

North Norfolk Housing Register Policy

Applying to join the Housing Register

To be considered for affordable housing in North Norfolk an applicant must be registered on the North Norfolk Housing Register.

An application form can be obtained from the following:

- the Council's website – www.north-norfolk.gov.uk
- telephone– 01263 516375
- the Council's office in Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN

Help will be provided to applicants in completing the Housing Register application form where required.

To ensure that our services are accessible to all, documents and forms prepared by the Council can be made available on request in large print, Braille, audio cassette or in a different language.

Who cannot join the Housing Register

A person who is ineligible because of their immigration status cannot be allocated a tenancy and therefore will not be accepted on to the Housing Register. This is a complex area and subject to change and therefore this will be explained in detail to an applicant who has been deemed to be ineligible.

The Council reserves the right not to register (disqualify) an applicant where they or a member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be tenants because of their unacceptable behaviour, this could include anti-social behaviour or significant

rent arrears. The applicant can re-apply to join the Housing Register if they can show that their circumstances or behaviour have changed.

Applicants will be notified if the Council believes that they are ineligible or should be refused entry on to the Housing Register and reasons will be provided.

Applicants will be notified of their right to request a review of the decision made by the Council.

Assessment of applications

All eligible applicants will be assessed and placed in one of the bands as detailed in the Choice Based Lettings Policy. The Council will aim to assess all applications within 7 days although this may not be achieved when unusually large numbers of new applications are received or when large numbers of existing applications are being re-assessed i.e. following a significant change in the Choice Based Lettings or Housing Register Policy.

A home visit may be made to an applicant where considered appropriate i.e. to verify the housing circumstances or to clarify any issues.

The applicant will be notified that their name and personal details provided have been entered on to the Housing Register along with the level of priority they have been given i.e. the Band in which they have been placed. They will also be notified of their relevant date which is either the date they were issued with an Emergency Card or joined Band 1 and 2 or the date their application was received by the Council for Bands 3, 4 and 5.

Applicants will be advised of the availability of affordable housing in the areas of their choice and of the property type of their choice along with the turnover of this accommodation and the number of applicants in each Band. This information will provide the applicant with an assessment of their likelihood of being offered

affordable housing and how long it is likely to be before such accommodation becomes available.

Applicants will be advised of their right to request a review of the assessment and the time within which the request for a review must be made.

Applicants will be required to notify the Council of any change in their household circumstances which might affect their priority on the Housing Register and will be required to provide the Council with any information reasonably requested related to their application and to allow Council officers or officers from a prospective landlord to visit them at home to assess and verify the circumstances of the household.

An application may be held pending whilst supporting documentation is awaited or re-assessed following a change in circumstances. The length of time any application is held pending will be minimised.

Applicants issued the Emergency Card or being placed in the Band 1 or 2 will be asked to provide documentation in support of their application at that point including for all household members proof of:

- identity/status
- residency
- income/capital

Other supporting documentation will be requested as appropriate.

Applicants in Bands 3, 4 and 5 will be required to provide supporting documentation when there is a reasonable likelihood of being nominated.

If from the information provided on the Housing Register application the Council believes that an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness,

the applicant will be asked if they would like to be formally assessed under the homelessness legislation. The Council will also provide advice on other suitable housing options.

Removal from the Housing Register

An applicant will be removed from the Housing Register in the following circumstances:

- they are re-housed into permanent accommodation by a housing association
- they fail to provide information reasonably requested in relation to their application within 28 days or other agreed period
- they do not respond to a request to re-register (normally requested on an annual basis)
- they move and fail to complete a new application form within 28 days or other agreed period of being requested to do so
- the eligibility criteria for the Housing Register changes and the applicant no longer meets the criteria
- the applicant or a member of their household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant
- the applicant requests removal from the Housing Register.

In all cases of removal from the Housing Register the applicant will be notified of the Council's decision and the reasons for it. Applicants will also be advised of their right to request a review of the decision and the time within which the request for a review must be made.

Requests for review of a decision

All requests for reviews of a decision must be made within 21 days of receipt of the notification of the decision and should be made in writing. The request will be considered by the Strategic Housing Manager and all decisions will be final.

An applicant who is not satisfied with a decision made following the request for a review can take the matter further under the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy.

An applicant will be advised of their right to seek a Judicial Review of the Council's decision where relevant and will be advised to seek independent advice from Shelter or a solicitor.

Offences related to information given or withheld by applicants

It is a criminal offence for anyone seeking assistance from a housing authority to:

- (a) knowingly or recklessly give false information; or
- (b) knowingly withhold information which the housing authority has reasonably required the applicant to give.

A person guilty of an offence is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000).

It is for the housing authority to determine when these provisions apply and when to institute criminal proceedings. The circumstances in which an offence is committed could include:

- (a) false information given on an application form for affordable housing;
- (b) false information given in response to subsequent review letters or other updating mechanisms; or
- (c) false information given or submitted by applicants during the proceedings of a review.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Housing Act 1996, s146) enables a housing authority to seek possession of a tenancy which they have granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

Access to information

An applicant is entitled to see the entry on the Housing Register relating to them and receive a copy of the details held free of charge. An applicant must also be notified of any change to their entry on the Housing Register.

All information held on the Housing Register is confidential and it will only be used for the purposes of allocating affordable housing owned and managed by housing associations in North Norfolk. It will also be used to provide information on levels of housing need across the district, but any information used in this way will be anonymous. The Housing Register may also be used for identifying prospective tenants for other housing opportunities including in the private rented sector but only with the express permission of the individual applicant.

The Choice Based Lettings Policy and Housing Register Policy is available on the Council's website; www.north-norfolk.gov.uk. Printed copies will be made available on request.

Equality and Diversity

The Council is committed to ensuring equality and the promotion of diversity and will seek to ensure that applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnic origin, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability. The Housing Register Policy is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and regular monitoring will be undertaken to ensure its fair implementation.

Monitoring of the policy

The Council will undertake regular monitoring of the Housing Register Policy and the information gathered will inform an annual review of the administration of the Housing Register. This monitoring will ensure that the Housing Register always operates proportionately in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Council will consult with its housing association partners and other stakeholders on any proposed changes to the administration of the Housing Register and will notify applicants on the Housing Register of any significant changes to the Housing Register Policy.

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