

Appendix B

Details of Homefinder Somerset and the criteria for the Housing register

[Source: –Homefinder Somerset www.homefindersomerset.co.uk]

What is Homefinder Somerset?

Homefinder Somerset is a partnership of local authorities and housing associations who are working together to make the process of finding a home simple and transparent for all applicants across Somerset. The partners are Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council. There are over 40 Registered Social Landlords who are taking part in Homefinder Somerset.

What has changed?

New Government guidance has advised that local authorities should adopt a Choice Based Lettings system by 2010. This replaces the points based system. There is now a common housing register across Somerset, and all applicants are placed in one of four bands, Emergency, Gold (high need), Silver (medium need) and Bronze (low need).

How does Choice Based Lettings work?

Once accepted onto the Housing Register, applicants are able to express an interest in (referred to as 'bidding') for almost every home advertised through the CBL system. Homes are advertised between Wednesday and Sunday on the Homefinder Somerset website.




Each applicant can bid for up to three properties, per bidding cycle (weekly). In some cases certain restrictions may apply for example; size of property - applicants are not able to bid for homes considered too big or too small for their household's needs; other properties may be reserved for people with specific mobility problems or other disabilities; others may have age restrictions or be for those with a need for supported housing.

Once the bidding deadline has passed it is normally the applicant in the highest band that has waited the longest on the housing register who is successful. This is subject to formal checks by the relevant landlord. Tenants at the top of the bidding list, with a record of anti social behaviour or who have a debt with a current or former landlord may not receive a formal offer of accommodation even if you are top of the list.

Existing tenants need to register on the Homefinder Somerset Housing Register in order to take part in a mutual exchange with another tenant. The exchange is agreed between tenants, however the Landlord must approve the exchange and will not allow the exchange if either household would severely overcrowd or under-occupy a property as a result

Prioritising Applications to the Housing Register

The Homefinder Somerset Scheme prioritises applicants into three bands, Gold, Silver and Bronze. Within each band, priority will be given to those longest on the register. In addition there is an emergency band for applicants that require an 'urgent' move to ensure their safety and welfare. Specific rules apply to applicants in the emergency band.

Gold Band – High Need 	Silver Band – Medium Need 	Bronze Band – Low Need 
Tenants of Homefinder Somerset partner landlords who live within the Homefinder Somerset area and under-occupy their home	Where the applicant lacks one bedroom in their current home.	Where the applicant is adequately housed.
Homeless households who are owed a main homelessness duty by a Homefinder Somerset partner authority	Social needs to move for employment reasons or to give or receive support.	Where applicants own their own property but whose home is not suitable for their needs.
Statutorily overcrowded (applicants who lack 2 or more bedrooms)	Applicant who is pregnant or has children under the age of 10 living in a first floor flat or above.	Where there is a low medical/welfare or disrepair assessment
Current supported housing residents assessed as ready to move to independent living	Where there is a medium medical need.	Applicants living in short term supported housing prior to being ready to move at which stage they will move up to the Gold Band.
High disrepair for people living in the private sector.	Medium disrepair for people living in the private sector.	
High medical need	Applicant lodging with friends or family	
Applicants awarded a 'medium' medical priority, combined with a 'medium' disrepair award from the silver band.	Applicants wishing to live independently but who still reside with their ex-partner/spouse following a relationship breakdown.	
Victim of harassment or violence	Other homelessness (where Homefinder Somerset partners do not owe an applicant a full homelessness duty).	
	Applicants of split families who not by choice are living separately.	
	Households who have a child/children under 10 years of age without access to an enclosed garden.	