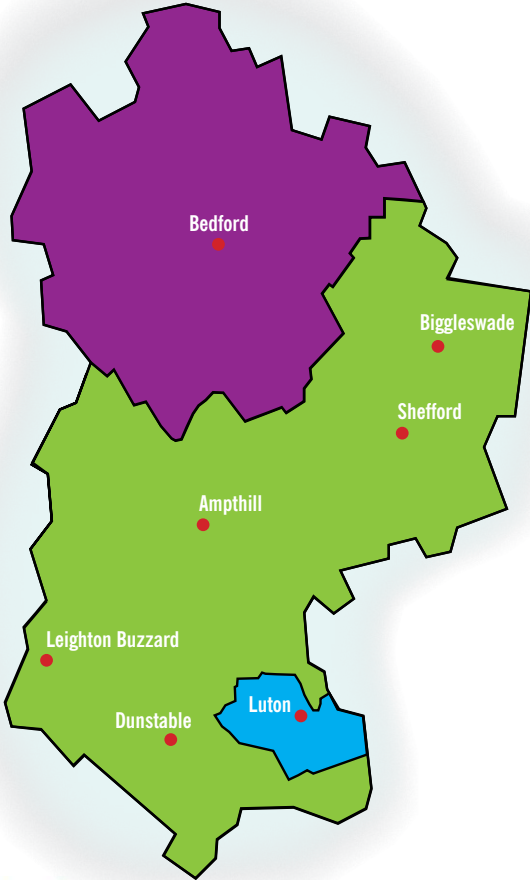


Bedfordshire Common Allocations Policy:

Housing Register (Allocations Scheme)

Summary Booklet



Central Bedfordshire



Introduction

Bedfordshire's local authorities and the two largest housing associations have agreed a common allocations policy for Bedfordshire.

The partners are:

Bedford Borough Council	bpha
Central Bedfordshire Council	Aragon Housing Association
Luton Borough Council	

Each housing provider will continue to take housing applications for the relevant local authority as follows:

bpha (on behalf of Bedford Borough Council)	01234 79 10 00
Aragon Housing Association	01525 84 05 05/ 01767 68 58 00
Central Bedfordshire Council	0300 300 80 00
Luton Borough Council	01582 51 03 70

The new allocations policy replaces the points-based assessments of housing needs which were used in the different local authority areas. Under the new allocations policy, an applicant's need for housing will be assessed using a banding scheme as described below.

You can request a copy of the full Allocations Policy from any of the organisations above or see them on the organisations' websites:

- www.aragon-housing.co.uk
- www.bedford.gov.uk
- www.bpha.org.uk
- www.luton.gov.uk
- www.centralbeds.gov.uk

Who can apply?

Anyone over the age of 16 can apply to join the housing register. However you may not be eligible for the register if:

- you have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a tenant
- you are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the asylum and immigration legislation.

How can I apply?

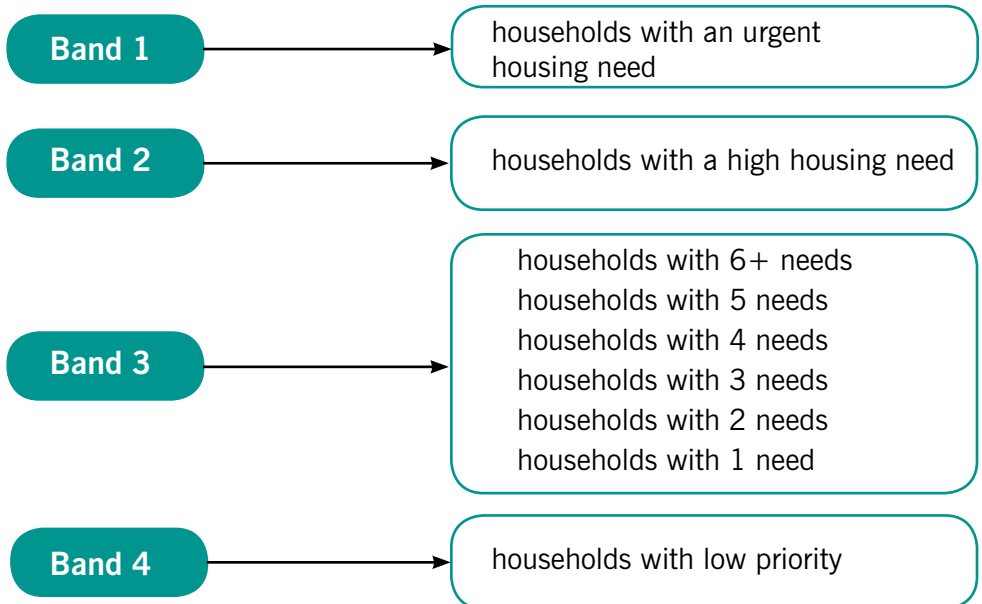
You need to complete an application form and provide evidence of your circumstances. The evidence you need to give us is listed in the application form.

You can apply to more than one district for housing, but you will need to complete a separate application form for each district. For example, if you are seeking housing in Luton *and* Bedford, you need to complete one form for Luton Borough Council and one for bpha. However, you will be given lower priority in any area where you do not have a local connection (see page 9).

How will my needs be assessed?

Your application will be placed in a band depending on your housing circumstances.

There are four bands:



Note: Households described as homeless and in priority need for housing are households the local authority has accepted as having a duty to rehouse under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

Band 1

- Households accepted as homeless, in priority need for housing and at immediate risk of violence.
- Current tenants needing an urgent management transfer and at immediate risk of violence if they remain in their home.

Band 2

- Other households accepted as homeless and in priority need for housing that are not at immediate risk of violence.
- Current tenants needing an urgent management transfer who are not at immediate risk of violence.
- Households whose current home is subject to a demolition order/closing order/emergency prohibition order.
- Tenants who are under-occupying council or housing association accommodation within the local authority area, and who want to move to a smaller home.
- Households occupying tenancies under the Rent Agriculture Act 1976 where the Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee confirms the tenant must leave.

Band 3

Applicants will have different levels of priority in this band. Priority will be assessed by the council or housing association depending on the household's housing needs. Needs can be accrued for different circumstances and are awarded as follows:

Lacking space for your household

- statutory overcrowding (as defined by the Housing Act 1985) **2 needs**
- lacking 1 or 2 bedrooms **1 need**
- lacking 3 or more bedrooms **2 needs**

Not having a home of your own

- households who are homeless but not in a priority category for housing **2 needs**
- households in residential hostel/mother and baby unit or young people leaving care **2 needs**

Having to leave your current home

- households with a legal notice to quit or with a possession order in place and in a priority category for housing **3 needs**
- households with a legal notice to quit or with a possession order in place and not in a priority category for housing **2 needs**

Other accommodation needs

Households in the following circumstances:

- assured short hold tenancy
- tied tenancy
- private sector lodgings
- living with family or friends
- any other form of license
(not including Rent Agriculture Act 1976) **1 need**

Dependant children

- households with dependant child/children aged 0–18 years and /or pregnant **1 need**

Lack of essential facilities

- households without a water supply and/or indoor sanitation either on site if occupying a caravan or any type of mobile home, or in a property **1 need**

Medical

- households where there are medical problems made worse by their current housing (the council or housing association will refer to an independent medical advisor) **1 or 2 needs**
(depending on condition)
- households needing care or support services to enable them to live independently (applications must be supported in writing by Social Services and/or the Health Authority). **1 need**

Harassment

- racial/sexual/domestic violence where the council or housing association is satisfied the household is not at serious risk sufficient to be placed in bands 1 or 2. **2 needs**

Band 4

- homeowners (except where certain medical criteria apply)
- current tenants of the partner councils or housing associations, or another housing association in Bedfordshire, where the current property is suitable (eg of an appropriate size)

- council or housing association tenants living outside Bedfordshire
- tenants of any other housing provider with an assured or secure tenancy where the current property is suitable (eg of an appropriate size)
- households with high income and/or assets (eg equity in property) or savings
- households with no local connection to the local authority district to which they are applying (see below).

You will have a local connection to the district if at least one of the following applies:

- you have lived in settled accommodation in the district for 6 months out of the last 12, or 3 years out of the last 5
- you have immediate family members who reside in the area and have done so for at least 5 years (immediate family members are parents, children, brothers or sisters)
- you have permanent employment in the area.

The following applicants will also be placed in Band 4, either from first application or during the life of the application, if any of the following applies:

- households with rent or mortgage arrears
- households where any member has been guilty of anti-social behaviour
- households where any member has been abusive to housing association or council staff
- households who have knowingly worsened their housing circumstances or have been found to be intentionally homeless
- households where any action has been taken for breach of tenancy terms and conditions.

Does time waiting on the register affect my application?

Time waiting on the register will be measured from the effective date of application. In most cases, the effective date of application is considered as the date when the application was first made.

Where more than one applicant has been placed in the same band, or needs level in band 3, priority will be given to the applicant with the earliest effective date.

However, where an application moves into a higher band for any reason, the effective date will be the date the priority changed, not the initial application date.

Note: those applications moved into band 4 (eg owing to breaches of tenancy conditions, behaviour or rent/mortgage arrears) will be reviewed on a regular basis. If the application is later returned to a higher band, the effective date will be the date of the most recent change of priority, not the original application date.

May I choose where I want to live?

When you make an application to the housing register, each housing provider will give you a list of the areas where they own or manage housing. You will be able to choose which areas you wish to be considered for. We cannot guarantee to offer you housing in your preferred area as this will depend on the number of vacancies and on how many applicants are seeking housing.

Applicants in Band 1 or 2 with an urgent or high housing need will be expected to consider suitable accommodation in any area, unless there are specific areas where your household would be at risk. A suitable offer will be a home of an adequate size for your household. **If you refuse a suitable offer, you could lose your priority for housing.**

Can I choose the type of property I'm offered?

You will be able to decide the type of property you wish to be considered for such as a house, flat or maisonette. However, some properties are only available to people in certain age groups (retirement housing, for example) and family houses are generally offered to people with younger children.

Applicants in Band 1 or 2 will be expected to consider any type of property of a suitable size.

Note: *pets are not allowed in certain property types.*

How many bedrooms will I be considered for?

The size of accommodation offered depends on how many people are in your household:

- **one bedroom/bedsit/studio flat**
single people or couples without children
- **two bedrooms**
couple or single person with one child, or two children of the same sex, or two children of opposite sex where both are less than 10 years old, or one child and expecting a child
- **three bedrooms**
couple or single person with two children of opposite sex where at least one child is over 10 years old, or two children and expecting a child, or three children
- **three or four bedrooms**
couple or single person with four or more children or three children and expecting a child.

How will properties be allocated?

When a property becomes available it will be offered to the applicant with the greatest housing need, measured by the band (and level of needs if Band 3) at that time. Offers will only be made to an applicant who is eligible for that type and size of property (see section on waiting time).

Note: *some partners operate local lettings plans which may affect allocations. Please speak to your local housing provider for details.*

When a Choice Based Lettings Scheme is launched in June 2009, this process will change. We will send you more information about these changes nearer the time.

How long will I wait to be offered a property?

The length of time it takes to receive an offer of accommodation depends on your housing needs (priority in the banding scheme), the type of property you need and the availability of properties in the areas you have chosen. It is therefore very difficult to tell you how long you will have to wait.

The demand for social housing far exceeds supply. We may be able to advise you about other housing options that may be available to you such as private sector, shared ownership/new build home buy or mutual exchange (see help and advice on page 13).

What happens if I refuse an offer of tenancy?

The consequences of refusing a suitable offer of accommodation differ slightly between the four housing providers. Please contact your local housing provider for details.

However, applicants in bands 1 or 2 normally only receive one offer of accommodation. If refused, the applicant's priority is likely to be reduced.

What type of tenancy will I be offered?

The housing provider in the district(s) you are applying to can tell you what type of tenancy they can offer you.

Transferring tenants will be offered the same type of tenancy they currently have if they transfer within the same landlord's stock.

Applicants who apply together will normally be offered a joint tenancy.

What if my circumstances change?

You should contact us as soon as possible so your application can be amended to reflect your housing circumstances. You may need to complete a new application form (eg if you have moved).

Can I get help and advice?

The housing provider you apply to will be able to give you more information and advice about how the new policy works.

If you have general housing queries, call your local housing advice service:

Aragon Housing Association:	01525 84 05 05 / 01767 68 58 00
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Bedford Borough Council:	01234 22 17 85/6
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Luton Borough Council:	01582 51 03 70
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Central Bedfordshire Council:	0300 300 8000
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The aim of the housing advice service is to prevent homelessness and provide information on housing options.

Housing advice teams offer free advice on housing issues such as:

- rent or mortgage arrears
- relationship breakdowns
- landlord/tenant law
- benefits
- homelessness.

Housing advisors may not be able to help in every case. It may be necessary to put you in touch with other organisations better able to help with your particular case.

Can I appeal?

If you are unhappy about any decision regarding your application, you have the right to have that decision reviewed. To appeal against any decision, contact your relevant housing provider who will explain the local procedure.

Equality and diversity

The Allocations Policy aims to recognise and support diversity to ensure no sections of society are excluded and the service meets the needs of those who may require extra care and support.

The policy seeks to meet the needs of all applicants regardless of race, ethnicity, faith or religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability and to comply with all legislation.

Use, operation and outcomes will be monitored to ensure no sections of the community are excluded or disadvantaged.

If you need any help with your application please contact your local housing provider.

