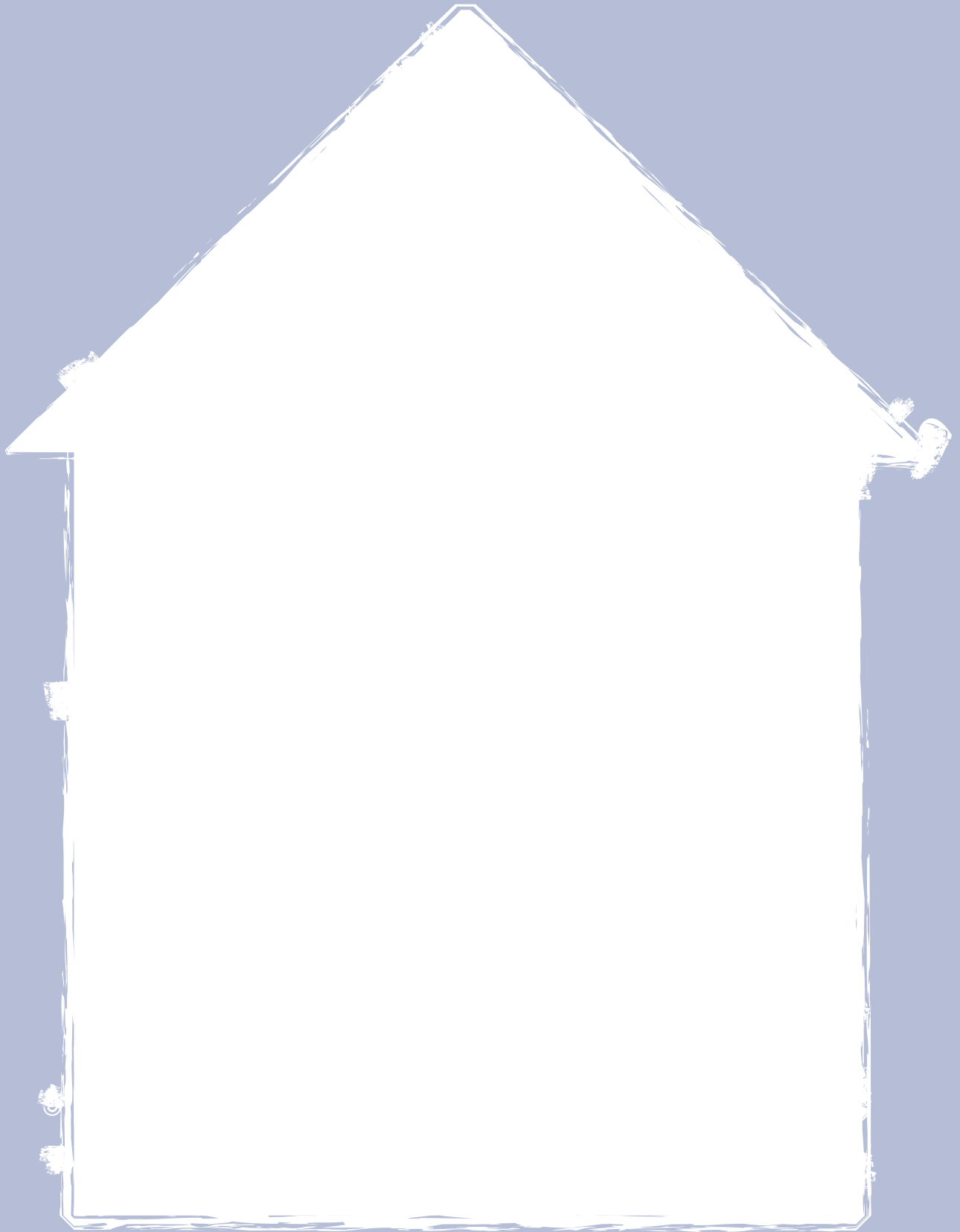


Choosing your Housing Options – Applying for Social Housing in Carmarthenshire



Summary of Policy



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1 Do you need a housing options interview?

You need to make sure that you consider the right housing options that suit your particular housing need. Detailed housing advice and agreeing realistic housing options are very important and you need consider these fully before applying.

If applying for social housing is a realistic option for you, the following information outlines the policy for deciding who receives council and housing-association properties.

We also provide more booklets on applying for affordable housing to buy and private rented properties through the Social Lettings Agency.

This is a summary of how we decide who can rent our homes.

You can ask us for a copy of the full policy or it is available on our websites at:

www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

www.bromyrdin.org.uk

www.cantref.co.uk

www.gwalia.com

www.coastalhousing.co.uk

www.fha-wales.com

2 What are the priorities for housing?

We must give priority to households who:

- are homeless
- are living in unsanitary, or overcrowded housing or unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- need to move for medical or welfare reasons (including disability);
- need to move to a particular area in the county because if they did not it would cause hardship.

We have also identified our local priorities as being households who:

- are in the highest medical need;
- need to move to give or receive support;
- need a suitably adapted property;
- need to move to reduce delayed transfers of care;
- are moving from larger properties to smaller properties;
- are moving from smaller properties to larger properties;
- need to move to receive or provide support and care;
- need sheltered housing.

This policy is a points-based lettings scheme. You can choose as many areas as you want in which to apply for housing. You are more likely to get the property you want if you are flexible in choosing the type of housing you need and the area you want to live in.

3 Who can apply for housing?

- Anyone over the age of 16 can apply for housing. However, if you are 16 or 17 years old, we will only offer you an 'equitable tenancy'. When you reach the age of 18 you will then become an Introductory, Secure or Assured Tenant.

4 Who cannot apply for housing?

Some people are unable to apply for housing. They are people:

- under immigration control who cannot claim benefits (if you do not have access to benefits, you may be entitled to housing with the housing associations);
- who do not live permanently in the Common Travel Area (UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland) for tax purposes;
- who do not have the right to live in the UK; and
- other categories of people who the Secretary of State has decided are not eligible for housing.

If you are not able to apply, we will let you know in writing and you will have the right to ask for a review.

5 Are there any circumstances where your application may be suspended or removed from the Housing Choice Register?

There are some circumstances in which we may delay an offer of housing no matter what your priority is under the scheme. You do not normally qualify for the offer of a tenancy through the scheme if you, or a member of your household:

- have deliberately made your housing condition worse to benefit from the allocations policy;
- are under notice seeking possession, for breaking of tenancy conditions. This will apply whether you are a council, housing association or private tenant.
- have a history of unacceptable behaviour, which may include serious and/or persistent rent arrears, the property is not in a good state of repair and clean enough inside or out; or you are convicted of any drug or sex offences taking place within a council or housing-association property or within the area;
- have refused one reasonable offer of accommodation within 12 months

A 'reasonable offer' is an offer of a property that:

- is the right size for your household;
- is near to any support you need and takes account of any special needs you may have (such as a home without steps or a home with adaptations);
- is free from the threat of violence; and

- is in an area you have chosen. If we have accepted you as homeless, and there is a legal duty to rehouse you, we may offer you a home outside your area of choice if it is considered to be reasonable.
- are a council or housing association tenant or a tenant re-housed through the Social Lettings Agency and have not been a tenant for 1 year; or
- we are waiting for further evidence to confirm your present circumstances

6 Can you ask us for a review of a decision made?

You can ask us to review of the decision on whether you can apply for housing, any suspensions or the number of points awarded within 21 days of receiving the letter confirming our decision. We only allow one review unless your circumstances have changed or you have additional information that could change our decision.

7 What is the role of county councillors and housing association board members?

The main role of councillors and housing association board members is to approve this policy and any changes we make to it. Local councillors cannot decide who will live in individual properties but can represent you if you live in their ward.

8 What are local lettings policies and sensitive lets?

In some circumstances, particular estates may have a formally agreed local lettings policy. A local lettings policy would be in place to make sure that homes on that estate are given in a way that helps to tackle particular issues or problems. This may also apply to specialist supported housing projects e.g. substance misuse, learning difficulties, physical disabilities, care leavers and so on. You can find a list of where our local lettings policies are on our websites.

A Local Lettings Policy must be approved by the Executive Board Member for Housing, Property and Building Services or the Board of a partner Housing Association before it can be put into place. The Executive Board Member or the Board of a partner Housing Association will review all Local Lettings Policies once a year.

An individual property may be 'a sensitive let'. This could be where there is a confirmed history of antisocial behaviour or criminal activity at that property involving the previous tenant or members of their household. A property will only be named a sensitive let with the approval of the council's Head of Housing or by a Manager of equal seniority in the Housing Associations.

If a property is a sensitive let, we will not consider certain types of households for that property. Once we give the property to a household, it will no longer be a sensitive let.

The Head of Housing Services or a Manager of equal seniority in the Housing Associations will decide what is to be a sensitive let using clearly defined criteria. All sensitive lets will be reported to the Executive Board Member of the Council and the Boards of our Housing Association partners once a year.

9 What size of home can you be offered?

- With a few exceptions (such as specifically adapted properties and some ground floor housing association and council ground floor flats), we give our 1 and 2 bedroom ground-floor flats and bungalows to people aged 60 and over (council) or aged 55 and over (housing associations). If there are no eligible people aged 60 and over (for council properties) or aged 55 and over (for housing associations properties), we will then consider people below these ages in points order taking into account both age and medical circumstances.
- Except for those one and two bedroom homes described above, the type of home offered will depend on the size of the household as shown in the table below:

Household	Number of bedrooms
Single person under 60 years	Bedsit, one-bedroom flat or one bedroom house
Single person 55 or 60 and over	Bedsit, one or two bedroom flat or bungalows, one bedroom house and sheltered housing
Household expecting a baby (see note 3)	Two or three bedroom flats, maisonettes or houses (see note 2)
Household with no children, everyone who is under 60 years	One or two bedroom flats, one bedroom house
Household with no children, everyone who is 55 or 60 years or over	One or two bedroom flats, one bedroom house or one or two bedroom bungalows and sheltered housing
Household with one child	Two or three bedroom flats (see note 4), maisonettes and houses (see note 3)
Household with two children	Two or Three bedroom maisonettes and houses (see note 3)
Household with three children	Three or four bedroom Houses (see note 1)
Household with four or more children	Three, four or five bedroom houses (see note 1)

Note 1: This depends on the ages of the children; each person needs one bedroom unless:

- you are a couple (unless there are medical or cultural reasons why they need another bedroom);
- you have two children, of the same sex, aged 16 or under;
- you have two children, of the opposite sex, aged 7 or under; or
- children from a previous relationship stay with you regularly (we will look at each case individually).

Note 2: To make best use of our housing in areas where there are fewer two bedroom properties (where the number of two bedroom properties is less than half of the number of three bedroom houses), you may also qualify for 3 bedroom property.

Note 3: We will accept a pregnancy of over 12 weeks as evidence of you needing an extra bedroom.

Note 4: We will not give you an upper floor flat where you have children under the age of 7, unless you ask for this

10 How we award points

We will assess your application and award it points in one of the following categories. You will not be placed into more than one category.

Category A – Emergency housing need

130 points

- Homeless or threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.
- Urgent medical need directly affected by current housing arrangements where there is an essential need to move for medical or disability reasons or you need specialist support and treatment as the current housing is having a negative effect on the members of the household's health. These assessments will be carried out by officers and may be referred to an occupational therapist or any other independent medical advisor if further information is needed.
- Delayed transfers of care – where the health authority has assessed that you cannot return home from hospital, residential care or a nursing home and cannot return home due to the property no longer being suitable.
- Households whose homes have many Category I dangers which are an immediate risk to health and safety. This will be assessed by an Environmental Health Officer and depends on you agreeing to us contacting your landlord to tackle these issues. You must be assessed as being in priority need in line with homeless law.
This only applies to households who are renting privately.

- Urgent need to move to give or receive support or care. These assessments will be carried out by officers and may be referred to an independent assessor if further information is needed.
- Serious overcrowding where the household lacks three or more bedrooms (please see section 9).
- Households moving from an adapted home that would benefit another household that needs the adaptations.
- In need of extra care accommodation within sheltered housing as assessed by a Sheltered Scheme Manager or designated officer within a Housing Association and the Community Resource Team.
- Veterans who have seen active service within the armed forces and are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder or serious illness directly related to their service in the Forces.

Category B - High housing need

90 points

- Homeless but not in priority need and not intentionally homeless.
- Intentionally homeless households.
- Serious medical or disability need that would be improved by other housing. These assessments will be carried out by officers and may be referred to an Occupational Therapist or independent medical advisor if further information is needed.
- Overcrowded where the household is lacking two bedrooms (please see section 9).
- Serious disrepair – Category 2 dangers and minor Category 1 dangers which are not immediately dangerous but need attention as assessed by an Environmental Health Officer. This depends on you agreeing to us contacting your landlord to tackle these issues. This only applies to households who are renting privately.
- Serious need to move to provide or receive support or care - These assessments will be carried out by officers and may be referred to an independent assessor if further information is needed.
- If you are served with a notice from your landlord that has more than 28 days to run and you are in priority need.
- Households where a person is pregnant or has one or more children under the age of 7 in an upper-floor flat.
- Households' under-occupying a property by two or more bedrooms and are requesting a smaller flat, bungalow or house. This only applies to council and housing association tenants within Carmarthenshire.
- In high need of sheltered housing due to support and care needs as assessed by a Sheltered Scheme Manager or designated officer within a Housing Association and the Community Resource Team.

Category C – Moderate housing need

50 points

- If you have a confirmed need (by your employer, school, college or university), due to transport difficulties, to take up or continue full-time employment, full-time education or training.
- Condition of current property – awareness of dangers which need some attention as assessed by an Environmental Health Officer. This depends on you agreeing to us contacting your landlord to tackle these issues. This only applies to households who are renting privately.
- Overcrowded where the household is lacking one bedroom (please see section 9).
- In moderate need of sheltered housing due to support needs as assessed by a Sheltered Scheme Manager or designated officer within a Housing Association and the Community Resource Team.
- Households' under-occupying a property by one bedroom and are requesting a smaller property which meets your housing need. This only applies to council and housing association tenants within Carmarthenshire.

Category D - Low housing need

10 points

- Where none of the above applies, we will award a low housing need of 10 points.
- In low need of sheltered housing due to support needs as assessed by a Sheltered Scheme Manager or designated officer within a Housing Association and Community Resource Team.

If we have placed you in category A, we may award the following points:

Exceptional circumstances

30 points

We award extra points in exceptional cases where there is a confirmed desperate need to move to another home.

This could be if you or anyone living with you is:

- experiencing serious harassment that has been confirmed by the police;
- experiencing intimidation or violence that has been confirmed by the police;
- recommended by Social Care or Children's Services, to be immediately re-housed into a more suitable housing. This could be where there is clear financial and social benefit to the council or prospective tenant e.g. to prevent out of county placements.
- Assessed with a disability or there are fire safety issues in your sheltered housing scheme and you need to a more suitable home

These points will only be given to households who have been accepted as homeless and in priority need.

Exceptional circumstances points may also be awarded where you or a member of your household are part of a witness protection scheme that has been confirmed by the appropriate agency.

Moving on

20 points

We award extra points if you have been living in supported housing, including supported lodgings, and the project has confirmed that you are ready to move on, or you have been in temporary housing and have been waiting to move on for 12 weeks. These are only awarded if you have been assessed and awarded points in category **A or B**.

If you have been placed in either A, B, C or D categories, we may also award the following points:

Residency

Max 30 points

We award these points at the time we give a property if you want to move within the same ward that you are currently living in. You must have lived in the ward for three or more years.

3 years = 5 points

6 years = 20 points

4 years = 10 points

7 years = 25 points

5 years = 15 points

8 or more years = 30 points

If you are living outside the county and are moving back to get or give care to a relative, you may be given the points shown above based on the years your relative has lived within the ward.

Making best use of our stock

20 points

We will award extra points if you are a council or housing-association tenant living in the county and you:

- need to move from a small property to a larger property which will meet your housing need (please see section 9); or
- need to move from a larger property to a smaller property which will meet your housing need (please see section 9).

Work related training**20 points**

- We will award extra points if you have finished or are currently taking part in a recognised employment related course that will help you in gaining employment. Evidence of your commitment in the form of attendance on any course will be needed before we award the points.