

Proposed Policy Amendments 2024

Theme	New Policy Page and Paragraph	May 2022 Policy Page and Paragraph	Amendment	Impact
Policy and Procedure				
2 Children Under 5 Years Old in a Flat and no Lift	Page 52 Appendix 9 2.15	Page 52 Appendix 9 2.21	Applicants to keep Band 1 until the youngest child turns 5. Applicants are being awarded a higher banding which is then removed as it takes so long to be rehoused. There are safeguarding issues with leaving a young child alone at the top of bottom of stairs while collecting shopping/pushchairs etc	As of July 2024, there are nine households on the housing waiting list meeting this criteria. There are nearly 3,800 on the waiting list in total, therefore the impact is considered low but would make a big difference to the families concerned.
Rural Allocation Policy (RAP)	Page 28 Appendix 1 3. Under Occupation 8. Cascading Process	Page 28 Appendix 1 Under Occupation Cascading Process	Some information has been re-written to make the policy clearer and easier for applicants to understand the aims of the policy and the areas that this applies. No changes have been made to the policy itself except where detailed below. The under occupation criteria has been amended in order to make best use of affordable housing stock. Under occupation by two bedrooms will only be allowed in exception circumstances and if agreed by the Homesearch partnership. The Cascading Process has been updated, pre-2022 wards have been removed and the villages within each community area have been included for ease of identification.	It is assessed that these amendments will have a minor impact on applicants, the only policy change will be to restrict under occupation of rural properties by two bedrooms. The other amendments are required for clarity and to ensure the information is up to date. Properties covered by a RAP account for a small proportion of the homes let through Monmouthshire Homesearch, in 2023/24 approximately 3.25% of lettings were to homes covered by the RAP - Emma.

<p>Suspensions and Demotions Policy and Procedure</p>	<p>Page 37 Appendix 3 6.2 and 6.3</p>	<p>Page 37 Appendix 3 6.2 and 6.3</p>	<p>An additional criteria has been included to allow flexibility where arrears have been incurred in private rented housing in order take into account the higher cost of renting privately:</p> <p><i>“For arrears/debt of £1,000 or above, or 8 weeks net private rent an applicant may be suspended ...”</i></p> <p><i>“We may demote an applicant for arrears/debt above £500, or above 4 weeks private rent, and below £1000.”</i></p> <p>The deadline for requesting an appeal has been extended from 21 days to 28 days.</p>	<p>There are 27 applicants living in private rented accommodation who are currently demoted or suspended on the housing register.</p>
<p>Intermediate Housing Framework</p>	<p>Page 58 Appendix 11</p>	<p>Page 59 Appendix 11</p>	<p>The identified income thresholds for Low Cost Home Ownership have been removed, instead these will be applied by individual community landlords but within guidance set by WG. Prospective purchasers will be required to evidence that the property is affordable and that they are unable to access market housing. This also applies to shared ownership.</p> <p>The intermediate rent and rent to own thresholds have been increased from £15,000 to £36,000 to £22,000 to £50,000. This is to bring the upper threshold in line with the assumed income needed to afford home ownership as assessed in Monmouthshire’s Local Housing Market</p>	<p>The amendments will benefit applicants as it is anticipated that more applicants will be eligible for Intermediate Housing. These amendments reflect the high private rental and property prices across Monmouthshire which are unaffordable to many residents.</p> <p>It is anticipated that these amendments will have a minor impact, intermediate housing (both LCHO and intermediate rent) accounts for a small proportion of the homes let through Monmouthshire Homesearch, in 2023/24 approximately 7% of lettings were to intermediate housing.</p>

			<p>Assessment Refresh 2024. The lower threshold of £22,000 is based on average 2 bed flat intermediate rent prices and the assumption that households should spend no more than 30% of their income on rent.</p> <p>Please note that neither shared ownership nor rent to own housing is current delivered in Monmouthshire.</p>	
Armed Forces Personnel	<p>P7, 3.2.2 d)</p> <p>P52 Appendix 9, 2.16</p>	<p>10 (d) (pg 8)</p> <p>Appendix 9, 2.16</p>	<p>d) The applicant has just been or is about to be discharged from the British Armed Forces and has previously lived in the County as defined in 3.2.2(a) immediately prior to joining the armed forces or has met these criteria through service.</p> <p>The spouse or civil partner of a serving British Armed Forces personnel will be considered to meet the British Armed Forces local connection criteria should a separation occur during service, if they can demonstrate they normally resided with their spouse/ civil partner as part of their household. This would also apply to bereaved spouses or civil partners of serving British Armed Forces personnel.</p> <p>Applicants Leaving the British Armed Forces or British Armed Forces accommodation</p>	<p>Expands LC to cover service personnel who are based and become settled in the area.</p> <p>Now covers family of service personnel to better meet obligations in the Covenant (armed forces community). Allows spouses to return or remain in the area if they have settled here/ have support networks.</p> <p>Changed to specify that it is the British/UK armed forces. Also changed to note that it now includes spouses of personnel as per the Covenant (applying to the AF community).</p> <p>Removal of 2.23 "Applicants who are active participants in operations of the Territorial</p>

	<p>P55 Appendix 9, 5.3</p>	<p>Appendix 9, 5.5</p>	<p>Applicants will meet this category when leaving the British Armed Forces and are in receipt of their Cessation of Duty Notice or their Testimonial of Military Service Notice and they have a local connection to Monmouthshire. Spouses or civil partners who separate from serving personnel will be considered as meeting this category should they demonstrate they previously normally resided with their spouse/ civil partner as part of their household and they have a local connection to Monmouthshire. This would also apply to bereaved spouses or civil partners of serving British Armed Forces personnel.</p> <p>If the applicant has left the armed forces or armed forces accommodation and secured alternative accommodation, they will be assessed on the accommodation they currently occupy. This band is awarded on basis the applicant doesn't own or lease their own accommodation and is threatened with/experiencing homelessness. It is applicable for up to five years post discharge, separation or loss.</p> <p>When assessing sufficient financial resources (also see Section 5.8 below) Homesearch would disregard financial resources relating to compensation or settlement connected with being in the armed forces.</p>	<p>Army (TA) will not be given extra preference on the Homesearch Register." as operational reservists may meet AF criteria (as covered in the Covenant) and so should be considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Changed the length of time this applies to 5 years, in line with local standard.</p> <p>Amended as there was a confusion regarding Reservists in 5.6 (Applicants who are Reservists (Territorial Army, Royal Navy /</p>
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	<p>P55</p> <p>Appendix 9, 5.5</p>		<p>Serving Armed Forces Personnel</p> <p>Applicants who are serving in the British Armed Forces can apply to join the Housing Register and will initially be placed into Band 4.</p> <p>Those applicants who have a local connection to Monmouthshire will be moved into Band 1 on receipt of their Cessation of Duty Notice or Testimonial of Military Service Notice. Applicants who are Reservists (Territorial Army, Royal Navy / Royal Marine Reserve, Royal Airforce Reserve) will not receive the Leaving the Armed Forces Priority as standard, but each case will be considered individually.</p> <p>Sufficient Financial Resources</p> <p>Income/money received as a result of injury connected to the armed forces (i.e compensation or settlement) or from welfare benefits will be excluded when Homeseach considers financial resources.</p>	<p>Royal Marine Reserve, Royal Airforce Reserve), will not be moved to Band 2, under Leaving the Armed Forces Priority.) Operational reservists may be considered as AF personnel and should not be disadvantaged for serving as in the covenant. Changed to Reservists being considered on an individual case basis if they meet additional priority criteria.</p>
<p>Sufficient Financial Resources</p>	<p>Page 55</p>	<p>Page 56 Appendix 9</p>	<p>The upper threshold has been increased from £45,000 to £50,000 to reflect high</p>	<p>There are currently 157 applicants assessed as having Sufficient Financial Resources, of</p>

	Appendix 9 5.5	5.8	<p>property prices across Monmouthshire. This is in line with the assumed income needed to afford home ownership as assessed in Monmouthshire's Local Housing Market Assessment Refresh 2024.</p> <p>A criteria has been introduced to allow flexibility in exceptional circumstances if agreed by the Homesearch Partnership and the Strategic Housing Manager.</p> <p>The thresholds will apply to households owed a Homelessness duty by MCC.</p>	<p>those an estimated 38 would be eligible for higher banding under the new policy.</p> <p>In rare circumstances, flexibility is needed to this criteria, for example when applicants have a high medical need and are unable adapt the property they are in. Other circumstances may be where an applicant is unable to access market housing for example due to a poor credit rating.</p> <p>There are current 294 households registered with a homelessness duty, of these just one applicant would be considered to have sufficient financial resources.</p>
Property size and type-eligibility	P22-24 15.1 14.4.1 p 21	P23-24 15.1	<p>Have added that couple/ single person households will be given equal priority for a 2 bedroom above GF flat subject to affordability assessment.</p>	<p>Couple/ single person households who have custody arrangements to have children overnight are eligible to bid for 2-bedroom properties. However, due to the limited numbers of GF flats, and their accessibility, it has been decided that preference for 2 bed GF flats will be given to those who can fully occupy, or those with mobility needs.</p> <p>This could potentially assist in housing another 8 families or people with limited mobility from the housing register.</p>
Interpretation and Guidance				

Household Circumstances	Page 9 3.10.1	Page 9 18.1	Added in “or with remaining in their current home” to cover people experiencing safety or welfare issues in their current accommodation.	
Local Connection	Page 7 3.2.2 a) 3.2.2 e)	Page 7 10.2 a) 10.2 e)	<p><i>“All existing contract-holders of a Homesearch Partner will also be considered to have a local connection”.</i></p> <p>This criteria has been added to enable applicants who are current occupants to transfer if their accommodation no longer meets their needs.</p> <p><i>“There are special circumstances, for example, the applicant or their household is currently receiving specialist medical or statutory services that are only available in the Monmouthshire area where the travel requirements are detrimental to their wellbeing”.</i></p> <p>This amendment clarifies the type of services considered suitable, specifies that applicants need to be accessing services and struggling to engage due their current residency outside Monmouthshire.</p>	<p>In the last financial year, 2 applicants were housed from the register who had ‘no local connection’ under the current allocations policy, neither have re-registered.</p> <p>However, the definition for a local connection for homeless applicants differs from the main allocation policy. This affected one applicant in the past year who then need to move again on welfare grounds.</p> <p>Assessed as minimal impact, known to have affected 2 people in the last 12 months. This is considered necessary to protect existing services in Monmouthshire.</p>
Eligibility and Social Housing	Page 46 Appendix 7	Page 46 Appendix 7	Due to the frequent amendments to the The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014 references to individual amendments have been removed and a catch all has been added to state that the authority abides by this legislation and following amendments in allocating social housing to those from abroad.	This should be less confusing to those reading the appendix, and will keep the section current. For those requiring more information the amendments can be sourced online.

Housekeeping				
Numbering	Throughout	Throughout	The policy has been renumbered throughout and links added in to facilitate navigating through the document.	There will be a positive impact on applicants as the policy will be easier to navigate.
Terminology	Throughout	Throughout	<p>The policy is now referred to consistently as the “Homesearch Policy”.</p> <p>MCC and the RSL partners overseeing the policy are referred to consistently as “Homesearch Partners” or the “Homesearch Partnership”.</p> <p>The “Housing and Communities Manager” has been amended to the “Strategic Housing Manager”.</p>	There is no assessed impact on applicants, these amendments are required to ensure the correct, up to date terminology is used throughout the document.
Rapid Rehousing	<p>Page 8 3.4.1</p> <p>Page 61 Appendix 12</p>	<p>Page 8 12.1</p> <p>Page 64 Appendix 12</p>	Updated terminology.	
Local Lettings Plans	Page 56 Appendix 10	Page 56 Appendix 10	Section included from Appendix 4 to group all information relating to Local Lettings Plans in one Appendix.	There will be a positive impact on applicants as the changes make the policy clearer.
Lettings Quotas	Page 48 Appendix 4	Page 43 Appendix 4	<p>Reworded to make it clearer that lettings quotas are not currently in place but can be reintroduced at any point if agreed by the Homesearch Partnership and the Strategic Housing Manager.</p> <p>First section relates to Local Lettings Plans so has been moved to Appendix 10.</p>	There will be a positive impact on applicants as the changes make the policy clearer.

