



Housing Applications 2018/2019

FINAL REPORT

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1) Executive Summary

i) Introduction

This audit was carried out as part of the agreed audit plan for 2018/19.

Audit testing has been carried out on the following objectives to ensure that:

- Procedures for being accepted onto the Housing Register are being complied with;
- Reviews are carried out where requested;
- Inactive applicants are removed from the register.

ii) Overall audit opinion

The overall audit opinion is based solely on testing carried out and discussions held during the course of the audit.

	Levels	Description/Examples
	No Assurance	Major individual issues identified or collectively a number of issues raised which could significantly impact the overall objectives of the activity that was subject to the Audit
	Limited Assurance	Control weaknesses or risks were identified which pose a more significant risk to the Authority
	Reasonable Assurance	Control weaknesses or risks were identified but overall the activities do not pose significant risks to the Authority
→	Assurance	No issues or minor improvements noted within the audit but based on the testing conducted, assurance can be placed that the activity is of low risk to the Authority

iii) Summary of findings

Objective 1: The criteria within the Allocations Policy are being applied correctly – Assurance

A copy of the most up-to-date Housing Allocation Scheme procedure was obtained dated November 2018. A review of this confirmed that it clearly sets out the criteria that applicants must meet to be accepted onto the register and the banding structure. The key criteria are that the applicant can demonstrate a local connection to Chichester has income below set thresholds, has a medical condition or disability that their accommodation impacts on, does not have significant housing related debts which are not being paid off, and has not been involved in anti-social behaviour in the past 5 years.

Applications for the Housing Register are received electronically in the main. Information contained within all new applications is reviewed and validated by the Business Support Officers. The system sets all new applications to 'Band D – No Housing Need'.

Between the 1/4/2018 and 15/2/2019 662 applications were accepted onto the Housing Register. A sample of 25 live applications was tested. It was found that

- For 24 out of 25 a local connection had been established either through CT records, HB records, employment records or other evidence. For the 1 case with no local connection, the applicant had been accepted onto the register due to the fact that CDC owed the applicant a full housing duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Therefore the applicant was able to be accepted onto the register as per Appendix C of the policy.
- In one instance the applicant's income exceeded the 2 bed Local Housing Allowance by £10,000. However, the applicant was authorised to be accepted onto the Register by the Divisional Services Manager in order to release a 4 bed room property in Midhurst for which there is a real need.
- The evidence on file supported the banding awarded for all 25 cases.

A sample of 25 rejected applications was also tested. In 7 cases there was no local connection and in 5 cases the income exceeded the Local Housing Allowance for the assessed bedroom need. This provides evidence that applicants are rejected where they do not meet the criteria.

Since April 2018 there have been 24 applications where the applicants' banding was based on medical need. A sample of 5 was tested and medical evidence was found on file for all cases.

Objective 2: Reviews are carried out where requested – Assurance

From the 1st April 2018 there have been 30 informal reviews carried out. A sample of 10 of these was tested. The evidence provided to support any agreed re-banding was seen on file and was in line with the policy. All applicants had been informed of the outcome of their review request and the appeal process should their request not have been successful.

The Homemove Officer provided case file reference numbers for all recent formal reviews that have been undertaken by the Housing Standards and Homemove Manager. All 5 formal reviews were tested and the evidence provided to support the outcome was seen on file and was in line with the policy. All 5 reviews were carried out within the 4 week timescale set out in the Allocation Policy.

For all of the reviews the applicants had been informed of the outcome of their request.

Objective 3: Inactive applicants are removed from the register - Assurance

Discussions with the Business Support Officer confirmed that the register is reviewed regularly to establish whether any non-bidders wish to remain on the list. Contact is made with applicants via letter or occasionally by phone (for Bands A and B). A spreadsheet is maintained of all applicants contacted and whether they have stayed on or been removed from the list.

Overall assurance level – Assurance

No exceptions have been raised as a result of the testing carried out during the course of the audit. Therefore, Internal Audit can give assurance that the processes followed for Housing Applications are of low risk to the Authority.