

# INDEX

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
Prioritising housing applicants .....	2
How long must I wait? .....	2
Equal Opportunities .....	3
The service we offer .....	4
<b>YOUR HOUSING REGISTER APPLICATION</b> .....	5
Confidentiality .....	6
Amending entries on the housing register .....	6
<b>INTERVIEWS</b> .....	7
Office interviews .....	7
Appointments .....	8
Viewing your housing application file .....	8
<b>MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS</b> .....	9
Medical assessment panel .....	10
Home visits .....	10
<b>REMOVING YOUR NAME FROM THE HOUSING REGISTER</b> .....	11
<b>OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION</b> .....	13
When you are offered a home .....	14
What happens if I refuse an offer of accommodation? .....	14
<b>BEST VALUE</b> .....	15
<b>COMPLAINTS</b> .....	17
<b>CONTACTS</b> .....	19



## HERTSMERE'S HOUSING REGISTER THE HOUSING APPLICANT'S CHARTER

### ***INTRODUCTION***

**By law Hertsmere Borough Council must keep a Housing Register.**

**The Council no longer owns any housing accommodation, but it has made arrangements to nominate people for vacancies that occur in the stock of Housing Associations with properties in Hertsmere.**

**We undertake to fulfil our statutory duties regarding maintaining the register, nominating those in greatest need for vacant properties in accordance with our policy**

**The Council aims to make sure everyone has equal access to housing accommodation, but preference will be given to people with a local connection to Hertsmere.**

**You can use this Charter to find out what to expect when you apply to the Council's Housing Register for permanent housing and to check that you are treated fairly.**

### ***PRIORITISING HOUSING APPLICANTS***

The Council has a leaflet which summarises its Policy and Scheme for registering and assessing the priority of people who need rehousing. You can ask for this leaflet, entitled 'Hertsmere's Housing Register'.

You can also ask to see the Council's full Nominations Policy and Scheme if you wish.

### ***HOW LONG MUST I WAIT?***

You have the **right** to be given some idea of how long you can expect to wait for rehousing. The Housing Register sends a quarterly newsletter to all its applicants showing numbers waiting and average waiting times for the different property sizes and areas of choice.

### ***EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES***

You can ask to see the Council's Policy on Equal Opportunities.

Our services are open to everyone – trained Council staff are happy to help with your application form whether you have difficulty understanding English, have a disability or there is any other reason why you need assistance.

Records are kept to show the race, gender and disability of housing applicants so that we can make sure that everyone has been treated equally and fairly without discrimination.

### ***THE SERVICE WE OFFER YOU***

We promise to provide you with a professional, helpful service.

You can ask to see the Council's leaflet called '**Hertsmere's Customer Charter**' which explains about the standards staff will try to meet when dealing with all its customers, including housing applicants.

When you contact us by telephone, our response will be:

- Quick
- Helpful
- Polite and professional

If you leave a message, someone will return your call within 24 hours.

When you contact Housing Services by **letter, fax** or **email** we promise to reply within 15 working days. Our response will be clear and easy to understand.

### ***YOUR HOUSING REGISTER APPLICATION***

Within a week of receiving your housing application, which must be made on our standard form, we will **promise** to enter it onto our computer system and confirm to you that it has reached us.

The date that we receive your form will be used when reviewing your application in the future for 'time on register' points.

Once you have provided us with all the information we require, your housing application will be processed and we will write to you informing you whether you are eligible for the Register, and if so, how many housing points you have been awarded.

The processing of your application will take us no longer than **3 weeks** BUT you must provide all the information we ask for if we are to keep to this target.

We will also confirm our understanding of your areas of choice, the size property to which you would be entitled and the level of housing needs points you have been awarded.

### ***HOMELESS OR THREATENED WITH HOMELESSNESS?***

We **promise** to give you housing advice, including advice about temporary accommodation and to provide you with our leaflet called 'The Hertsmere Homeless Service.'

### ***CONFIDENTIALITY***

We handle the information you give us in accordance with the details specified in the Data Protection Act.

We **promise** that your housing application will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

However, all the details you have provided on your application form will be investigated and other Council departments and outside agencies may be contacted in the course of assessing your application for housing.

### ***AMENDING ENTRIES ON THE HOUSING REGISTER***

If we amend your entry on the Housing Register we **must** notify you about the change.

Altering our Policy: **If we make significant changes to our policy we must notify you about them.**

## ***INTERVIEWS***

### ***OFFICE INTERVIEWS – AT THE CIVIC OFFICES IN BOREHAMWOOD***

**If you need to discuss your housing application or need help in completing a form, one of the Council's reception staff will assist you. Please note that Council staff are not able to fill out your form for you – for this type of assistance you will be referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau**

If you wish to speak to one of the Officers dealing with your housing application you may need to make an appointment in advance.

We **promise** to arrange an appointment within 7 days of your request.

If you call in without an appointment and wish to see a Housing Services Officer, we try to ensure someone will see you, but you may be asked to wait.

## ***APPOINTMENTS***

If you have been given an appointment with an Officer from the Housing Services Unit, we **promise** to see you punctually, in a private room in the Council's reception area. You have a right to be dealt with in a polite and helpful manner, and you can expect the Officer you see to have your housing application details available.

## ***VIEWING YOUR HOUSING APPLICATION FILE***

You can ask to see your housing application file

We **promise** to make this available to you in a private room at the Council's offices, within **1 week** of your written request.

### ***MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS***

If your housing conditions are affecting your health, you can apply for a medical assessment for an award of extra housing needs points to increase your priority for rehousing.

#### **What should I do?**

You must submit a medical form to the Housing Services Unit (available on request). You will also be given a leaflet entitled 'Medical Assessments' which explains the process in detail

Before your application is discussed at the medical assessment panel you may be visited at home (by appointment) by a Housing Services Officer, who will assess your housing conditions in relation to your health problems

### ***MEDICAL ASSESSMENT PANEL***

The panel meets every 4 to 6 weeks. It is a multi-agency panel, and your case will be discussed and awarded extra housing needs points if the panel members feel it is appropriate to do so.

You will receive written confirmation of your points level within **1 week** of the panel's assessment.

If you have new medical information, you can submit it and your application will be reassessed at the next panel if possible, or depending on the level of applications, at the following panel.

Cases for the panel are accepted up to a week before the next panel date.

Very urgent cases will be accepted later than this at the discretion of housing staff.

### ***HOME VISITS***

We will contact you either by letter or phone to arrange a convenient time to call, and we **promise** to call at the time arranged, or telephone if we are going to be delayed. Housing Services Officers will carry identification with them and you are **entitled** to ask to see this before inviting someone into your home.

## ***REMOVING YOUR NAME FROM THE HOUSING REGISTER***

We **promise** to write to you giving you 28 days notice before removing your name from the Housing Register. We will include a leaflet called 'Your Right to Review on Housing Register Decisions in Hertsmere'

### ***YOUR RIGHT TO REVIEW***

If you are not happy about either a decision by the Council not to put your name on the Housing Register, or a decision by the Council to remove your name from the Register:

You have a **right to review**

The Council **promises** to give you full details of the review procedure in an information leaflet if it makes a decision on which you have a right to review.

## ***OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION***

You have a **right** to receive two offers of suitable accommodation through your application to the Council's Housing Register.

We **promise** that you will be nominated to a Housing Association for a vacancy in their stock as soon as you reach the top of the Council's Housing Register and a suitable property becomes available for you.

We **promise** that any offer made to you will be in your area of choice as marked on your housing application form.

**Areas of choice** are as follows:

- Any area in Hertsmere
- Borehamwood, Radlett, Elstree
- Shenley, Ridge, Borehamwood
- Borehamwood (North Brook Road side)
- Borehamwood (South Manor Way side)
- South Mimms, Potters Bar
- Bushey

Your **preferences** within these areas will be noted, and we will try our best to meet them, but please note that this is not always possible.

We **promise** that the vacancy you are offered by the Housing Association will have the number of bedrooms to which you are entitled under the Council's Nominations Policy and Scheme. We will have informed you of this number when we first accepted your application to the housing register.

## ***OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION***

### ***WHEN YOU ARE OFFERED A HOME***

You have a **right** to a written contract. The Housing Association will give you a **tenancy agreement** which includes information about the terms under which you may live in your new home. This is a legally binding document and you should make certain it is clearly explained to you by the Housing Association before you sign it.

### ***WHAT HAPPENS IF I REFUSE AN OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION?***

Under the Council's policy, your application to the Housing Register will be deferred for 6 months.

We will write within **2 weeks** to confirm this.

We **promise** to inform you once your application is reinstated on the Housing Register at the end of the 6 months' deferral.

Housing applicants who refuse two suitable offers of accommodation will be removed from the Housing Register, and we will write giving you **28 days' notice** of this. You will not then be eligible to reapply for 2 years unless you are statutorily homeless.

## ***BEST VALUE***

To help us fulfil Government requirements under Best Value, we may ask you to complete a questionnaire or satisfaction slip to ask you for views about our service. We **promise** to take account of these views and to try to use them to improve the service we offer you and other housing applicants.

## ***COMPLAINTS***

The Council has a leaflet called 'Righting a Wrong'. You should ask for a copy of this if you are dissatisfied with the service you have received from the Housing Services Unit