-contained homes with dedicated support staff, where the length of stay is time limited (normally no more than two years).

The need to move on must be supported by the support agency.

6.25 Victims of Serious Harassment or Hate Crime and Suffering the Effects of Serious Anti-Social Behaviour

Band 1 – Victims of Serious Harassment or Hate Crime

Band 1 should be awarded where it is essential that the applicant move quickly because:

- There is a threat of actual bodily harm or a threat to their physical safety which is likely to be carried out; or
- They have suffered severe mental trauma.

Band 2 will apply where the applicant or a member of their household has experienced serious or long term persistent anti-social behaviour which causes substantial distress but where there is not a threat of bodily harm, or to physical safety and the trauma caused is not severe. Examples of serious anti-social behaviour include:

- Serious verbal abuse.
- Extreme noise nuisance.
- Ongoing and serious level of disturbance (eg: due to visitors to neighbouring properties, youth disorder etc).
- A number of more minor levels of nuisance, experienced over a long period of time and which combined cause more serious distress.

Where the threat is most serious (assessed as Band 1), the option of a management transfer should be explored/discussed with the applicant, including an immediate move into temporary accommodation.

Note : Where the applicant is an Impact tenant it is a priority to tackle the perpetrator and support the victim in remaining in their home wherever possible. Where there is not an immediate threat to the safety of the applicant and the applicant would prefer to remain in their home measures should be taken as per the Nuisance and Harassment Procedure.

Overcrowding

In assessing the degree of overcrowding it is assumed that a bedroom is needed exclusively for:

- Each couple living together.
- A parent in a single parent family.
- Each person aged 16 or over.
- Each child aged 10 or over who would otherwise have to share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.

If the applicant is not currently overcrowded but, for example is going to be living with a partner or is expecting a child, and another bedroom is required, they should be treated as overcrowded.

Households deemed to have made themselves overcrowded (eg: by taking in lodgers etc) will not be treated as overcrowded.

6.27 No Secure Tenancy

Applicants will be regarded as not having a secure tenancy if any of the following apply:

- They live in tied accommodation.

- They have a licence agreement.
- They have an Assured Shorthold tenancy (unless this is a starter tenancy).
- They are lodging.
- They have no agreement or have a form of agreement which gives restricted protection.

6.28 Fleeing Domestic Violence

An applicant should be assessed as Band 1 if it is essential that they move because:

- They have been treated violently or threatened by violence by their partner or someone else who lives with them; or
- They have been treated violently or threatened with violence at or near the property by a former partner who does not live with them in the property.

The policy applies equally to men and women (ie: not just to women fleeing violence) and to people in same sex as well as heterosexual relationships. It also applies to applicants who are abused by household members other than spouses or partners. In line with the Domestic Violence Policy no evidence should be required as proof of abuse/violence.

Where violence is an issue, consideration should be given to making a management transfer ie: offering a property directly if this is likely to result in a quicker move than through the Choice Based Lettings System, as well as an immediate move into temporary accommodation.

Further guidance on dealing with Domestic Violence issues is given in the Domestic Violence Policy.

6.29 Social Welfare Reasons

To Be Nearer Workplace, School or Essential Amenities

This need should only be allowed if a move will greatly ease problems accessing work, school or other essential amenities. Normally if the service is located on the same estate, within the same ward area or is easily reached via transport routes accessible to the applicant within a reasonable timescale, then the need will not be allowed.

Essential amenities are those regarded as essential to the applicant, or members of their households, well-being. Normally these will be hospital or other health services which have to be accessed regularly for treatment purposes, but may include other services.

To Give or Receive Support

This need should only be deemed to exist where a high level of support is both needed and can be given and where moving would result in an improvement in quality of life. Support may come from family or friends, or the community.

The need will be identified if:

- There is evidence that a high level of support is needed, and without that support, the applicant would have serious problems in their daily life and:
- A move will greatly cut or ease the travelling time needed to give or get support.

Generally if the parties concerned live on the same estate or within the same ward area, or there are not real travel issues, then this need will not be identified.

Affordability

Existing housing will be deemed unaffordable where more than 30% of total household income is required to pay the rent or mortgage, taking account of any Housing Benefit received, If the person has savings of £15,000 or more then their accommodation should be treated as affordable.

Where an applicant is above the 30% threshold but is not receiving Housing Benefit and might have entitlement if they applied, the Designated Housing Officer may ask the applicant to apply for Housing Benefit if they have not done so. If an application is agreed existing housing should not be treated as unaffordable until the result of the application is known. If the applicant will not make a benefit application after being asked to do so, then their housing should be treated as affordable.

6.3 Banding – Evidence Required to Confirm Needs

6.31 Band 1

Supporting information will normally be required to be included in Band 1, as follows:

- Statutory homeless – written confirmation from the Homeless Persons Unit.
- Home unfit for habitation – written confirmation from the Local Authority Environmental Health Dept.
- Care leavers – referral letter from Children Services Team, including details of support needs and support package.
- Residents moving on from Supported Housing Schemes – letter from a keyworker detailing support needs and any support in place to meet these needs.

For medical need a doctor's letter is requested but is not an essential requirement unless the officer cannot make a determination without a professional opinion. Letters from other professionals e.g. Social or Mental health Workers, Occupational Therapists etc may also be requested, but will not normally be an absolute requirement.

6.32 Band 2

A solicitor's letter will normally be required as proof of relationship breakdown.

Otherwise supporting information will not normally be required to be included in Band 2, unless the Designated Housing Officer is unable to make a determination from the information on the Registration Form and any discussions with the applicant.

6.33 Where an applicant, or member of their household has been a victim of violence, or there is a serious risk of violence, then further evidence is not required.

6.4 Further Investigation of Needs

6.41 Where it is difficult to determine the level of need from the information provided, further investigation may be required. This may include:

- Contacting the applicant by telephone, or in writing to discuss needs in more detail.
- A home visit.
- Contacting another agency supporting/in contact with the applicant, for further information.
- Contacting an independent agency or person to provide advise and/or professional assessment eg: an Occupational Therapist, Mental Health Professional, Police etc.

6.42 Where there is a delay in obtaining further information to confirm banding, then the Designated Housing Officer should register the applicant in the Band appropriate to the needs initially confirmed. If when further information is received a higher banding is determined then a standard letter must be sent to confirm the new banding. The date of Registration will be the original date (ie: the date the Registration Form was received).

7. **Assessments – Other Considerations**

7.1 **Support Needs**

7.11 Designated Housing Officers should seek to develop a planned approach to lettings involving people with support needs. This will involve determining support needs as part of the assessment process, through effective liaison with Supported Housing Staff and staff from other agencies, and involvement with groups/panels working to facilitate successful moves for people with high/medium level support needs.

7.12 All applications from people in Supported Housing schemes, from children in Care and from others with support needs must include a letter from a Support Worker detailing support needs, potential issues for the person moving into independent housing and any support to be provided when the person is rehoused. If support needs or provision is unclear, or other information is insufficient, then the Designated Housing Officer, or other delegated person, should seek to clarify matters as part of the assessment process. Priority should only be awarded if the Designated Housing Officer is satisfied that the person moving on is able to live independently, or that the necessary support

will be in place to enable this. Where panels are in place for facilitating moves into independent accommodation, referrals to the appropriate panel should be made where deemed necessary to resolve/agree support issues/requirements. Support issues should be dealt with as per any relevant protocols.

7.13 16/17 Year Olds not in Care

Persons under 18 years old will only be housed with an appropriate support package in place. Designated Housing Officers should identify 16/17 year olds applying to join the Register and contact the applicant to explain the support requirement. If support is being provided a referral letter (as 7.12 above) should be requested from the Support Worker/Agency.

If no support is in place, the Officer should explain to the person that a referral to a Floating Support Service will be necessary – if this is agreed then the Designated Housing Officer, or other delegated person, should progress a referral. If the person will not consider this, then they will be advised that an application cannot be considered until they are 18, and the standard Refusal Letter sent.

7.2 Local Connection

7.21 As part of the assessment process the Designated Housing Officer must determine any local connection. Connections are considered in relation to:

- Local authority areas in Cumbria.
- The Salterbeck Estate.
- Schemes listed on the Registration Form with section 106 agreements, or other local agreements.

7.22 Local Authority Connections

People are deemed to have a connection with a local authority area if any of the following apply:

- They currently live in the area.

- They have lived in the area for at least 3 of the last 5 years or previously lived in the area for a substantial period (normally 10 years).
- They have a permanent job in the area or an offer of a permanent job, which they are accepting.
- They have close family living in the area (mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter).

7.23 Salterbeck Connection

- They currently live on Salterbeck and have lived on the estate for at least the last 12 months.
- They have previously lived on the estate for a period of 12 months or more.
- They work or are securing permanent employment, on the estate or in the immediate vicinity.
- They have immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter) who live on the estate.

7.24 Other Schemes as detailed on the Registration Form

Connections with these schemes are detailed in the section 106 agreement or other local agreement for each scheme normally held on the 'General' house file.

7.3 Owner Occupiers

7.31 Owner occupiers should be assessed as per other applicants unless it is determined that the applicant is able to purchase a suitable property within, or near to the area, in which they wish to live. An area will normally be taken as no more specific than a town or parish unless a very strong reason exists for living in a more defined location. Where it is decided that an owner is able to purchase an alternative property, then that person is placed in Band 3, subject to having stated a commitment on the registration form to dispose of their property should they be re-housed. If this commitment is not given then the applicant should be refused unless a strong and appropriate reason exists for not selling. Exceptions to this requirement must be agreed with an Operations Manager.

7.32 When assessing the ability to purchase a suitable property, Designated Housing Officers should consider the following:

- The means available to a person (from the sale of a property, earnings/income, savings etc.) to purchase a property. Affordability (no more than 30% of total household income spent on mortgage costs) will be a consideration in this assessment.
- The cost and availability of the type of property required

7.33 In considering the availability of property to purchase, Officers may need to decide which locations are appropriate if suitable property is not available in any immediate areas specified by owners on the Registration Form. If a very limited area has been specified (e.g. an estate or ward area), then the officers should check the need to live in the area. If there is genuine need (normally to receive or give support, or be close to essential amenities) then the determination of availability will focus on that particular area, and neighbouring wards/estates if serious travel issues are not presented. If the area specified is choice rather than needs based, then property availability should be looked at on a wider area; normally the town in which any estate or ward specified is located.

7.34 Where assistance is required to determine property costs and availability, the Property Services Department should be consulted.

7.35 In assessing ability to purchase there may be circumstances, which make a judgement more difficult. For example, if applicants have a relatively large income then 30% of total income may not be an appropriate indication of affordability. Where there is a large degree of uncertainty the Designated Housing officer should discuss the matter with an Operations manager before a final decision is made.

7.36 Applicants who are owners through Right to Buy and Right to Acquire will be able to participate within the scheme, as per other owners.

8. **Completing Registrations**

8.1 **Registering Applicants on the Scheme**

8.11 The Housing Officer should aim to complete the application assessment as quickly as possible and unless a police check is required, or other information which is not quickly available, within no longer than 7 working days.

8.12 If the outcome of the assessment is that the applicant is accepted, then, provided the application does not have to be considered by a Local Lettings panel (see section 8.2), the Housing Officer will record the applicants banding on the IBS system and make the registration 'live'. For Band 1 applicants the date that priority is awarded is input as 'date allocated'. If the assessment process has been delayed by a failure of the applicant to obtain any further information required within a reasonable timescale, the Housing Officer may amend the Registration date to the date at which this information was received. If an amendment is made this must be detailed in the Acceptance letter. The Officer must make a diary entry on the IBS system explaining the banding given to the applicant, and link the previously scanned Registration form and documents to the live Registration.

The Registration should be made live within one working day of completing the assessment.

8.13 The Officer after making live on the IBS system must generate a standard Registration letter, CBL4 if the applicant has been placed in Band 1 or CBL 2 if in Band 2 or 3. The letter should be sent out within one working day of the application being input to the IBS system, and scanned and linked to the Registration.

8.14 A copy of the Acceptance letter must be sent to any Supporter Agency, where permission has been given on the Registration Form to do this.

For the following Band 1 applicants a copy of the letter must be sent to the Agency/Contact detailed:

- Homeless: Homeless Persons Section.
- Moving on from Supported Housing: Applicants Keyworker.
- Young person leaving care: Applicants Keyworker.

8.15 On completion of the above, the Registration form and all linked paperwork should be placed on the Office Registration File. Each Office holds its own file.

8.2 Local Lettings Panels

- 8.21 If the applicant has indicated that they will be interested in housing on Salterbeck, or another area where applications are considered by a Local Lettings panel, then the application must be forwarded to Salterbeck, (or other appropriate team), for consideration by the panel prior to being made live, or refused. The Housing officer should record the applicants banding and make a diary entry on the IBS system as normal, but leave the application at 'pending' status.
- 8.22 The Officer should e-mail the Salterbeck or appropriate designated Housing Officer, to advise that the application needs to be considered by the panel. The Officer must advise in the e-mail whether they are recommending acceptance or refusal, giving any reasons for refusal, and highlight any issues relating to possible exclusion or restriction which they think need to be considered by the panel.
- 8.23 The Salterbeck designated Housing Officer, or other appropriate Officer, should refer the application to the next Local Lettings panel, as per the applicable local lettings procedure. The Officer will access all information relating to the application via the scanned Registration form and other documentation.
- 8.24 Following consideration by the panel it is the local Officers responsibility to make a final decision on the application. If the decision is different from the original Officers recommendation, the decision should be made after discussion with this Officer. It is possible that one outcome of this decision is that the application is refused for Salterbeck but accepted for other areas, for example where there is an issue specific to Salterbeck, or another area.
- 8.25 The Officer local to the area for which the panel operates is responsible for making the application live/refusing the application once a decision is made. This should be done within one working day of the panel meeting unless any further investigation is required.

If the applicant is excluded from the local area, but not other areas, the Officer must input details to the IBS system in line with this.

9. **Advertising Properties**

9.1 General

- 9.11 Empty (void) properties are dealt with as per the procedure for management of voids in the Repairs and Maintenance Procedure.
- 9.12 The Scheme Administrator is responsible for co-ordinating advertisements for all vacant properties advertised within the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
- 9.13 Advertisements are placed every fortnight in Thursday's edition of the Evening News and Star and in the Westmorland Gazette in South Lakeland. Advertisements are also placed on Impact's website, e-mailed or posted to Supporter agencies and other agreed venues, and sent directly to vulnerable customers with particular communication needs, on the same fortnightly cycle. All properties available for letting in a period are included in a single advertisement. Properties will normally be advertised as open to bids from applicants in all bands.
- 9.14 Adverts will allow until 4.00 pm on the following Monday to make bids for properties (4.00 pm on Tuesdays at Bank Holiday weekends).
- 9.15 Patch Housing staff must work to advertise properties as soon as possible within the void cycle. Where notice of termination has been received, properties should be advertised with the outgoing tenant still in-situ.

9.2 Pre-Advertisement – Information for the Advert

- 9.21 Where a termination notice has been received the patch housing staff should carry out a pre-void inspection within 3 working days of receipt of notice. The level of works to the property, and the likely target re-let date, should be determined from this inspection. A photograph should be taken of the property on this inspection. Photographs should not show people, properties that are boarded, properties with untidy gardens or properties obscured by vehicles.

Note: if the inspection identifies significant damage to the property caused by the tenant, and the termination is due to a transfer (i.e. an offer of accommodation from Impact), then the offer may be withdrawn. The Housing Officer should make a decision, in discussion, with the Operations Manager.

9.22 If no works, or minor level works only are required to the property, then the Housing Officer/Senior Housing Assistant should prepare advertisement details immediately after the pre-void inspection. Information for the advertisement should include:

- The property address.
- Property type and number of bedrooms.
- Property features (eg: double glazing, central heating, front/rear gardens or yards, driveways, special adaptations etc).
- The gross weekly rent due. The rent will need to be checked by the patch staff, and where appropriate, set at the target rent. Where a different rent is set this must be entered on the IBS system as per the Guidance Notes.
- Details of any services provided.
- Any support services linked to the property eg: Tenant Support Worker.
- Details of local facilities nearby eg: shops, doctors, schools, bus routes etc.
- The date the property will be available for letting.
- Any requirements linked to the letting of the property eg: age restrictions, household size, need for ground floor accommodation, need for wheelchair user accommodation, no pets, local connection etc.
- Any banding restrictions.
- Any local connection criteria (e.g. where a local agreement exists requiring a connection) or where it is appropriate to specify a connection to help achieve a local target (e.g. for the number of priority homeless people housed in a particular district).

9.23 Housing should be advertised as available to specified household sizes as detailed in the following table:

	Single Person	Couple	Two Adults	Three Adults	Family 1 Child	Family 2 Children	Family 3 Children	Family 4 or more children
Bedsit	✓	✓						
1 bed flat	✓	✓	✓					
2 bed flat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3 bed flat				✓		✓	✓	
1 bed house/ maisonette	✓	✓	✓					
2 bed house/ maisonette	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3 bed house/ maisonette				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 bed house/ maisonette							✓	✓
5 bed house/ maisonette								✓
1 bed bungalow	✓	✓	✓					
2 bed bungalow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3 bed bungalow				✓		✓	✓	✓
4 bed bungalow							✓	✓

Note:

- Households without children living with them permanently but with access to children who regularly stay overnight (normally at least one night per week) will be treated as family with the appropriate number of children.
- Households who require other people to stay on a regular basis eg: a carer will be treated as requiring appropriate larger accommodation.
- A pregnancy will be regarded as a child for occupying purposes.

The above table is guidance for labelling and letting criteria but is not strict policy. It is recognised that there will be some variations in order to meet different sets of household circumstances/make ups.

9.24 Restrictions may also be detailed in the advert relating to the need a customer has for a particular type of housing.

- Ground floor accommodation, including bungalows will normally only be let to elderly applicants (over 60 or other age specified at a particular scheme), or to applicants with a mobility problem

and who have difficulty climbing stairs. Some ground floor accommodation may be less suitable for these needs groups. Housing staff advertising a property will determine whether the accommodation is only available to people who require ground floor.

- Accommodation specifically built/adapted for use by a disabled person, including wheelchair user housing, will normally only be let to households which include a disabled person with need matching the provision.
- Flats and maisonettes above ground floor will not normally be let to families with children under 7.

9.25 In determining banding restrictions or labelling criteria, housing staff need to take account of performance against quota's set. If a quota is not being achieved eg: the target for number of transfers, then some properties may be advertised as open to bids from 'existing Impact tenants only'.

Information on performance against quotas will be obtained from quarterly reports produced by the Scheme Administrator (see section 15).

9.26 When the advertisement has been prepared it must be placed in the appropriate folder on the IBS system in time for the next advertising cycle. To be included in the next advertisement, advert details must be on the IBS folder by no later than 12 noon on a Monday of any advertising week.

9.27 Following the pre-void inspection the Housing Officer/Senior Housing Assistant should send a letter to the outgoing tenant confirming the termination details and any issues arising from the inspection. If works are not required, or are of a minor level, the tenant should be advised that viewing by prospective tenants might take place whilst the tenant is still in situ.

9.28 If the inspection determines that major works are required to the property then the Housing Officer/Senior Housing Assistant will refer the property to a Technical Officer for a full void inspection. This inspection should be carried out as soon as possible, and no later than two days after the return of the keys for the property. On completion of this inspection the Technical Officer should inform the Housing Officer/Senior Housing Assistant of the level of works required and likely timescales. The Housing Officer/Senior Housing Assistant should, on receipt of this information, complete the advert details and place on the IBS advertising folder for the next advertisement cycle.

- 9.29 Where a property has been abandoned, or the required notice not given, then the patch housing staff should carry out/organise the void inspection as quickly as possible and prepare advertisement details, as above.

9.3 Advert Completion

- 9.31 The Scheme Administrator will prepare advertisements using the formats on the IBS system. The Administrator will extract advertising details prepared by patch housing staff, from the IBS advertising folder, each fortnight.
- 9.32 The Scheme Administrator will start finalising information for the next advertisement in the week before the advertisement is placed.

Each Friday of a non-advertising week the Scheme Administrator will check the central spreadsheet (see 9.38) to ensure that it is up to date and includes details of all current and imminent voids. Where there is no advertising date for a property listed, the Scheme Administrator will contact the appropriate patch housing staff, for details. The Administrator will also e-mail all patch housing staff on the Friday requesting details of any recent voids, notified but not included on the spreadsheet. Housing staff must e-mail by return any such voids, and state whether the property is to be advertised on the next cycle. If the property is to be advertised immediately, the Housing Officer must provide details and photographs by no later than 12 noon on the following Monday.

- 9.33 On Monday of the advertising week the Scheme Administrator will check all necessary information has been received for the advertisement. Any outstanding information will be requested from the appropriate housing staff. After the deadline for outstanding information (midday Monday) the scheme Administrator will format the advert. The advert will include a colour photograph of the property, the property address and type, property amenities, the amount of rent payable, the date from which the property will be available, local amenities and any labelling criteria, including any banding restrictions.

Prior to forwarding the advert to the local press, the Administrator will e-mail the prepared advert to all patch housing staff for final comments/checking of details. The advert will then be e-mailed to the local press by 4 pm on Monday. The Scheme Administrator is responsible for liaising with the local press, dealing with any queries

following submission of the advert, ensuring that all necessary information is provided and that adverts appear at the prescribed time and in the prescribed format.

9.34 On Tuesday of the advertising week the Administrator will:

- Arrange with the I.T. department for the advert to be put on the Impact website. The advert must be on the website by Thursday.
- E-mail the advert to agreed agencies, venues and groups including all Impact Offices, Impact Supported Housing Teams, Homeless Persons Sections in each local authority area and Occupational Therapist teams if the property is suitable for a wheelchair user or is other adapted accessible accommodation.
- Distribute poster versions of the advert to venues to which it cannot be e-mailed.
- Forward the advert to customers deemed more vulnerable and with a clearly specified communication need. These customers will be identified from a list taken from the I.B.S. system, further guidance on which is included in the I.B.S. procedure notes.

9.35 In parallel with gathering details of void properties for advertising, the Scheme Administrator will collect details of all properties let in the previous cycle. This information will be taken from the I.B.S. system for inclusion on the website, and will include the property address, the successful applicants banding and the date of letting.

9.36 Properties should always be advertised at the earliest opportunity. If a property requires major repairs (12 week relet target) it should normally be advertised in the cycle following completion of the void inspection.

Properties with a 26 week relet target should not be advertised immediately but at the earliest appropriate date and at least six weeks prior to completion of works.

9.37 Where a void property is not to be advertised immediately, patch Housing staff should e-mail the Scheme Administrator giving the reasons why and advising of the likely advertisement date.

If a property is not to be advertised but let directly to an applicant then the patch staff dealing with the letting must advise the Administrator

giving details of the type of letting (eg management transfer due to harassment).

Some properties may be kept out of the scheme and offered directly in order to achieve quota's set. For example if the target number of move-ons from Supported Housing is not being achieved, then properties may be offered directly to Supported Housing Schemes.

9.38 To help ensure an efficient lettings process the Scheme Administrator will keep a central spreadsheet, which records all current and imminent voids. Details of void properties are imported from the IBS Void Management System. Details on the spreadsheet will include:

- The date void.
- Target re-let dates.
- Proposed and actual advertisement dates.
- A comments section.

10 **Bidding, Shortlisting and Second Reference Checks**

10.1 **Bid Process and Receiving Bids**

10.11 Bids may be made on any advertised property suitable for the applicant, up to a maximum of 3 bids per advertisement. A person may bid for a suitable property in any area of the county i.e. bidding is not restricted to areas with which a person may have a local connection, unless the advert details specify 'local connection only'.

10.12 Bidding will begin immediately advertising starts (from the Tuesday that the advert is e-mailed to supporter agencies and other agreed venues) and will close the following Monday at 4.00pm., unless varied due to Bank Holidays.

10.13 Bids may be made by applicants, in person, or by a carer or support worker on their behalf;

- At the housing offices.
- By telephone - during office hours, or by leaving a message on the answerphone.

- By e-mail or via the website
- In writing.

When bidding a person must give their Registration number, the address of the property(s) for which they wish to bid, and, if they are bidding for more than one property, their order of preference

- 10.14 Any member of Impact housing staff may take bids. On receipt of a bid, a bid sheet should be completed (see appendix ?) and the bid logged immediately to the computer, or as soon as possible afterwards. The person taking the bid should check the person's details against the criteria given in the advertisement and advise if a bid is not eligible.
- 10.15 The Scheme Administrator will check bids made by e-mail and the website and log these to the system.
- 10.16 If a customer wants to withdraw a bid the member of staff dealing with the matter should cancel the bid on the IBS system as soon as possible, and before the deadline for bids to be made. The member of staff should create a diary entry on the persons Registration recording the bid cancellation.
- 10.17 The Scheme Administrator will e-mail all housing staff at 3.30pm on an advertising Monday to remind that all bids must be put on the computer by 4.00pm and that no further bids should be taken after 4.00pm.

10.2 Shortlisting and Prioritisation of Bids

- 10.21 After the closing time, the Scheme Administrator will generate a list from the IBS system listing all customers who have expressed an interest. Details on generating the list are given in the IBS guidance notes.
- 10.22 The Scheme Administrator will check the bids made and exclude any not eligible. This check will include checking applicants diary notes to ensure that no restrictions are applicable which might prevent an offer. Bids may be ineligible because:
- A bid has been made for a property unsuited to the applicant's requirements.

- Where specific criteria have been set on the advertisement and the applicant does not meet these requirements including any local connection requirements.
- The applicant has a restriction applied and has bid for a property in breach of this restriction

10.23 Unless a particular band has been specified for an advertised property or local connection is the first consideration (see 10.24) the IBS system will prioritise bids by band first (band 1 being highest priority and band 3 lowest). Where there is more than one person at the top of the list with the same banding then priority is established as follows:

- By local connection to the local authority area, or for properties on Salterbeck, by connection with the estate. If connection is the same:
- By the date that the banding was allocated (band 1 applicants only) or:
- By earliest date of registration (for band 1 applicants where no priority is created from both the above criteria, and for bands 2 and 3 where local connection is the same).

If the above criteria do not prioritise between bids, then the Scheme Administrator should refer the matter to the appropriate Designated Housing Officer for a decision. The Officer should determine priority by re-assessing relative levels of need (eg: giving priority to a person with multiple needs as against a person with single need).

The Housing Officer should make a decision and advise the Administrator by e-mail of this decision, by close of business Tuesday. The Officer should make a diary note on the IBS system, explaining the decision.

10.24 For those properties other than those covered by 10.25 below, local connection is only a consideration where persons at the top of the shortlist are in the same band. If the person at the top of the bid list is in a higher band than the next person, then the tenancy offer is made to the higher band person ie: local connection does not override prioritisation by banding.

10.25 For certain schemes (those listed on the Registration Form) priority is given to people with a connection to the village or immediate area in which the scheme is located ie: local connection, and not banding, is the first consideration when shortlisting bids. For those people with a

connection the shortlist will be sorted by the normal banding, date of priority and date of registration criteria.

If no bids are received from people with a local connection, or from the bids made by people with a connection there is no-one suitable, then the Administrator will consider bids by people with no connection and selection will be as per the normal criteria.

10.26 On completion of shortlisting the Scheme Administrator will carry out second reference checks to be completed by Tuesday following the closing date for bids

Checks will include:

- Rent check, other housing related debts.
- Verifying current address, no change in circumstances, (family composition, medical conditions etc) and no recent incidents of anti-social behaviour.

These checks will be made on the top three bids for each property. The check will be made by contacting the original referee, normally by telephone. Details of the check should be recorded as a diary note against the person's registration.

If it is not possible to obtain the second reference check from the original referee, then the Administrator should refer the matter to the patch Housing Officer to pursue. The Officer should contact the person directly to make the above checks, and record details of the check as a diary note.

10.27 Should issues arise from the second reference check a decision may be made to exclude or suspend the customer from the Housing Register. The Scheme Administrator will contact the appropriate patch Housing Officer who will discuss this with the Operations Manager to agree action to be taken. If an immediate decision is not possible the registration will be deemed suspended, and the customer will not be considered for any accommodation, until a final decision has been reached. In this situation the Scheme Administrator must be advised that a second reference check should be made on the fourth person on the bid list.

The customer, and any Supporting agency, must be informed in writing of any suspension or cancellation. All correspondence must be scanned and also held on the Registration File.

10.28 Once second reference checks have been completed the Scheme Administrator should e-mail all appropriate housing staff to advise that

they can access the checked bid list for properties advertised in their patch. Normally the lists should be ready to access by Wednesday morning following closure of bidding.

- 10.29 If a customer appears in more than one bidding list, then this must be identified by the Scheme Administrator when checking the lists. The Administrator should, when notifying Housing Officers that they can access the bid lists, advise the appropriate Officer of all customers who are in the top three bids in more than one list. Where this occurs the appropriate Officers should liaise with regard to contacting the person. If a person is top of more than one list they will be given first option for the property that they have given as their first preference. They will be placed second on the list for their second choice property and third on the list for any third choice property.

If a person is top of one list and second or third for another then staff dealing with the let must advise the appropriate staff if the offer of the property for which the person is top of the list is accepted or refused.

- 10.30 When an offer of a tenancy is being made the tenant will be asked to sign to confirm the outcome of reference checks.

10.3 **No Bids received/eligible**

- 10.31 In the event that no eligible bids are received in response to the advert, or the property being refused, then the Scheme Administrator will discuss options with the patch staff.

Options include:

- Forwarding a copy of the advert to all band 1 customers for which the property would be suitable, and considering any responses on a first come first served basis.
- Notifying Support agencies that the property remains vacant and that bids will be considered on a first come first served basis.
- Contacting customers who bid for other properties in the cycle and who would be suitable for the vacant property to ask if they would wish to be considered on a first come first served basis.
- Advertising the property out with the Choice Based lettings Scheme ie: people not on the Housing Register will be able to apply for an advertised property. Where this option is taken priority will be given to any respondent who are on the Register. Selection will be by the choice based banding criteria.

- Requesting nominations from the Homeless Persons Section or from the local authority waiting list in areas where a list is administered.

Where a further 'bidding' option is chosen, customers should be contacted as soon as possible after the original bidding has ended. The Administrator will forward the property details as appropriate, and will set a time and date from which bids can start (this time must allow for the details to be received by all customers, agencies etc). In this circumstance customers will be advised that all bids must be made to the Scheme Administrator. The Administrator will allow a period of two working days for bids. Bids will then be ordered on a first come first served basis and second reference checks made, as per the above procedure, and the appropriate housing staff notified of the bid results.

- 10.32 If a decision is made not to take any of the above options, or an option is followed but no bids are received, then the property should be re-advertised on the next cycle.

11 **Tenancy Offers and Start of Tenancy**

11.1 **Tenancy Offers – Initial Checks and Process**

- 11.11 Patch Housing staff should normally be able to access the bid shortlist for any property advertised within two working days of close of bidding.

- 11.12 Normally an offer must be made to the person at the top of the bid shortlist. Where there is a serious concern regarding any bids on the shortlist, this should be discussed with an Operations Manager. A discretionary decision can be taken not to make an offer if a judgement is made that granting the tenancy of a particular property might lead to serious management problems (eg: a potential for serious anti-social behaviour to occur because of the proximity to particular persons), or an offer would be inappropriate for other reasons.

If a decision is made not to make an offer, the person concerned and any Supporting Agency, must be advised in writing and a diary entry made against the persons application. The person must be given advice about any other properties, which might be considered inappropriate, and advised of their right to appeal against the decision.

- 11.13 If the bid shortlist includes persons under 18 or other persons with support needs, then the patch Housing staff must verify that

appropriate support is in place before any offer is made. If such support is not in place the Officer will need to discuss this with the applicant, and any appropriate agencies, and identify a suitable support package. A bid may be discounted if support issues cannot be resolved within a reasonable timescale, typically five working days. Further guidance is given in section 7.

11.14 Where support has been pre-arranged or is already in place, then the support agency must be contacted and advised that an offer is being made.

11.15 Prior to making an offer, the patch Housing staff must identify any communication needs and make any appropriate arrangements.

11.2 Tenancy Offers – Arranging Viewing and Pre-Offer Interview

11.21 Following any necessary checks, an offer to the selected person should be registered on the IBS Choice Based Lettings system. Guidance notes are available on the hyperlink for making offers and starting tenancies on the system. (Appendix 1)

11.22 When the offer has been registered on the IBS system the person should be contacted as quickly as possible, preferably by telephone or e-mail, to arrange confirmation of the application details and viewing of the property. Normally, and where there are no lengthy delays caused by pre-offer checks, the successful bidder should be contacted on the same day that the bid shortlist has been accessed.

At this stage the person must be advised that the offer is conditional on satisfactory confirmation of application details. If the person is a transfer applicant this will include a satisfactory repair inspection of their existing home. This inspection should form part of the pre-offer interview process.

11.23 If the applicant is not interested in the property, then this should be recorded as a refusal on the IBS system. The next person on the bid list should be contacted as soon as possible.

11.24 If the applicant cannot be contacted within two working days from accessing the bid shortlist, then the bid should be discounted and the next person on the list contacted. An entry should be made on the IBS system recording 'Offer Withdrawn' and a diary note made giving the reasons for the withdrawal.

11.25 When contacting the successful bidder arrangements should be made to interview the applicant and then view the property, within two working days. Where possible/feasible the meeting should take place at the applicants home. If this is not possible then the meeting should be in the office or at the property being viewed. If the meeting is off site, then two staff must attend.

If there are any outstanding support issues these should be discussed with the person at this stage (ie: when contacting to arrange the interview and viewing). The applicant must also be advised that they will need to provide the following information at the interview:

- Proof of ID (passport, driving licence, birth or marriage certificate, recent letter/bill from utility company, bank, local authority or government department).
- Proof of Residence (letter as above, or from a professional organisation).

The meeting and viewing should be confirmed in writing by generating the standard pre-allocation letter from the IBS system. Any Supporter Agencies should be advised of the interview and sent a copy of the pre-allocation letter.

11.26 The application interview is intended to verify the information on the Registration Form and ensure that no issues exist which might prevent a tenancy offer. The Officer conducting the interview should check that the persons circumstances and details remain essentially the same. If the person is an existing tenant then a repair inspection should be undertaken as part of the interview. When carrying out the inspection reference should be made to form TSA 4 where this was previously completed with the tenant.

A satisfactory interview will remain valid for three months unless the applicants circumstances change.

11.27 If the interview is unsatisfactory and further information is required, the person should be informed that the provisional offer is being withdrawn until further checks are carried out.

If on investigation the applicants details are substantially different from those on the Registration Form and this would detrimentally effect

either their banding or their suitability as a tenant or checks cannot be satisfactorily completed within a reasonable timescale (normally five working days) then the case is referred to an Operations Manager for a decision which may be:

- Removal of the offer due to lower need. The applicants banding would be lower and as a result they would have less priority than other persons who have bid.
- Removal of the offer (unsuitability). Information indicates that the applicant or members of their household would present a serious risk (eg: because of anti-social behaviour, criminal activity etc) to others, not identified from the original registration.
- Removal of the offer due to an unsatisfactory repair inspection. Where a significant level of repairs, which are the tenants responsibility, are identified. If the tenant is able to carry out necessary repairs within five working days then the offer can be kept open for this period.
- Removal of the offer due to being unable to obtain information and where the concerns are serious.
- Offer the property. Where although the persons need is lower it remains higher than other bidders.
- Offer the property. Where checks cannot be satisfactorily completed but it is deemed that the issue(s) identified is not sufficiently serious to remove the offer.

11.28 If it is the view that information originally given was false, then the offer may be withdrawn and consideration be given to cancelling the registration. Section 14.2 gives further guidance.

11.29 If the offer is withdrawn this must be input to the IBS system, as per the guidance notes.

11.3 Tenancy Offer – Viewings

11.31 If the outcome of the interview is satisfactory then the viewing should proceed. Viewings must be accompanied and two staff should attend. If the outgoing tenant has not left the property to be viewed, then agreement to view must be previously arranged ie: at the point that the interview and viewing date are set.

At the viewing, patch staff should ensure that the ' Assessment of Support Needs' Form is available to complete.

11.32 On the viewing the following information should be given:

- Outline tenancy details including the weekly rent and any services provided.
- Basic property details eg: heating system details, whether the property has a water meter, any special features etc.
- Any void repairs to be undertaken and any programmed planned works or improvements.
- The amount of any decoration allowance to be granted.

11.33 If the person wishes to accept the offer at the viewing then a start of tenancy date should be discussed and agreed at this point. This date should be set for as soon as reasonably possible and normally no later than the second Monday following viewing. If the person has to give notice they should be advised to do this immediately. Patch housing staff should contact the persons landlord to confirm the notice details.

The patch staff should also complete an 'Assessment of Support Needs' form at this point, and discuss any issues arising and take the documentation for proof of ID and proof of residence for copying.

A time and date for a tenancy 'Sign Up' meeting should be set.

11.34 If the person is unable to make a decision at the viewing, they should be advised that they have one working day to make a decision. If the person is vulnerable this may be extended to three working days.

If after the set period no decision has been received, the Officer should contact the person. If a decision cannot be reached, or the person cannot be contacted, then the offer should be withdrawn and the next person on the bid shortlist contacted. If the Officer believes that an exceptional circumstance exists then the decision may be extended by a short period (normally one working day). If a Supporter Agency is involved, contact should be maintained with the agency through this period.

11.35 If the offer is not accepted this must be entered to the IBS system as either 'Offer Declined' or 'Offer Withdrawn'.

11.4 Tenancy Offer – Offer Accepted/Pre-Sign Up Meeting

11.41 When an offer has been accepted patch housing staff must start a 'Sign Up Checklist' (form TSA2). The checklist details all the actions and information linked to starting a tenancy and must be completed in full.

11.42 If a date for the tenancy sign up meeting has not been set at the viewing, then this date should be arranged at the time of acceptance of the offer, or as soon as possible afterwards. This date must be before the start of tenancy date.

11.43 The offer must be updated on the IBS system by the patch Officer as per the guidance notes, and a full offer letter generated. The letter will confirm the date of the sign up meeting.

Providing a tenancy start date has been fixed the Offer should be progressed to 'let' status on the IBS system (ie: a tenancy created).

All documentation, including all registration information, must be held on the house file, from this point.

11.44 A Tenancy Pack should be set up to give to the tenant at the Sign Up meeting. The pack must include all the documents/information detailed on the Signing Up Checklist. All documentation must be prepared as necessary by the Officer dealing with the letting or a designated Admin Assistant.

The type of tenancy agreement included in the pack will depend on the persons previous situation, as follows:

- Twelve month Assured Shorthold (starter tenancy) for a new tenant.
- Full Assured tenancy for an Assured tenant transferring.
- Fair rent tenancy for a Fair rent tenant transferring

If a furnished tenancy is being provided the appropriate furnished version of the above agreement will be provided.

11.45 Where a joint tenancy is being created each joint tenant is required to

sign a separate joint tenancy agreement, which they retain. A single copy is placed on file. Transferring joint tenants must retain a joint tenancy. Joint applicants will usually sign a joint tenancy unless one tenant does not require a joint tenancy in which case written confirmation is required. Joint tenancies will be granted if:

- Applicants are married
- Applicants are living together as a couple
- Two or more people have originally applied to join the Choice based scheme at the same time. If both, or all are moving into the property, the customers should be granted a joint tenancy.

11.46 Where a particular communication need exists the documentation in the pack must be prepared in an appropriate format and/or language.

11.47 As soon as possible after acceptance of the offer, and prior to the Sign Up meeting, the Officer should deal with any outstanding issues eg: support, furnishings, outstanding repairs including the gas safety test. Repair issues should be dealt with as per the Void Management Section of the Repairs and Maintenance Procedures. Generally, the Officer should identify potential problems that might delay start of tenancy, and work to resolve these as quickly as possible.

11.5 Tenancy Sign Up

11.51 The Tenancy Sign Up meeting should, where possible, take place at the tenants new home. Any keyworker providing support to the tenant should be asked to attend the meeting. If the property is at a scheme with a Tenant Support Worker (TSW), the TSW should also attend.

11.52 Where communication needs have been identified appropriate arrangements should be put in place (eg: an interpreter, signer etc).

11.53 Patch staff doing the sign up should take a complete Tenancy Pack to the meeting. The Tenancy Agreement should be completed in full, with two copies if a sole tenant, three if a joint tenancy. If a Gas Safety Certificate is not available then the tenant will not be able to move into the property until the certificate is provided.

11.54 The meeting should cover all the points listed on the Signing Up Checklist (TSA 2) including:

- Summarising the main points of the tenancy (eg rent payments, arrears, repairs, anti-social behaviour, and complaints).
- Completing key forms (Housing Benefit, Core Form, Assessment of Support Needs if not completed at viewing).
- Explaining the heating system and any other property equipment.
- Providing details of the lettable standard and void repairs ordered.
- Giving details of any services provided to the property.
- Giving details of any local residents groups.
- Agreeing a date for the 'Follow Up' visit. This must be within three months of start of tenancy.
- All copies of the Tenancy Agreement must be signed by the tenant (both tenants if a joint tenancy) and the Officer.

11.55 Any outstanding issues should be discussed. Where support is being provided but is not immediately available, interim arrangements should be agreed (visits by housing staff etc).

11.56 Providing a Gas Safety Certificate has been obtained and the house is in a safe condition, the tenant should be given the property keys. Keys may be provided earlier if the property is in a suitable condition and a Gas Safety Certificate has been received).

11.6 Post Tenancy Sign Up

11.61 Following the sign up meeting all outstanding actions should be completed. The Signing Up Checklist must be checked and any outstanding items dealt with before start of tenancy.

11.62 The date for the Tenancy Follow Up visit should be logged in the diary of the patch Officer with a note to confirm the appointment in writing at least 7 days before the visit.

11.63 The signed Tenancy Agreement, completed Signing Up Checklist, proof of identity and residence, and all other Registration documentation should be placed on the house file. A copy of the Signing Up Checklist should be given to the person(s) maintaining the office void list and weekly gross rental sheets, prior to the start of tenancy date.

12 **Reviews & Appeals**

12.1 Reviews

12.11 If customers are unhappy with a decision they can request a review of:

- The decisions relating to the choice based scheme including the date of registration, referrals, and priority awarded, bid acceptance, offer of accommodation etc.
- Exclusions from the scheme, or restrictions applied, based on anti-social behaviour, rent arrears or other factors.
- Registration cancellation decision.
- Decisions to refuse an extension of priority status.

12.12 Requests for a review can be made verbally, in writing or via e-mail. Such requests must be made within 21 days of the date from which the customer was notified of the decision. Supporter agencies, or other persons on behalf of the customer can make requests for a review.

12.13 Any person within the housing management teams can receive and take details of the review request. Initially the request should be logged to the service user feedback file and then details forwarded to an appropriate Housing Officer (not the Officer who made the decision for which the review has been requested).

12.14 On receipt of the review request the Officer will undertake a review taking account of relevant legislative requirements, and codes of guidance. Customers, and any Supporter agency or third party involved with the request, will be offered the opportunity to meet to discuss the matter. The offer of a meeting should be made within three working days of the request being made and any agreed meeting should take place within 10 working days of the request.

12.15 The reviewing Officer will notify the customer of their decision within 15 working days of the request for a review (this time may be extended by agreement with the customer). Written notification will be given, with a copy letter to any involved Supporter agencies or third parties. If a letter is not appropriate then the customer must be informed of the decision verbally and a file note made confirming details of the conversation.

12.16 A review may have one of three outcomes:

- Original decision upheld: the letter will give the reasons supporting the review decision. There is no right to request a further review of the decision.
- Original decision rejected: the letter will explain what action will be taken as a result and the reasons for doing so.
- The customer provides the reviewing Officer with new information. The review will end and new enquiries will be made and a new decision reached. In such cases customers will be advised of their right to request a review of the new decision.
- The Officer must place copies of all correspondence relating to the review, including file notes on the Registration file. The Officer must also make a diary note on the IBS system noting the review process and the final outcome.
- Unless the review relates to exclusion, or cancellation of a registration, then the customer may continue to participate within the scheme during the period of the review. If the review relates to priority status then the customer can still participate but with a lower banding.

12.2 Appeals

12.21 If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the review they can make an appeal against the decision. An appeal must be made within 15 working days of notification of the review decision and can be made in writing, verbally or by e-mail.

12.22 The local Operations Manager will consider appeals in the first instance. If the appeal is received verbally then the member of staff in first contact with the customer should complete a Complaint Form and forward this to the Manager. If the appeal is in writing, or via e-mail, then this should be forwarded directly to the Manager.

- 12.23 On receipt of an appeal the Operations Manager will arrange a meeting with the customer within 5 working days. If the customer is being supported by another agency or person, then they will be informed that a third person may attend the meeting.
- 12.24 Following the meeting the Manager will inform the customer and any third party, of their decision in writing, or verbally if more appropriate, within 5 working days of the meeting. If further investigation is required then, with the customer's agreement, this period may be extended.
- 12.25 If the customer is not satisfied with the decision made by the Manager and makes a further appeal, the Operations Director considers this second appeal. The same process and timescales apply, as above.
- 12.26 The Operations Directors decision will be the final decision within the appeals process. If the customer is not satisfied with the final decision then they can make a complaint via Impacts Complaint Procedure. The complaint would go to stage 4 of this procedure to be considered by a panel comprising two Committee Members and the Chief Executive.
- 12.27 Details of all appeals must be recorded on the Lettings Appeals File held by each Operations Manager. The appeal must be logged to the Appeals Log Sheet held on the file and all paperwork relating to the appeal kept on file. A written note of the appeal must also be placed on the Customers Registration File. A computerised diary note must also be made by the Operations Manager/Operations Director against the Customers Registration, noting the appeal and recording the outcome at each stage.

13 **Band 1 Reviews**

- 13.1 It is the Scheme Administrators responsibility to monitor all Band 1 applicants' timescales and to trigger all six month reviews due. On an ongoing basis the Administrator will identify Band 1 applicants approaching the end of the six month period and forward details to the appropriate Housing Officer, between two and four weeks before the expiry of the period. . The details will include:
- The number of suitable properties on which the applicant could have made bids
 - The applicants bid history for suitable properties.

- Any offers made to the applicant and refused.

13.11 When undertaking a review of Band 1 status the Housing Officer will consider the following information in making a decision:

- Have there been any suitable properties advertised that would have met the persons needs?
- If so, have they bid for them? If they have bid why has this not resulted in rehousing (ie: why have bids been unsuccessful, or if bids have been successful, why have offers been refused).
- Has appropriate support and help been given in accessing the scheme.
- Do the person's circumstances remain the same or has the need for priority gone.

Generally unless good reason has been accepted for not bidding or refusing an offer, than a failure to bid on two or more properties, or a refusal of an offer, will lead to loss of band 1 status.

13.12 Having considered the above, the Officer will discuss the matter with the applicant, and where applicable, with any of the following:

- The Homeless Persons Section if the applicant has homeless status.
- The persons Keyworker/Support Worker if the applicant is seeking to move on from Supported Housing, or is a young person leaving care.
- Any Supporter Agency involved with the person.

13.13 The Housing Officer should make a decision at least one week prior to the end of the six month period. If the applicant is homeless the final decision must be agreed with the Homeless Persons Section.

The Officer may:

- Award priority status for a further six month; or
- Remove the priority status and place the applicant in Band 2; or
- Offer the next available and suitable property directly to the applicant. If this offer is refused, priority banding is removed and the applicant placed in Band 2.

Examples of circumstances where the Housing Officer will make a final offer are:

- To end a duty toward a homeless applicant who is acting unreasonably by refusing to make reasonable bids, or refusing offers; or
- Where it is felt that an applicant is at particular risk, for example they are suffering domestic abuse or harassment and are failing to make reasonable bids.

13.14 The Housing Officer must send a letter to the applicant and to any appropriate agencies (Homeless Persons Section, Supported Housing Keyworkers, Supporter Agencies etc), confirming the decision and the reasons behind it. The letter must detail the applicants right of appeal against the decision. The Officer must amend the applicant's details on the IBS system, as appropriate, ie: extending the Band 1 status, or cancelling and placing the applicant in Band 2.

13.15 If following a review an applicant has retained their Band 1 status and a further six month period elapses without the applicant being rehoused, then a second review is undertaken by the Housing Officer, as per the procedure for the first review. If the outcome of this review is that a further extension is awarded, the extension is only given for a three month period. If after this time the applicant has not been rehoused then no further extensions are given and the applicant will either lose the priority status, or be made one final direct offer

14. **Registration Reviews**

14.1 The Deputy Scheme Administrator is responsible for co-ordinating the annual review process. The Administrator will generate letters from the IBS system to be sent to all applicants who have been registered for six months or more. Details on how to generate a re-registration from IBS are given in the guidance notes.

14.11 Where communication is required in a particular format the Administrator will ensure that this format is used. If the customer was supported in making their original application then a copy of the Re-registration letter must be sent to the appropriate person within the Supporter Agency.

14.12 The Administrator should check responses to the Re-registration letter. Where no changes of circumstances, or other issues are indicated, then the Administrator should input the re-registration to the IBS

system. All response paperwork should then be forwarded to the Housing Assistant (Admin) in the appropriate team (the team holding the original registration paperwork), to file on the office registration file.

14.13 Where the response advises of a change in circumstances the Deputy Scheme Administrator should forward the letter to the appropriate Housing Officer, to check. The Housing Officer must determine whether the change will affect the applicant's banding/priority. If priority is affected then the Housing Officer should make any necessary verification checks (eg: home visit, letter supporting the change etc).

14.14 On making a decision the Housing Officer must send a letter to the customer confirming the outcome of the change of circumstances notification. Where the customer banding is affected the letter must confirm the new banding. If the customer is placed in the highest band (Band 1), they must be informed of the six months bidding period and the date from which priority is awarded. The letter must be sent in the appropriate format and a copy sent to any Supporter Agencies.

On completion of the assessment the Housing Officer should pass all relevant paperwork, including a copy of the decision letter, to the team Housing Assistant (Admin) to input to the IBS system, as appropriate. All paperwork should be filed on the Office Registration File.

14.15 If a customer does not reply to the Re-registration letter within one calendar month the Deputy Scheme Administrator should cancel the registration on the IBS system. The Administrator should send a letter to the customer confirming the cancellation – if the customer has received support with their registration/participation in the scheme, then a copy of the letter must be sent to the Support agency/person.

14.16 Cancelled registrations should be kept on the Registration file for one calendar month after the date of cancellation. If, after this time no request has been received to re-instate the registration, then the Deputy Scheme Administrator should instruct the housing Assistant (Admin) in the appropriate team to destroy the registration documentation.

14.17 If a customer requests a cancelled registration to be re-instated, the request should be considered by the Deputy Scheme Administrator in discussion with the Designated Housing Officer for the team in which the administrator is based. Normally, re-instatement should be allowed if the request is received within one month of the date of cancellation. The original date of registration should continue to apply.

Where a request for re-instatement is received after this period, then the Deputy Scheme Administrator should consider the reasons given. If re-instatement is agreed but the original registration paperwork has been destroyed, the customer will need to complete a new Registration form, but will keep their original registration date.

If the re-instatement request is refused, then the customer will need to make a new application. If the application is accepted then a new date of registration is set.

- 14.18 All decisions on re-instatement requests must be confirmed in writing by the Deputy Scheme Administrator. Copies of letters must be sent to any Support agencies/persons.

The Deputy Scheme Administrator should hold all correspondence relating to re-instatement requests on a separate file, until a decision has been made. If the re-instatement is agreed the correspondence should be forwarded, by the Administrator to the Housing Assistant (Admin) in the appropriate team for filing on the Registration file. If the request is refused the correspondence should be held on file for one month after a decision, and then destroyed.

14.2 Cancellation of Registrations

- 14.21 Registrations are no longer valid if:

- Customers accept a new Impact tenancy as a sole or joint tenant.
- Customers become a joint tenant with an existing Impact tenant.
- Customers are assigned an Impact tenancy.
- Customers accept a home under the Mutual Exchange Scheme.
- Customers buy an Impact property under the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire schemes.

Where any of the above applies a customer will not be able to re-register on the scheme for a period of six months, unless an exceptional circumstance exists. Any exceptional circumstances must be discussed with the Operations Manager and approval to allow an application to the Housing register, sought from the chair of the Residents Committee.

14.22 Applications will be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- The registration is no longer valid (see above points).
- If a customer wants to cancel the registration.
- If customers do not respond to a review letter (see 'Registration Reviews'), or other correspondence.
- If customers leave the country and are subsequently prevented from being registered because of the restrictions within the Asylum and Immigration Act.
- If customers have supplied false or incomplete information connected with their registration, or have failed to advise of a significant change in their circumstances e.g. a change of address.

14.23 During any period that an investigation is being carried out to inform a possible cancellation decision, the registration is regarded as suspended and the customer cannot bid for a property. If an investigation is required prior to a decision, the Housing Officer must send a letter to the customer and any supporter agency advising that the registration is suspended, pending a decision. A diary note must be made of this against the customer's registration on the IBS system and a copy of the note held on the Registration file.

14.24 The decision to cancel a registration should be made by the Designated Housing Officer for the team in which the registration paperwork is held. The Housing Officer should generate and complete the standard cancellation letter and send this to the customer, and where appropriate to any supporting agency. Details of the cancellation, including a copy of the Cancellation letter should then be passed to the Housing Assistant (Admin) in the team to cancel the registration on the I.B.S. system, including making a diary note giving the cancellation reason.

14.25 The Housing Assistant (Admin) should also place a copy of the cancellation letter on the Registration file. The hard copy of the registration and associated paperwork should be kept for one calendar month after the cancellation letter has been sent. After this period the registration documentation should be destroyed, unless an appeal is being made against the cancellation decision.

- 14.26 Where an appeal is made, then the registration remains cancelled during the period of the appeal. If the outcome of the appeal is that the registration should be re-instated the Housing Assistant (Admin) should be informed and should re-open the registration on the I.B.S. system. The designated Housing Officer should send a letter to the customer confirming the re-instatement and the original registration date. All paperwork should be passed to the Housing Assistant
- 14.27 If an appeal is unsuccessful the registration documentation should be held for a period of one calendar month from the date of the final decision, and then destroyed by the Housing Assistant (Admin).

15 **Monitoring of Scheme and Report Production**

- 15.1 The Scheme Administrator working with the Deputy Administrator has responsibility for the production of reports, which monitor outcomes against targets set, and the overall effectiveness of the scheme in achieving policy objectives.
- 15.11 Each quarter the Scheme Administrator will produce reports providing information on the Register, bids and lettings. The following information will be provided:

Registration Report

- The total number of customers on the register.
- New registrations in the year to date.
- The number of cancelled registrations in the year to date.
- The number of refused applications in the year to date.
- The refusal reasons.
- A breakdown of the register by ethnic origin.
- The number of ethnic minority registrations as a % of total new registrations in the year to date.
- The number of disabled persons on the register.
- The number of wheelchair users on the register.
- The number of disabled persons registered as a % of total new registrations in the year to date.

- The number of statutory homeless people on the register.
- The number of statutory homeless people registered as a % of new registrations in the year to date.
- The number of supported housing residents on the register.
- The number of supported housing residents registered as a % of new registrations in the year to date.
- Numbers on the register split by band.
- The number of transfer applicants on the register.

Bid Report

- Total number of bids received in the year to date.
- The average number of bids per property in the year to date.
- The number of properties advertised for which no bids were received in the year to date (addresses given).
- The numbers of properties for which 3 or less bids were received in the year to date (addresses given).
- The number of bids by ethnic minority customers in the year to date.
- The number of bids by disabled persons in the year to date.
- The number of customers making:
 - no bids
 - less than 3 bids.
 in the previous 6 months.

Lettings Report

- Total number of lettings made in the year to date.
- The number of CBL lets as a % of total lets in the year to date.

- The number of mutual exchanges, mobility moves and management lets as a % of total lets, in the year to date.
- The number of lettings broken down by band in the year to date.
- Breakdown of lettings by ethnic origin in the year to date.
- The number of lettings to disabled persons excluding wheelchair users in the year to date.
- The number of lettings to wheelchair users in the year to date.
- The number of lettings as a % of total lettings to statutory homeless persons.
- The number of lettings as a % of total lettings to customers moving on from Impact Supported Housing schemes, in the year to date.
- The number of lettings as a % of total lettings to customers moving on from all Supported Housing schemes.
- The number of lettings as a % of total lettings to transfer applicants.
- The total number of tenancy offers made in the year to date.
- The total number of refusals in the year to date including addresses.

15.12 The report will be produced within three weeks of the end of each quarter. Reports will be created for the full organisation and for each local authority area.

15.13 The Scheme Administrator will forward the full organisation report and the appropriate local authority reports to each designated Housing Officer, within the above timescale (ie: within three weeks of the end of the reporting quarter). Housing Officers will disseminate the reports to other members of the team as appropriate. The information will be used to monitor progress against lettings targets, identify any issues requiring consideration/action and to complete returns/reports for other agencies (eg: local authorities).

15.14 The Scheme Administrator will monitor the number of bids being made

by individual customers on an ongoing basis. If particular customers are not bidding (ie: no bids are made within a six month period) or are making lots of unsuccessful bids, then the Administrator will notify the appropriate designated Housing Officer. The Housing Officer should contact the customer to discuss the matter and identify any issues relating to accessing the scheme or unrealistic expectations.

16 **Partnership Arrangements**

- 16.1 The Scheme Administrator will work to build and maintain the network of participating statutory and voluntary agencies, and community groups. The Administrator will be responsible for maintaining an up to date list of agencies and groups, including contact names and numbers, and ensuring that the list is accessible to all housing teams.
- 16.11 The Administrator will be the first point of contact for agencies and groups when dealing with general issues around the scheme. The Administrator will also request feedback from these agencies and groups each April using the standard feedback form (see **appendix ?**). Following receipt of feedback the Administrator will co-ordinate a meeting with all designated Housing Officers and Operations Managers to review the information received.
- 16.12 Where possible the Administrator, will set up negotiated agreements with each agency/group. These agreements will govern advertising arrangements, and roles with assisting people through the registration and bidding process. Each agency/group will be provided with general information about the scheme including contact details for Impact.

17 **Promotion of the Scheme**

- 17.1 Beyond the regular advertising of properties the Scheme Administrator will be responsible for general promotion of the Choice based Scheme. A key objective is to ensure that awareness of the scheme, particularly amongst harder to reach groups, is maximised.

17.11 Key tasks co-ordinated by the Administrator will include:

- General Advertisements/features in the local press and other appropriate publications, at least every six months.

- Organising re-prints of the scheme leaflet and regular distribution to partner agencies and groups, and other agreed venues.
- Updating the scheme leaflet.
- Updating the Website in liaison with I.T. staff.
- Liaising with staff with key responsibility for equality and diversity issues with regard to effective promotion to vulnerable and harder to reach groups.

18 **Lettings outside of the Choice Based Lettings System**

18.11 It is aimed to maximise the number of lettings made through the Choice Based Scheme. However, there will be certain circumstances when empty properties will not be advertised in the normal way.

18.12 Examples when this may happen include:

- Where nomination agreements are in place and vacancies are notified to the local authority, or their agent, to nominate persons from their waiting list. Currently nomination arrangements are in place for the Eden and South Lakeland District areas.
- Where exceptional housing management reasons such as fire, flood or other major incident exist.
- Where customers need to move because of a serious risk of violence towards them.
- Where there is disrepair to an Impact home and it is necessary to move a person temporarily to carry out works.
- Where the usage of a home is being re-designated eg. moving from general needs to supported accommodation.
- Where there is a particularly high risk in re-housing a person e.g. a Section One offender. For such persons separate referral arrangements will operate.
- Witness protection.
- Releasing a high demand home for re-let in circumstances where a home is being under-occupied.

- Where minimum target figures for lettings to particular groups are not being achieved.
- To assist a customer who has the right to succession but can not be granted a tenancy in their current home.
- To assist a customer who has the right to be assigned a tenancy but cannot be granted a tenancy in their current home.
- Where unusual circumstances exist which cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the Choice Based Scheme.

18.22 Any lettings outside of the Choice Based scheme, other than nominations must be agreed by an Operations Manager. Such lettings must be reported to the Scheme Administrator to record on the central spreadsheet.

18.23 Separate procedures will apply for administering lettings out with the Choice Based scheme including:

- Nominations
- Direct referrals
- Successions
- Assignments
- Mutual Exchanges