



Criteria and Procedure for Special Needs Rehousing

A person can apply for a priority move, on grounds of Special Needs Rehousing (SNR) if they have a disability or a long term medical condition that prevents them performing everyday tasks such as bathing and climbing stairs, and if a different property more suited to their needs will improve this problem. Existing WDH tenants must be permanent tenants of WDH or household members who have resided in the property for longer than six months and are classed as a permanent member of the household.

WDH will work in partnership with Wakefield Council to ensure that consistent decision making procedures are applied when awarding or refusing additional priority on the grounds of SNR.

The Criteria

The definition of disability as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 is used to determine the SNR criteria and it will be updated on a regular basis as legislation changes.

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as physical (including sensory) or mental impairment which has had a substantial or long term adverse effect upon a person's ability to perform normal day to day activities which may include:

- difficulty getting in and out of their home;
- difficulty going up and down stairs;
- difficulty reaching the toilet;
- difficulty maintaining personal hygiene; and
- problems with lighting or heating which affect their health.

WDH will consider persons for a SNR priority if their disability or illness has a substantial and long term effect and falls into at least one of the points below:

- has affected their ability to perform normal day to day activities for the last 12 months;
- is likely to have an effect for at least 12 months; or
- is likely to have an effect for the rest of the person's life.

A WDH Occupational Therapist (OT) will provide advice and guidance on medical conditions.

WDH do not assess persons applying for special needs rehousing due to mental illness. If an application is received from a person applying for priority due to mental illness a referral will be made to Wakefield Council's Vulnerable Adults Service who has a criteria which the applicant will be assessed against.

Wakefield Council will also assess applicants who are in the following areas:

- any person applying for SNR who is in hospital and unable to return home will be referred to Wakefield Council for assessment;
- all persons in rehabilitation or residential care;
- all persons with an assessed complex disability that requires specialist accommodation;
- children under the age of 18; and
- children and adults assessed as having a moderate to severe learning disability.

Meeting the SNR Criteria for Assessment

If a person requests a Special Needs Rehousing form (HM1) at a service access point they will be spoken to by an OT on the phone to establish whether they meet the criteria for Special Needs Rehousing.

Once the application has been received by the Special Needs and Disability Unit (SNDU). The application will be checked to make sure it meets the SNR criteria, this process is overseen by an OT. Any applicant who does not meet the criteria at this stage will be sent a letter advising them why. If the applicant disagrees with this decision they have the right to appeal within 14 days.

The appeal can be made by phone, in writing or by email. Appeals will be reviewed by the Clinical lead OT and the applicant will be informed of the outcome in writing within 8 weeks from receipt of the appeal.

Any applicants with a terminal illness will be treated as a priority for assessment.

WDH will aim to visit applicants that meet the criteria within 20 working days to complete an HM2 assessment form. On assessment the applicant must sign the declaration form confirming the information they have given is correct and that they give WDH permission to obtain medical information about them if needed or to contact other agencies involved if necessary.

For applicants out of the Wakefield area an OT assessment or similar will be required from the applicants local authority area before the case can be considered for SNR. The applicant is responsible for obtaining this.

Awarding Priority

Approved applications will be referred to the SNR Panel within 14 calendar days for a decision on the priority status for a move. The panel is held weekly and is made up of an OT, a representative from the Area Management Team and a member of the Homeseach Team. All decisions are recorded for audit purposes with details of who was present at the panel. **Minutes are recorded of the meeting and reasons supporting the decisions reached are also recorded electronically.**

The panel, after considering the application, can make the following decisions:

- award band A welfare/medical priority;
- award band B medical priority;
- not to award any priority;
- refer for consideration of adaptations or equipment;
- write to consultants or health professionals for more medical information;
- refer for an OT assessment - this may include an independent OT assessment and/or an out of area OT assessment;
- refer to the Independent Living Team for an independent living assessment;
- defer the decision whilst another agency or Wakefield Council is consulted for information, such as, Family Services;
- refer to the Vulnerable Adults Service; and
- withdraw the application as it does not fit the criteria for special needs rehousing.

If the applicant is referred for an OT assessment this will be carried out within 20 calendar days if the applicant is a WDH tenant. If the applicant is not a WDH tenant a referral will be made to Wakefield Council's Adaptation Service.

Criteria for Band A – Welfare and Medical Need

Will be awarded:

- if, following assessment, the property is considered very unsuitable for the applicant's needs, such as wheelchair user **and** it is unable to be adapted or it is not possible to do so **and** this results in extreme personal hardship for the disabled person;
- or**
- the applicant has limited life expectancy **and** it is reasonable to consider rehousing **and** their current housing provision does not allow for the person to be accommodated on the ground floor of the property;
- WDH will award additional priority to former and serving members of the armed forces, who need to move due to injury or illness sustained in service and have a local connection (refer to Homesearch Policy for more detail).

In some cases it may be considered more appropriate to adapt a property.

Criteria for Band B – Medical Priority

Will be awarded:

- if the applicant is housebound in their present home and would not be if rehoused;
- if the applicant is unable to access essential facilities in the property, such as, toilet, bathroom, kitchen facilities;
- if the applicant is unable to use the facilities without excessive pain and/or difficulty/discomfort; and
- WDH will award additional priority to former and serving members of the armed forces, who need to move due to injury or illness sustained in service and have a local connection (refer to Homesearch Policy for more detail).

In some urgent circumstances it may be appropriate to consider the award of priority outside of the SNR Panel. This will be determined by the Panel Chair or someone acting on their behalf, who will liaise with panel members to reach a decision. If priority is subsequently awarded outside of the panel meeting, the case will be presented and ratified at the panel that follows immediately after. Minutes taken at the panel will record the decision reached.

If an application is awarded a Band A or B priority and the panel have specified that a person requires a disabled dwelling (purpose designed wheelchair accommodation or a fully adapted wheel chair property) the application will be referred to Wakefield Council for a nomination to other housing providers. If a potential property becomes available a void inspection will be carried out to check its suitability. An accompanied viewing with a WDH OT and The Specialist Accommodation Co-ordinator from Wakefield Council will also take place prior to allocation.

If an applicant is awarded a Band A or B priority and the SNR Panel have specified that the property needed by the applicant requires two or more major adaptations to meet their needs, for example, a ramp and a shower, then the person will be considered for accommodation in line with the Choice Based Lettings Policy.

If an applicant is not awarded priority or is assessed as not meeting criteria for SNR, the applicant can reapply after six months. However, this can be sooner if the applicant is able to demonstrate that their condition or circumstances have significantly changed since their original application.

In line with Wakefield Council's Housing Needs Policy, where the Medical Panel has clear evidence that a service user has moved address and deliberately worsened their circumstances in an attempt to gain a priority banding, the priority can be deferred at the panel's discretion for an appropriate period.

Reviews

Members who are still seeking accommodation six months after priority is awarded will undergo a phone review to determine whether there has been any change in circumstances. If their circumstances have not changed priority would be retained. Where a change in circumstances is identified the details will be noted and the case will be returned to panel to determine whether priority should be, increased, decreased, retained or removed. The Panel may decide that a further re-assessment is required at six months. The review will take into account individual circumstances, relating to an applicant's medical condition. It will not take account of bidding history and offers made and refused, this will be considered separately under Homeseach Policy.

All reviews at 12 months will receive a re-assessment visit, unless one was completed on the first review at six months.

If the case has been referred to Wakefield Council as the applicant requires a disabled dwelling Wakefield Council's Specialist Accommodation Co-ordinator will be consulted as part of the review process.

Appeals

Any applicant who is dissatisfied with any decision made by the panel has the right to appeal.

Appeals can be made by phone, by email or in writing by the applicant, or someone elected on their behalf, within 28 days of the date of their decision letter. They must state why they are unhappy with the decision and if there is any new evidence they feel that the panel should consider. A GP letter or letter of support from another source may be included if appropriate.

Appeal requests received outside this timescale may be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

The appeal will then go back to the panel with the appeal letter (or written details of the appeal if made by phone) and any new evidence, for re-consideration.

If the panel upholds the original decision the applicant will be referred to the Independent Medical Consultant (IMC) for an independent review of their case. The Panel Chair will refer all appeal cases on a monthly basis to the IMC and a response will be provided with the outcome within 28 days of receiving all information from the IMC. During times when the IMC is unavailable to hear cases the applications will be sent to an independent OT for consideration.

The applicant will be sent a letter of explanation advising them that their case has been referred to the IMC and that they will be notified of the decision in writing. The IMC may request further medical information or an OT assessment before a final decision can be made. The IMC is an independent medical consultant and their decision is final. There is no right of appeal against the decision. If an applicant feels that they have been dealt with unfairly at any stage of the process they can complain using the WDH Complaints Procedure providing it meets the definition of a complaint as set out in WDHs Complaints Policy.

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