

# South Gloucestershire Council

## HomeChoice Panel Criteria

This document sets out the terms of reference for the council's HomeChoice Panel when considering applications for re-housing, referrals to the Panel and the Panel's criteria.

## **1] Aims**

To ensure that applications for re-housing with a high welfare or health need are fully and impartially assessed and awarded the appropriate priority under the council's re-housing policy. In particular those whose priority is likely to qualify for the award of a Priority Card, or whose application may need special consideration to be awarded Band A and this cannot be assessed solely by the HomeChoice team through application of the usual guidance and procedures.

In some cases the Panel will recommend the type of accommodation that an applicant will be eligible to bid for if this is outside the usual criteria.

## **2] Objectives of the HomeChoice Panel**

To promote a partnership approach in assessing cases by adopting a multi-disciplinary approach to decision making for complex cases, or where particular expertise is required.

To co-ordinate and advise on additional information that may be required to complete the full assessment.

To encourage housing applicants, those representing them and professionals working with them to be involved in the assessment of their housing priority and access needs, and to assure them that they have been consistently and fairly treated, and that their needs have been given full consideration.

## **3] Membership and Structure**

The Panel is made up of the following core representatives:

- A senior HomeChoice officer
- A housing manager from a partner Landlord
- A children's Social Services team manager
- A senior housing occupational therapist

Qualified medical opinion from a practicing GP or practice nurse will be sought where required. The council accepts its responsibility to pay for this under the agreed professional fees structure.

A quorum of at least 4 of the above representatives are required to attend any one Panel in order for the decisions made to be considered consistent and objective. Where housing access needs are being considered, one of the representatives must be an Occupational Therapist.

The Panel is open to representation from the applicant, or a representative appointed by them in the consideration of their case.

The Panel meets at least once a month and details of discussions and reasons for decisions are recorded. Individual cases may be considered between meetings on an emergency basis. Where it is not possible to convene a special session, information may be shared by email and opinions sought from representative in lieu of the Panel meeting.

The Panel is facilitated by the HomeChoice Team who will co-ordinate all cases to be considered and maintain records, update the housing register and keep applicants informed of decisions.

#### **4] Referral to the Panel**

The applicant, or anyone working with them can refer a case to the Panel. All households must be eligible and meet the qualification criteria to join the council's Housing Register.

All referrals should be submitted to the HomeChoice team. The team have a particular responsibility for identifying cases that the Panel's criteria may apply to when considering incoming housing applications. This may include instances where the applicant appears to have significant health or welfare needs that are as yet un-assessed due to demand issues experienced by other services. In these cases, the application will be assessed based on the information available at the time. If necessary, a re-assessment can be completed at a later date. Any assessment will consider whether any of the council's overrides apply, for example, financial capability.

The professional referring the case must fill in a referral form and send it to the HomeChoice team. Supporting information must be attached to the referral form. If this information is not attached, or is considered to be incomplete, the referral will be returned to the person making it.

Where an applicant is self-referring, they should identify how they feel that the Panel's criteria applies to their circumstances. Where the applicant needs assistance with this, the HomeChoice team are responsible for making enquiries on their behalf and preparing the case.

Referrals should either be e-mailed to, [homechoiceteam@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:homechoiceteam@southglos.gov.uk), or posted to, South Gloucestershire Council, PO Box 1955, HomeChoice, Bristol, BS37 0DE

#### **5] Selection**

Referrals will only be taken to the Panel where there is evidence of a severe welfare or health need that directly contributes to, or causes the applicant's need for rehousing, or those with significant health or welfare problems that would be improved by rehousing. Cases will not be referred if there is no evidence that the case meets the Panel criteria.

In addition, views will be sought about the applicant's ability to sustain a tenancy.

The initial application form, medical forms, referral form and supporting information will form the basis of the case to be considered by the Panel.

## **6] Keeping Applicants Informed**

Applicants are informed in writing of decisions made. This will be sent within 3 working days of the Panel's consideration of their case.

## **7] Review**

There is a discretionary right of review by applicants (or their representative) of all decisions made. This should be done in writing to the senior Homechoice officer along with their reasons for making the request. Where this is not possible, a request can be made verbally and the person receiving it will note the reasons.

It is important that the objectives of the Panel should be maintained and in the first instance, any review of a case will be returned to Panel for consideration along with the applicant, or their representative's reasons for requesting the review, including their own consideration of how the criteria applies to their circumstances.

Where the applicant continues to disagree with the Panel's decision, a further review will be carried out by a manager within the most relevant service, who was not involved in the original decision.

There is no further right of review within the council and the applicant will be informed of the council's complaints procedure if they continue to disagree.

No further referrals to the HomeChoice Panel will be considered unless there is a significant change in circumstances.

## **8] Reconsideration of a previously made decision**

The purpose of the Panel is to award urgent priority to an applicant in exceptional circumstances. In some instances, a person who has previously been awarded a higher banding under the Panel's criteria may not go on to fully participate in the Choice Based Lettings bidding system, they may refuse an offer of suitable housing, or their circumstances may change in such a way that the reasons for their priority no longer apply. Where this happens, the case will be reconsidered in the first instance by the senior homechoice officer who will return it to Panel where they recommend a change to the Panel's original decision. This includes the following circumstances:

- The person has failed to bid for 3 months following their enhanced priority and there were properties advertised during that time that appear to be suitable;
- The person has failed to bid successfully and it is likely that the circumstances conferring the priority have dissipated in the time they have been waiting to be rehoused.
- The person has refused an offer of accommodation which is regarded as suitable;
- At any time where it is reported to the HomeChoice service that the situation conferring the level of urgency has been resolved.

Where it is considered that the applicant has opted to not take full advantage of their priority, or has refused an offer of suitable housing and there was no good reason for this, or that the circumstances conferring the priority no longer exist, the Panel can decide that the priority be withdrawn and the applicant will be reassessed according to their new circumstances.

## **9] Eligibility for Awarding Priority on Health or Welfare Grounds**

### **9.1 Priority Card Status: Immediate housing need due to health or welfare need.**

Priority card will only be awarded where a member of the household:

- 1] Has critical and substantial and/or life threatening health problems directly linked to their housing situation where their current property cannot be adapted to meet their needs.

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Those who have developed severe mobility problems which prevent access to essential areas of their current accommodation e.g. permanent, complete wheelchair use, use of walking frame constantly, disabled for whatever reason and unable to negotiate stairs (currently in property with upstairs facilities).
- Hospital discharge/urgent health need: Where the applicant, or a member of their household, has a progressive, or chronic health condition and is unable to meet their own housing needs and where their existing accommodation cannot meet, or be made to meet their housing needs and they cannot be discharged home. A care plan for the relevant person must have been devised.
- Applicants with severe and enduring mental health problems being discharged from inpatient psychiatric services who would be at risk, or a risk to others, without settled accommodation, are not able to find suitable accommodation and an intensive care package has been arranged to support the applicant in independent living.
- Those with terminal/end stage life expectancy AND it must be demonstrated that the patient's current housing is unsuitable because of their illness and that it essentially affects their mobility and prevents them accessing facilities or carer's ability to provide care. For example, for those with severe chronic cardiac/respiratory disease that requires home oxygen use, the patient will be breathless at rest and unable to mobilise due to internal stairs.  
**Discretionary decisions to be made by the Panel on a case by case basis with the power to turn down applications if reports suggest short life expectancy (less than 6 months).**

- 2] Whose welfare needs are such that the protection of vulnerable adults or children is only possible if the household is re-housed.

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Where the present housing circumstances have deteriorated or are likely to deteriorate to such an extent as to place family members, particularly children, at risk or in need of residential care.
- The Council's safeguarding services have recommended that the person be urgently rehoused.

- Applicants who are acting as a police witness where the police have requested immediate rehousing under the witness protection scheme.
- Where the applicant, or a member of their household is subject to severe harassment, racial harassment, threats of violence, or actual violence, or threats of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and it appears that the problems can only be resolved by an immediate move.

NB - The Panel to consider what other remedies may be available to resolve the situation, e.g. legal remedies, or security improvements to home. If the applicant is in a property belonging to a partner landlord, the Panel must consider whether the situation can be resolved by the landlord's own housing management, anti-social behaviour, or internal transfer policies. A Guidance note in relation to the expectations of partner landlords in addressing tenancy or estate management problems is attached to this paper at Appendix A.

3] Where the current property is no longer available. Particularly,

- Applicants who are a tenant of a partner landlord and require permanent rehousing to enable redevelopment or refurbishment of their scheme or property.

NB - Demolition or prohibition order where the Private Sector Housing Team advise that, under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (Housing Act 2004), category 1 hazards exist that cannot be rectified - these are dealt with by the HomeChoice Team and do not need to go before the Panel.

## **9.2 Band A priority: Urgent housing need due to health or welfare circumstances:**

Band A will be awarded where a member of the household:

1] Is suffering from substantial health problems that would be improved by re-housing.

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Age >75: Those who have a history of frequent falls (every few weeks) with an existing diagnosis of osteoporosis/recent fractures directly linked to current housing and risk could be reduced by a move to more suitable accommodation.
- Applicants with dementia (Folstein <12), lacking insight and therefore at risk and that would benefit from moving to sheltered or supported accommodation. Views will be sought from adult care services regarding the ability of the applicant to manage in the proposed type of accommodation.
- Applicants with mental disorder, supported by Statutory Mental Health Services and being treated under the Care Programme Approach (CPA), who need rehousing, because:
  - Significant risk has been identified to the individual, or others, which can only be addressed through a move to new housing.
  - Current accommodation is unsustainable.
  - Interventions to sustain existing, or obtain viable alternative housing have been carried out and the results are unsuccessful, or would be inappropriate.

Representation should identify:

- The nature and extent of the mental disorder
- Significant risks and their relation to housing and how these will be addressed by a move
- Why the accommodation is unsustainable, and the actions that have so far been taken to sustain this accommodation and promote health, or to ensure that the same issues will not be transferred to a new address

(Panel to consider if CMHT involvement required in the allocation of accommodation)

- Applicants with severe learning disability, who are vulnerable in current housing. They must be known to the Learning Difficulties service and an explanatory letter from the Learning Difficulties services is needed to explain why re-housing is necessary.
- Applicants with learning disability needing to be re-housed from residential care, without settled accommodation and who are unable to find suitable accommodation. An intensive care/support package must have been arranged to support the applicant in independent living.
- Very poorly controlled epileptic patients (several fits per week), where there is risk of injury as a result of the layout of the property and where rehousing would eliminate this risk.
- Those with severe mobility problems as a result of progressive physical disability AND it must be demonstrated that the patient's current housing is unsuitable, because of their illness and that it essentially affects their mobility and prevents them accessing facilities, or a carers ability to provide care. For example, someone with severe arthritis, which is inoperable, or a neurological disease and the current property cannot be adapted to meet their needs and access to and mobility around the current property is affected. If essential facilities are accessible within the property and a ramp could be installed into the home, Band A will not be awarded.

NB - If applicant is waiting for a joint replacement, then Band A priority should not be awarded as the situation will be resolved.

- Patient suffers from severe chronic medical problem that affects mobility and causes severe difficulty accessing essential facilities. For example,
  - Breathlessness e.g. Chronic Heart Disease.
  - Chronic Lung Disease Test - results will reflect the severity of their impairment e.g. FEV1/FVC ratio 40-59%.
  - Echocardiogram findings of impaired LV function (31-40%) or inoperable severe valvular stenosis.
  - Clinical findings of oedema.
  - On high doses of medications for heart/lung disease.
  - Recurrent admissions into hospital as result of breathlessness, has needed input respiratory rehabilitation from LEEP team.

2] Whose welfare needs are such that there is an urgent need to move:

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Applicants who have suffered a traumatic event in, or extremely close to, their current home, where no other treatments, such as counselling are appropriate and remaining in the home would cause considerable ongoing distress.
- Where the applicant has undergone lengthy and expensive rehabilitation in residential surroundings and is ready to attempt independent living in the community and temporary accommodation, or existing housing would risk undoing the work of the centre or unit.
- Where children have been identified as vulnerable, settled accommodation is essential for their wellbeing and the household are unable to locate accommodation for themselves.
- Has an urgent need to move due to threats of or actual harassment, violence or abuse of any kind and the matter cannot be resolved through other means, including enforcement action.
- Applicants, aged 16-24, who have been looked after, fostered or accommodated by South Gloucestershire Council's Children and Young Peoples' Services, who were evicted from, or surrendered a social housing tenancy. A higher banding will only be considered where the Panel are satisfied that the young person can maintain any future tenancy.

The following information must be supplied with the HomeChoice Panel referral:

- A reference (statement) from their former landlord setting out the reasons for eviction/statement explaining why the tenancy was surrendered.
- Details of what support the young person has received to address these issues.
- Where the eviction was for rent arrears, details of the current debt and any repayments made alongside confirmation that the young person has obtained debt/money management advice.
- Details of any on-going support including any arrangements for post tenancy support.
- Applicants living in a South Gloucestershire supported housing scheme assessed as ready to move into independent accommodation by the housing provider. This will only apply where the Council and the housing provider have a service level agreement in place and where it is identified that there are no other suitable housing options. This banding will also require that, where appropriate, arrangements have been made for post-tenancy support.
- Applicants who are persistent offenders, whose offending behaviour can only be curtailed through a move to settled accommodation in social housing.

### **9.3 Band B priority: Housing need due to health or welfare circumstances.**

Band B will be awarded where a member of the household:

1] Suffers with significant health problems that could be eased by rehousing and current property cannot be adapted to meet need.

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Mobility problems, as a result of a progressive chronic condition, which is causing difficulty moving around the property, but do not reach the criteria for Band A. Will include physical disability, due to lower limb arthritis, but good pain control, perhaps with the less potent analgesics, any other physical disability that whilst present, does not reach the severity needed for A.
- Those with lung/heart disease who experience breathlessness, but do not have objective evidence in terms of the above echo/spirometry findings that suggest they have severe disease. It is recognised that they could be helped by rehousing (e.g. in level access accommodation, or closer to local amenities) but priority will go to the more severely affected.
- Moderate Learning disability that makes applicant vulnerable. Known to Learning Difficulties service. Application must be supported by an explanation from Learning Difficulties services as to why rehousing is needed and how it would help.
- Persons with epilepsy who fit frequently (once a month or more) despite compliance with medication and whose safety/risk could be bettered by a move to more suitable accommodation.

2] Is suffering from hardship that is associated with unsuitable housing.

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Drug dependent patients (incl. alcohol) where a move would help compliance with an established treatment programme that might lead to an improvement in the health of the applicant.
- Alternative accommodation is required to assist Social Services in delivering a care plan, or to relieve other social welfare hardship, as agreed between Social Services and Housing.
- A member of the household is suffering hardship as a result of isolation from relatives or support services.
- A member of the household is suffering hardship as a result of the need to move to an alternative location to take up particular employment, education or training opportunity.
- A member of the household is likely to achieve a greater level of independence if they are rehoused.

## **10]Overriding financial capability**

Section 2.6 of the council's lettings policy and procedure states,

'Applicants will be restricted to the registered applicant category if,

- A combination of their income, equity and savings means they are not eligible for means tested benefits (with the exception of households in receipt of working tax credit where they have no savings or equity) and/or,
- They have equity in a property exceeding the current savings limit for housing benefit, which is £16,000'.

In principle, properties advertised through HomeChoice are for letting to people on low incomes who have limited savings or assets, as this group may find it difficult to meet their housing needs in the private sector. However, there may be certain situations where it would be appropriate for the Panel to override this assessment where an applicant may not be able to access suitable accommodation in the private sector.

This includes, but is not limited to the following,

- Owner occupiers
  - a) Applicant struggling to pay the mortgage on the property due to changes in household finances and the property is at risk of repossession. Applicant requires adaptations, but they are not eligible for a disabled facilities grant, due to the threat of homelessness.  
Note: Evidence required that applicant has explored alternative financial solutions, e.g. possibility of re-mortgaging, taking payment holiday etc. and this would not resolve situation.
  - b) The current property is not suitable and adaptations are required, but this is not possible in the current home. The applicant does not have sufficient equity to purchase another property and it is not possible to source suitable accommodation in the private sector.
- Housing Association tenants of a partner member living in South Gloucestershire
  - a) Applicant is under occupying the property and wishes to move to a smaller home. Applicant requires adaptations, but they are not eligible for a disabled facilities grant, as they have indicated that they wish to move.
  - b) Applicant is under occupying the property and wishes to move to a smaller home. Has an urgent housing need due to health or welfare circumstances that would otherwise meet the criteria for a band A award. The applicant does not have the financial resources to purchase a property, or source suitable accommodation in the private sector.  
Note: Evidence required to show the impact that the current home is having on their health & welfare especially as it relates to the size of the property and the need to downsize.

## **11]Type of accommodation that an applicant will be eligible to bid for if this is outside of the usual criteria and Panel recommendations**

In some cases the Panel will recommend the type of accommodation that an applicant will be eligible to bid for if this is outside of the usual criteria.

This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Provision of extra space for essential equipment provided by the Health or Social Care Service
- Provision of an extra bedroom for live-in care. This can only be considered where live-in care is required for the majority of the time and does not include instances where live-in care is required on an ad-hoc basis, or for a relief carer.
- Where the provision of adaptations for the individual, or a member of the household, is only available within a particular property type.
- Where there is a particular access need only available within a particular property type.
- Where nearby parking is required - please specify distance.
- Where additional space is required to allow a carer, who is a member of the household, to run a business from home within the criteria set out and agreed with the participating RP (see section 10 for further information).
- Where there is a need for ground floor accommodation only. E.g. applicant cannot manage upper storey accommodation with a lift.
- Where there is a need for bungalow accommodation only for an applicant under 60 years old.
- Extra space required to assist applicant being cared for to undertake ordinary day to day activities.
- Any other personalised need within the household.

In addition the Panel can recommend the type of property or area on which an applicant should not bid if they feel it is not suitable or there is a risk to the household.

The Panel may recommend that an applicant engages with certain support agencies e.g. Occupational Therapist involvement to ensure suitability of a property before any formal offer is made, floating Support to assist with setting up of tenancy etc.

Where the person is approved for extra space, the rent for the size of the property would be charged in full and they should be informed that any shortfall in meeting the full eligible rent through any restrictions under HB size criteria should be met by them through other means.

## **12]Use of residential premises for running a business and the award of additional space for carers who do so**

In order to consider someone for additional space under these circumstances, the applicant must fulfil the following criteria:

- 1) The space is needed to enable a live-in carer, who is a part of the household to run their business from home where otherwise they would not be able to do so.
- 2) The need for live-in care has been established through the Children Adult & Health service.
- 3) The person receiving care has confirmed the care arrangement with the person providing care.
- 4) The landlord of the property being bid for has a policy to approve the use of residential accommodation for business purposes and will grant/has granted permission for the carer's particular business.
- 5) The applicant could not continue with their business other than with the additional space.
- 6) Additional space is up to a maximum of one room over the usual bedroom allocation of the landlord.
- 7) The case for the business is established through the fulfilment of all the following:
  - The business is the main income, i.e. more than 50% of total personal income for the carer.
  - The business is registered.
  - The business has been operational long enough for the applicant to be able to demonstrate to the Council that their business is established and that if it ceased to operate this would have an adverse financial effect on the family.
- 8) The business would not require a change of use to business premises outside the charitable rules applying to the landlord.
- 9) Rent for the size of the property would be charged in full and the person should be informed that any shortfall in meeting the full eligible rent through any restrictions under the housing benefit size criteria should be met by them through other means.
- 10) It is the tenant's responsibility to inform Council Tax for consideration of any business rates due.
- 11) The tenant must have full insurance to enable them to run the business from their home.
- 12) The business does not require alterations to be made to the property.
- 13) The landlord retains the right to approve the bid and the allocation of additional space.

## HOMECHOICE PANEL

A Guidance Note in Relation to the Role of Partner Landlords in Addressing Tenancy or Estate Management Problems Resulting in a Recommendation to Re-house as an Emergency.

### 1.0 General

1.1 This note should be considered by the Panel in respect of existing social tenants as a way of solving problems of severe anti-social behaviour where it appears that the problems can be resolved only by an emergency transfer outside the landlord's own management transfer or tenancy management policies including anti-social behaviour.

1.2 This note is not to be used in the following circumstances:

- to support transfer applications that can be routinely assessed under the HomeChoice rehousing policy
- to applicants other than assured tenants eligible to join South Gloucestershire Council's housing register
- to support transfer requests where an area or a scheme is experiencing generic anti-social behaviour – the purpose of the assessment is to support tenants who are being directly targeted where it is demonstrated that they are suffering particular stress or hardship due to the ASB.

1.3 Landlords have a duty to safeguard their tenants who, on the grounds of risk and threat to their immediate safety, are unable to remain in their own accommodation, and who otherwise would be considered as homeless.

1.4 This includes introductory tenants and assured tenants other than those with an advanced warning or who are under notice where their reason for applying for the transfer is associated with any enforcement action being taken against them.

1.5 Where the tenant has unrelated breaches of tenancy on file, e.g. rent arrears, allegations of antisocial behaviour, harassment etc., these should not prevent them from applying to be considered under this policy. The Panel will nonetheless take these into account in investigating the case and to what extent they have motivated the application.

1.6 Tenants applying for an emergency transfer through the HomeChoice Panel will be considered only where all other solutions have been examined to maintain a tenant in their home, and discounted as inappropriate, and thus it has been clearly demonstrated that there are no other remedies.

1.7 In order to maintain the credibility and operational effectiveness of the landlords housing management policies, an emergency transfer will always be an exceptional solution applying to exceptional circumstances,

## **2.0 Consideration of Emergency Transfer Applications and Estate Management Actions**

- 2.1 Each case should be investigated and reported on by a Lead Officer for the partner landlord, who will usually be the relevant Area Housing Manager. This can be delegated as appropriate to the relevant Housing Officer, but no case will be presented to the HomeChoice Panel as an emergency transfer without the Area Housing Manager's approval.
- 2.2 A key line of enquiry for the Lead Officer in any application for a management transfer is to establish whether a solution to the problem is likely to be achieved by management action. The lead officer will need to take a judgement on the appropriate response to any report by a tenant of harassment and/or violence. A wide range of support, actions, and remedies are available including:
- counselling
  - support to remain in the tenancy
  - support for the perpetrators of the ASB to address their behaviour and its likelihood of success
  - mediation, particularly in instances where there are counter allegations
  - warnings
  - private legal remedies, e.g. injunctions
  - other enforcement actions, e.g. noise abatement orders, anti-social behaviour orders, closure orders
  - landlord control actions, e.g. possession action/NOSP
  - minor improvement works, e.g. sound insulation, improved fencing, security for blocks of flats, security options for enabling the person to remain in the tenancy
  - transfer through qualification through the normal transfer route
  - management transfer
  - private rented sector housing
  - homelessness application
- 2.3 It is evident that a solution to the tenant's problem may be achieved in many ways, and a number of options can be considered simultaneously. It is for the Lead Officer to ensure that the most appropriate action/s are taken.
- 2.4 In investigating cases where the alleged perpetrator is a social tenant or someone associated with a tenancy, the information gained can be used to take action against the perpetrator and hence finding a solution to problems of anti-social behaviour in accommodation managed by the landlord. The complainant will be informed of this and their co-operation requested in providing evidence to enable the landlord to take action.
- 2.5 In order that appropriate and complete consideration is given to the circumstances of every case, the Lead Officer should always complete a Report for the HomeChoice Panel setting out all the key and relevant facts. The report should include the following:
- (a) a brief history of the case and action taken by the landlord, police etc,
  - (b) What other remedies have been considered/enacted and why they cannot be pursued.
  - (c) An explanation of why a move is the only recommended resolution of the situation

(d) Why a transfer would also be in the landlord's interests in terms of effective housing management or helping resolve a particular problem of ASB

(e) reference to the tenant's own history as a tenant and any outstanding warnings/arrears/notices/possession actions that are underway

### **3.0 Homelessness duties**

- 3.1 There is a legal entitlement whereby a tenant being considered for emergency accommodation may concurrently pursue an application as a homeless person if they wish to do so. It should be recognised however that homelessness is a high penalty for any tenant with tenancy rights who cannot remain in their accommodation due to the actions of others. It should also be recognised that their removal does not in itself resolve the problem.
- 3.2 Where the tenant wishes to apply under the Homelessness legislation, an application should be taken and registered as such by the HomeChoice service. The Council expects nonetheless that the partner landlord continue to take responsibility for the ASB on their patch and to report to the Council any progress in resolving the issues, particularly where the person can return to their tenancy.
- 3.3 The HomeChoice service may rely on information presented to the HomeChoice Panel in considering the outcome of the homeless application, including the Panel recommends in the case.
- 3.4 Where emergency accommodation is provided, it is essential that the Housing Officer and Housing Options Officer work together to resolve the case. The tenant should be informed:
- that all emergency placements are likely to be into B & B and/or refuge accommodation
  - that a placement into emergency accommodation while their application is being considered is not a guarantee of the acceptance of their case and as such, they should not voluntarily relinquish their tenancy in anticipation of this. Where they do voluntarily relinquish, and their emergency transfer application is not accepted, they may be found to be intentionally homeless.
  - That the responsibility for the payment of the rental charges for the tenancy remains with the tenant while they are accommodated in emergency accommodation. Where they are receiving Housing Benefit, their entitlement will be transferred to the emergency accommodation, this being their place of residence, and they will be expected to cover all ineligible costs in respect of their emergency placement. Information regarding eligibility for dual housing benefit claims will be provided by the Housing Officer
  - That they will be subject to the terms of occupancy for the emergency accommodation that they are provided with and should they breach those terms resulting in a withdrawal of the emergency accommodation, then no further other offers of emergency accommodation will be made pending the outcome of the consideration of the homelessness application including emergency transfer.

#### **4.0 Approval of Emergency Transfer Cases**

- 4.1 The Panel will consider all the information available to it. Where it is felt that additional information is required, the Panel will refer the case back to the partner Area Housing Manager making the referral.
  - 4.2 The Panel will consider the circumstances and what options have been considered by the landlord and discounted for the tenant remaining in their accommodation. The Panel should be satisfied that the landlord and tenant have considered all options to address the situation and that the only resolution available for this tenant is to be rehoused as an emergency.
-