



**MANCHESTER**  
CITY COUNCIL

# **Rehousing in Manchester**

**a guide for staff of  
Barnardo's Leaving Care Team**

*March 2006*

## What is the Manchester Housing Register?

The Manchester Housing Register is a computerised database of all the people who have applied for rehousing, shared by Manchester City Council and all the city's major Registered Social Landlords.

Applying to just one of the MHR partner organisations means that the applicant is registered simultaneously with all the others and therefore has access to rehousing in the vast majority (94%) of the city's social rented properties – over 84,000 homes.

Sometimes people refer to the MHR as the 'waiting list', the 'joint register' or even just 'the queue'. In fact it's a very complex system enabling applicants to queue for multiple types of property across different areas of the city, and with differing levels of priority according to each of the partner organisations' policies.

## How would you go about getting a service-user registered on the MHR?

There are several ways an applicant can register:

- At any local Council office – call 0161 953 2525 to make an appointment
- At any partner RSL office – make an appointment at the office (see numbers below)
- Over the telephone with Homefinder – call 0161 230 2534
- On-line – at [www.manchesterhomefinder.org](http://www.manchesterhomefinder.org)
- Homeless Families                      0161 234 4847    (singles/couples with children)
- Women's Direct Access                0161 219 6050    (female singles/couples without children)
- Men's Direct Access                    0161 273 7306    (male singles/couples without children)

The City Council's Homelessness Service will assess whether we have a statutory duty to rehouse someone under the relevant legislation, and if someone qualifies we can also provide temporary accommodation for them. Sometimes people qualify although they are currently living in accommodation provided by another agency – yourselves – if the reason they are there is that otherwise they would be homeless.

### Keeping up to date with a client's application – Enquirer Codes

If an enquirer code is added to an application, that person or team will be automatically notified whenever anything happens to the application.

For Barnardo's staff, the enquirer code is **35**

It is up to staff, whenever a service user is registered, to make sure that this enquirer code is input – so that you are kept informed whenever the applicant receives an offer, needs to re-register, is suspended etc. You may then need to arrange for the applicant to contact the office which holds their application, to update their circumstances/

## Which organisations are in the MHR?

There are currently 20 partner organisations in the MHR:

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
Adactus Housing Group	Lettings Section	0161 226 5384
Arcon HA	Karen Moore	0161 214 4120
Ardwick Grove Village PFI	Anila Khalid	0161 274 1180
Ashiana HA	Rachel Longley	01706 712252
Contour Housing	Donna Woods	0845 602 1120
Eastlands Homes	Lettings Section	0161 274 2390
Guinness Trust	Lorraine Sykes	01706 369050
Irwell Valley HA	Michelle Carr	0161 610 1000
Manchester City Council	Homefinder	0161 230 2534
Manchester & District HA	Harvest Response	0845 345 0272
Manchester Methodist HA	Kate Woodward	0161 447 5000
Mosscare Ltd	Pam Light	0161 226 4211
Northern Counties HA	Paul Pritchard	0161 244 6800
Northwards Housing Trust	On Call	0161 953 2662
People First HA	Melanie Merchant	0161 226 1917
Places for People	Lettings section	0161 875 1450
Space New Living Ltd	Caroline Hamblett	0161 925 7931
St Vincent's HA	Rose O'Brien	0161 865 6565
William Sutton Trust	Julie Lowe	01477 539250
Willow Park Housing Trust	Alison Holt	0161 498 1601

*... and as the City Council transfers the remainder of its housing stock to new RSLs over the next few years, the new management organisations will also join the MHR:*

Parkway Green Housing Trust	approx June 2006
Miles Platting PFI	approx September 2006
South Manchester stock transfer RSL	approx spring 2007
Inner South Manchester stock transfer RSL	approx spring 2007
East Manchester stock transfer RSL	approx autumn 2008
Collyhurst PFI	approx summer 2008
Brunswick PFI	approx 2010

Each partner organisation has its own Allocations Policy, however those who came into being through taking over management of Council properties are required to apply the same principles as the City Council's Allocations Policy:

## A SUMMARY OF MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL'S ALLOCATIONS POLICY

**Applicants appear on the register in date order, within their Priority Group:**

**Group 1** *is awarded to the following:*

- Applicants with a Manchester connection, whose home is in a redevelopment scheme and due to be demolished or extensively refurbished.
- Applicants with a Manchester connection, and who have very severe medical needs which are being made worse by their current accommodation.
- Special Transfer applicants who already live in Manchester City Council homes which are in very high demand by people in housing need.

**Group 2** *has three sub-groups; which are awarded to:*

### **Emergency (2E)**

Applicants with a Manchester connection, who are in need of urgent rehousing because of violence or harassment in their current accommodation, or who are homeless or about to become homeless and who will consider a home in any part of the city.

### **Housing Need (2X)**

Applicants with a Manchester connection, who are in housing need.

These include: overcrowding, living in poor conditions, having less severe medical needs but which are affected by their current accommodation, needing to move areas for support or other 'social' reasons, living in temporary accommodation or being asked to leave their tenancy or lodging arrangement.

### **Community Connection (2C)**

Applicants who qualify under the Community Connection criteria. These criteria are:

- having a parent who has lived in a particular area of Manchester for 5 years and has a 'positive residence history'
- having lived in a particular area themselves for at least 5 years and having a 'positive residence history'
- being employed or undertaking work-related training in a particular area of Manchester which they currently find it difficult to travel to, or difficult to travel between childcare facilities and place of work/training
- providing employment or community services (eg. voluntary work) in a particular area
- providing foster care on behalf of Children Families & Social Care in Manchester

*Please tell us if you think an applicant may qualify for a Community Connection. If this is the case, they could be priority group 2C for that particular area, even if they do not qualify as in general housing need or live outside Manchester*

### **Offers to applicants in Group 2 are made in alternation between the three sub-groups.**

Applicants who qualify for Emergency or Community Connection priority are likely to be offered a property more quickly than other applicants in housing need, BUT there are special rules attached to these priorities and penalties for refusing a suitable offer. Please contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

**Group 3** *is awarded to:*

Applicants with a Manchester connection who are not in housing need.  
Applicants without a Manchester connection.

## What is a 'Manchester connection' and why is it important?

The City Council has certain statutory responsibilities that stipulate who we are allowed to give 'reasonable preference' to, and this includes prioritising people who live or work within our local authority area. We can only give an applicant 'housing need' priority (i.e put them in Group 2 or above) if they have a 'Manchester connection'. The criteria for this are:

- Being currently resident in Manchester (*NB Some types of temporary accommodation, e.g. prison, do not necessarily count as being resident*)
- Having lived in Manchester recently but having moved away less than 6 months ago
- Having lived in Manchester for a period of at least 10 years at some point in the past
- Being in employment in Manchester
- Being in full-time education in Manchester (*the applicant, not their children*)

Due to the sheer numbers of people on the register, if an applicant doesn't have a Manchester connection – e.g. if they have never lived or worked in Manchester, it's unlikely they would have high enough priority ever to receive an offer from the Council. Most of the RSL partners however, are not subject to this statutory responsibility and may prioritise people no matter what their connection - so it is still worth someone applying.

**NB** All young people who are 'in care' or 'looked after' by Manchester City Council will automatically qualify for a Manchester connection. If the applicant does not appear to qualify under the above criteria – e.g they have been living in foster care in Trafford – you need to request that the connection is specifically given to the applicant.

### Leaving Care – housing need priority

All young people leaving a childrens' home or foster care are entitled to Group 2 priority for rehousing into a Council or RSL tenancy. The registering office will require written confirmation of their leaving care date from Barnardo's Leaving Care Team and will normally expect the young person's Advisor to accompany them to the registration interview.

If a young person is leaving care to return to live with family members and their current home is not large enough to accommodate them all, the household can be given priority to move to a larger property.

### What Homefinder does.

Homefinder is the City Council's Choice-Based Lettings scheme. Every week some of the Council's vacant properties, and some that our partners have put forward, are advertised for applicants to 'bid' for. The available properties are published on the Homefinder website and in the Homefinder Weekly newsletter which is sent out to a wide range of venues across the city – e.g. libraries, job centres.

People who are interested in the available properties register their bid on the internet or over the phone and when all the bids are in – usually after a week – the property is offered to the applicant with the highest priority who bid for it. Applicants can bid for several properties at a time and continue to bid each week.

### Housing Association Nominations

All the RSLs in Manchester, even those who are not MHR partners, are required to accept nominations from the Council for 50% of their vacant properties each year. This means that they tell us when they have a property available and we tell them who they should offer it to. We nominate applicants from the MHR according to who has the most priority according to the City Council's Allocations Policy – just like a direct offer of our own properties.

## **Complaints & Queries**

Applicants are perfectly entitled to make enquiries or complaints through CABx, Shelter, their Councillor, MP or support workers... and they frequently do!

Often however, it's much quicker and simpler just to contact their 'casepapers-holding' office – this is usually the office they originally registered with.

If the applicant, or their advocate, wants to challenge a decision or provide additional information, the local team manager will have the authority to make amendments to their application and if there is a complex problem they will consult us – Central Rehousing Group - for advice.

If the applicant is registered with a City Council team, the number to contact is: 0161 953 2525.

If the applicant is not happy with the service they have received at a local office, they can use the Complaints procedure. Usually a formal complaint should be addressed to the team manager at that office in the first instance. CRG will get involved if required, and if the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily, the applicant will be informed who is the more senior manager they could then appeal to.

## **When service–users are refused rehousing.**

If an applicant applies for rehousing through the Homelessness service, but they don't meet the statutory criteria, they may be told they are ineligible for local authority housing under Part VII of the Homelessness Act 2002. This means that they are not owed a full statutory duty, but the person can still register for rehousing as a 'general' applicant. Homelessness staff sometimes refer to these applicants as 'advice & assistance' cases.

If you have a client who believes they have been told they can't register at all, please let us know; this is usually a misunderstanding.

If an applicant is an overseas national and has visa conditions that specify "no recourse to public funds", the City Council is not legally allowed to rehouse that person or nominate them. They can still register however, because they can be rehoused by most of the RSL partner organisations – the exceptions are those which manage properties that the Council actually owns (Northwards Housing and the PFIs). (*See further details below*)

Some applicants will be told that they are not eligible for rehousing because they appear on the Rehousing Review List. In order to have their entry deleted or overridden, the applicant will need to appeal to the office that created the entry. The manager of the office will review the case. (*See further details below.*)

## **My client needs a disabled-adapted property - Equipment & Adaptations Service**

A specialist team supervises the letting of properties which have adaptations for people with disabilities, to ensure the best match for people's needs. Adapted properties are only offered to people without disabilities if a suitable match to a disabled applicant cannot be made – and we will usually remove any adaptations that can be re-used elsewhere.

The Equipment & Adaptations team also assess the needs of applicants who require adaptations, and arrange new adaptations for properties which don't already have them. People with disabilities are therefore able to access any of the properties available through the register.

If you have an applicant who may require special adaptations, they should register in the normal way and ask for a Medical and/or Adaptations assessment – we will take it from there.

## **My client will need on-going support – Housing Support Service**

This is a service provided by the City Council for people with low to medium support needs, to help them settle into a new tenancy and deal with issues such as budgeting, sorting out repairs, and signposting to other specialist services. Support packages are provided for an initial six-month period, which can be extended but is not intended to be permanent. The cost (approx £80.00 a week) is charged to the rent account and is eligible for Housing Benefit. Applicants can request a support assessment at any time.

NB: We cannot usually double-fund support, so someone who is already being supported by a service that receives Supporting People funding would probably not be eligible for this at the same time as the Housing Support Service.

Any young person aged 16 or 17 who is pregnant or already has a child/children, will be automatically referred to Housing Support Services as part of a Government initiative to help young parents establish and sustain a home for their family.

### **My client has been told they have Emergency priority , what does that mean?**

Applicants who are acknowledged to be in housing need because of violence or serious harassment; or who are homeless or imminently homeless – whether they have presented to the Homelessness service or not – can be awarded Emergency priority by any of the MHR partner organisations.

Evidence will usually be required, and it is vital that the applicant is made aware of and agrees to the **special rules** attached to Emergency priority:

The applicant may be made an offer of a suitably-sized property **anywhere in the city**. Special requests such as wanting a garden or a parking space, will not be taken into account but medical needs will be. If the applicant refuses an offer, there are penalties: the Emergency priority is removed and the applicant's queue date is forward-dated by twelve months.

Applicants can appeal that the property they were offered was not suitable, but less than 50% of these are successful and appeals on the basis that the applicant simply isn't keen on the particular property or the area it's in are very unlikely to be successful. If there are parts of the city that an applicant really can't accept, e.g. for fear of violence or court order, this should be discussed at the point that Emergency priority is awarded.

If the applicant is eligible for Emergency priority but doesn't want to accept the special rules, they can opt not to have it – but this will mean that they are likely to wait longer for rehousing.

On average, applicants with Emergency priority wait 6-12 months for rehousing. The average waiting time for applicants in housing need but without Emergency priority can be anything from 6 months to over 5 years, depending on what they are queuing for.

Applicants who have been accepted as being owed a full statutory duty under the Homelessness legislation will be given Emergency priority and they do not have the option of refusing this. This is Manchester City Council's policy because we have to discharge our statutory duty to these people and we have to 'free-up' places in our temporary accommodation to meet the pressing needs of new cases.

As service providers, you also may decide that it is the policy of your organisation that eligible applicants from your service must accept Emergency priority in order to have people rehoused as quickly as possible and make their bed-space available for a new client. This is something only you can decide, but CRG are happy to discuss all the implications with you if your organisation wishes to consider this.

### **My client has been asked about their nationality - Persons From Abroad procedure**

All applicants who have ever lived abroad, whatever their nationality, must complete a questionnaire and provide proof of their citizenship and immigration status. This is because the City Council is prevented by law from offering tenancies to certain groups of people. These include Asylum Seekers whose claim has not yet been determined and people whose visa specifies "No Recourse to Public Funds".

CRG carry out all the assessments and we can make a decision almost instantly once we have seen the necessary paperwork. We aim to allow as many applicants as possible to access all the properties available through the register, but if the Council is unable to rehouse them, they can still be on the register for rehousing with RSL partners.

## **My client has been told they are on the Rehousing Review List.**

This is a parallel database to the register; which lists people whose past actions have made them **ineligible** for a tenancy. Any partner organisation can create entries and the RRL applies to statutory Homeless applicants equally as much as to general applicants. Entries can only be overridden or deleted by the team that created them.

The criteria for being put on the RRL are: previous eviction from a tenancy; outstanding debt to a previous landlord; anti-social behaviour during a previous tenancy; being - in the judgement of the Serious Offenders Panel - too great a risk to the community to rehouse; or intending to live with someone who qualifies under these criteria.

If an applicant wants to appeal against their RRL entry they will need to write to the manager of the team that 'owns' the entry and explain why. If they owe money the manager will want to see a repayment arrangement. If they have been involved in anti-social behaviour, the manager will want some evidence that this isn't likely to happen again.

If the office that created the entry has disbanded – eg. because the properties have been transferred to another landlord, any appeal should be addressed to CRG and we will allocate it to a senior manager on a rota basis.

Applicants with active RRL entries will be suspended from the register and cannot be made offers, nominated or bid for properties through Homefinder.

## **My client has been asked about their criminal record – Serious Offenders procedure.**

All applicants are asked to declare whether any member of their household has a criminal conviction. If someone has a conviction for one of the serious offences on our list, and it isn't spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, we will obtain a risk assessment from a Probation Officer or similar, and all relevant information will be submitted to our multi-agency Serious Offenders Panel. The panel includes representatives from Probation, Greater Manchester Police, Housing Support Service and others. The panel may approve an applicant for rehousing, either as it stands or with special conditions; they may defer a decision pending further information or an update on progress from Probation; or they may refuse rehousing. Special conditions may include personalised clauses to be added to a tenancy agreement when rehoused – eg. that the applicant will not keep drugs in the property - which are enforceable by Possession Order. Occasionally the Panel requires that the applicant must have a Compliance Tenancy.

Applicants can appeal against decisions made by the Serious Offenders Panel by writing to CRG in the first instance.

## **My client has been told they must have a Compliance Tenancy**

These are intensively supported tenancies designed for people whose case has been before the Serious Offenders Panel, or referred through the MAPPP process by Probation, and it has been decided that any risk they may pose needs to be minimised by close management in the community. For these people it is a requirement that they agree to a Compliance Tenancy in order for them to be rehoused. A support worker will provide up to as much as 10 hours contact a week for up to 2 years, according to the individual, and will liaise with all the other agencies that person needs to engage with e.g. Probation, Drugs & Alcohol Services. They aim to work with the tenant to address the root causes of the offending behaviour. If the tenant breaches the terms of any of their agreements – tenancy, probation etc, or there are concerns about risk to others, the relevant agency will be informed. The service is funded by Supporting People, so there is no cost to the landlord, but this service cannot usually be combined with other Supporting People-funded services.

## How can I get my client a Community Connection Award?

This is a priority scheme that runs alongside the assessment of applicants' housing needs under our statutory obligations. It only applies to an applicant's priority with the City Council, but this does include nominations, so if an applicant registers with an RSL partner and they feel they might be entitled to a Community Connection award, they will pass on the details to CRG to assess.

Community Connection awards are not the same thing as having a 'Manchester connection'. They apply to one rehousing area only – and they do give an applicant a significant advantage in the queue for that area – but only if the applicant meets very specific criteria:

- Having lived in that area for at least 5 years and being able to demonstrate a 'positive residence history' (*i.e. no rent arrears or anti-social behaviour*)
- Having a parent who has lived in that area for at least 5 years and who can demonstrate a 'positive residence history' *NB: Parents and legal guardians are the only relatives that count under this criteria, not children or other relatives.*
- Having employment (or certain work-related training; or childcare that the applicant needs in order to stay in employment) in that area while currently living an unreasonable distance away.
- Having contributed to the well-being of the community in that area through voluntary activities for at least 6 months.
- Having been approved by Manchester City Council as requiring a move to or within that area in order to foster a child/children.

Please encourage applicants who may qualify for a Community Connection award to ask for it. However, please also note that these are the only criteria that apply – we cannot give these awards to people who just particularly like an area, use community facilities or have friends there; this is a common misconception amongst applicants!

### *Changes in the pipeline...*

We are currently carrying out a review of our Allocations Policy, in response to changes in housing need within Manchester. This can be a long process because we must check all the statutory and service delivery implications and get agreement from elected Members at a number of Committee levels. If all the proposed changes go ahead, they will probably be implemented in line with the introduction of our new IT system later in 2006. We will provide a full briefing when any changes are due to take effect.

### **For more information, please contact us:**

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