

1) Who should be on the Housing Register?

Currently anyone aged over 18 can register on Homeseach regardless of whether they have a need for social housing, their income or whether they have a local connection with the area. Consequently we now have nearly 12,000 households on the register, with approximately 600 homes becoming available every year.

Option	Reason For	Reason Against	Impact	Initial Officer Recommendation
1.1 Exclude people who do not have an agreed need to live in Bath & North East Somerset?	<p>To ensure that local social housing is targeted to those households who need to live in Bath & North East Somerset. Currently around 2% of properties are secured by households with no local need.</p> <p>To reduce the size of the register. Would reduce list by around 17%.</p> <p>Prevent giving false expectations</p>	Reduces national social mobility.	Increased workload associated with dealing with challenges, however, this will be offset by reduced administration associated with smaller list.	Recommend that scheme is restricted to households who have an agreed need to live in Bath & North East Somerset. This includes: those living in the district; working in the district or who have offer of employment; have care or carer requirements in the district; or meet the armed Forces criteria.
1.2 Exclude people with substantial assets/income from the Housing Register? For example Barnet use median earnings minus 10% which equates to a maximum income of £32,580 or £50,000	To ensure social housing is targeted to those who are unable to buy their own home or afford to rent privately.	<p>Could create less mixed and hence sustainable communities.</p> <p>Could create significant administrative burden depending upon how</p>	Impact dependent upon income threshold set and system design e.g. checked at application or allocation stage. Our limited research suggests that 90% of households on	Agree to implement an income/savings cap. More work required to determine levels & in particular the relationship with shared ownership income levels requirements, given that being on Homeseach is a requirement of

savings.		implemented. Incomes and assets are prone to change.	the Register earn less than £30,000 or are in receipt of benefit.	access to shared ownership.
1.3 Exclude home owners from the Homesearch register?	In theory households who own their own home can access the private sector.	For older people and people in financial hardship continued home ownership may not be a viable option.	Whilst the numbers of homeowners on the Register are low the resource implications in assessing whether they are in financial hardship are significant.	Restrict home-owner access to older people seeking sheltered housing or home owners facing severe financial hardship.
1.4 Exclude social housing tenants from the register who have no social or medical reason to move?	Removing social housing tenants would significantly reduce the size of the register. Social housing tenants wanting to move can do so through mutual exchange or transfer.	Would create two or more allocation systems. Arguably social housing tenants would be at a disadvantage. Registered providers have indicated that they would like tenants seeking transfers to be re-housed through our register.	Would reduce workload, though significant numbers of tenants would be affected. Significant risk of customer confusion.	Recommend that social housing tenants remain on register.
1.5 Allow vulnerable people who are 'friends' to apply to Homesearch as a joint household to support each other?	To support vulnerable households such as those with learning difficulties or mental health problems to live together in shared households.	None, though could create additional management issues for the RPs.	Low impact with only very low numbers expected to meet the agreed criteria.	Recommend to agree change with eligibility criteria to be developed.

(Currently friends cannot make a joint application).				
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2) Who should be given priority?				
People with a higher priority are more likely to be successfully housed. The law states that certain categories of people must be given priority; this is referred to as reasonable or additional preference.				
Option	Reason For	Reason Against	Impact	Initial Officer Recommendation
2.1 Give priority to social tenants who are under occupying?	<p>More effective use of limited housing stock, freeing up larger properties.</p> <p>Help reduce impact of proposed benefit changes which can financially penalise under occupation.</p>	None.	Assist in reducing overcrowding and with limited effect on resources.	Recommend to agree change, subject to the vacated properties being recycled through Homesearch.
2.2 Give preference to people who make a contribution to the community? For example being in work, training or undertaking voluntary work.	Reward and encourage a positive contribution to society.	Difficult to fairly assess as some households are genuinely unable to contribute. These would need to be “teased out” which is resource intensive, open to challenge and fraught with difficulties.	Potentially very high political and resource impact.	This is a new concept and not recommended for change at this point in time. However, officers are proposing to monitor the success, or otherwise, of any such criteria introduced by other Councils.

<p>2.3 Introduce three bands of priority, these being:</p> <p>High – for those households who meet the statutory reasonable preference criteria.</p> <p>Medium – for those households who have a NEED for social housing, such as, those under-occupying, are in supported housing schemes, at risk of becoming homeless or who have a social or medical need to move that does not meet the reasonable preference criteria.</p> <p>Low – all other qualifying households that do not meet the reasonable preference criteria or have a need to move. In effect this is a DESIRE to move band.</p>	<p>Would meet legislative requirements whilst maintaining a simple system that clearly distinguishes between those in housing need and those who have a desire to move.</p> <p>Helps create mixed and balanced communities. This is strongly supported by the RPs.</p> <p>Helps with the marketing of low demand properties.</p>	<p>Would affect a significant number of existing households.</p>	<p>High initial resource impact, though in the long run no significant changes.</p> <p>Combined with the changes proposed in section1, and following a data cleanse it is likely to result in a list of between 5,000 to 8,000 households.</p>	<p>Recommend change.</p>
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3) How should we advertise Homesearch properties?

Properties are advertised weekly on the Homesearch website. Properties are allocated through a Choice Based Lettings system, where applicants express an interest in properties that meet their needs.

Option	Reason For	Reason Against	Impact	Initial Officer Recommendation
3.1 Some RPs, who retain 25% of stock for use as	Will result in a single route for people seeking	None.	Additional financial impact associated with increased	Recommend change on the basis that the additional costs

transfers, have requested that we advertise this additional stock through Homesearch.	social housing, thus creating a single and transparent process.		work load.	can be mitigated against through discussion with the RPs.
3.2 Advertise sheltered properties in line with the age range of the individual RPs age policy, rather than a blanket policy of 60+	Will open up sheltered accommodation to a wider range of households.	None	Limited workload impact.	Investigate further and agree change if there are no adverse implications to Supporting People funding. Give registered providers some flexibility in the Homesearch Policy to specify a minimum age for people wanting sheltered properties.

4) What size property should people be entitled to?

When people apply to the Homesearch Register there are advised what size property they are able to bid for.

Option	Reason For	Reason Against	Impact	Initial Officer Recommendation
4.1 Allow a limited number of properties to be under occupied in rural areas.	In some villages there are no properties of a certain size, for example there are no 2 bedroom properties in Farrington Gurney or Farmborough. Camerton and Tunley has only two 2 bedroom properties, but has forty seven 3 bedroom properties.	Under occupying rural properties could disadvantage people in housing need who require that sized home. Rural connection policy can be viewed as unfair. This could exasperate the issue.	Low resource impact.	Recommend to agree.

	Will therefore help prevent households from rural communities having to move away.			
4.2 Should we change the age from 8 to 10 when a child will be eligible for their own bedroom?	<p>Amending the age for a child to qualify for an additional bedroom will bring Homesearch in line with the Local Housing Allowance, the 1985 Housing Act and our neighbouring authorities.</p> <p>Reduce pressure for 3 bed properties.</p>	Households will need to share a smaller home for longer and will feel they have been disadvantaged by the change.	Low resource impact, though the change could be considered unpopular. It is likely to affect between 500-800 households.	Recommend to agree change.
4.3 Should we allocate a larger property to prospective adopters and foster carers to allow space for a child?	To encourage and assist the placement of vulnerable children.	Property could be under occupied if the person is unsuccessful with adopting a child or changes their mind about adopting.	Low resource impact.	Recommend to agree change. However, will need to work with Children Services to produce a working policy that assists genuine carers whilst preventing potential misuse or abuse of the system.