



Policy and Criteria for Special Needs Rehousing

A person or household can apply for a priority move, on grounds of Special Needs Rehousing 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.

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) will work in partnership with Wakefield Council to ensure that consistent decision making procedures are applied when awarding / refusing additional priority on the grounds of Special Needs Rehousing.

The Criteria

The definition of disability as outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act is used to determine the Special Needs Rehousing criteria and it will be updated on a regular basis as changes occur in legislation.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as physical (including sensory) or mental impairment which has had a substantial or long term adverse effect upon a persons 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 bathing.
- Problems with lighting or heating which affect their health.

WDH will consider person's for special need rehousing priority if their disability / illness has a substantial and long term effect and falls into at least one of the points below:

- Affects 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.
- If likely to have an effect for the rest of the persons life.

The Clinical Lead Occupational Therapist will provide advice and guidance on medical conditions.

WDH do not assess person's applying for special needs rehousing due to mental impairment, if an application is received from a person applying for priority due to mental impairment a referral will be made to Wakefield Council's Open Door Project.

Awarding Priority

Once the application has been received at the Special Needs and Disability Unit it will be checked to ensure it meets the special needs rehousing criteria, any applicants with terminal illnesses will be treated as a priority assessment. WDH will aim to visit applicants that meet the criteria with 20 days to complete an HM2 form. 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.

The application will then be referred to the Special Needs Rehousing Panel for a decision on the priority status for a move. The panel is held weekly and is made up of the Clinical Lead Occupational Therapist, a representative from a local service access point, a member of the Homeseach Team and the Specialist Accommodation Officer from Wakefield Council. All decisions are recorded on a weekly sheet for audit purposes with details of who was present at the panel.

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

- Award band A (SM) priority.
- Award band B (SM) priority.
- Not to award any priority.
- Refer for consideration of adaptations or equipment.
- Write to consultants or health professionals for more medical info.
- Refer for an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment.
- Refer to the Independent Living Team for an Independent Living assessment.
- Hold whilst another agency or Wakefield Council is consulted for information, such as, Family Services.
- Refer to the Open Door Project.
- Refer to the Specialist in Community Medicine or where this service is not available refer to an Independent Occupational Therapist.
- Withdraw the application as it does not fit the criteria for special needs rehousing.

Criteria for Band A – Welfare and Medical Need

Will be awarded:

- If the property is very unsuitable for the applicants 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 cannot be made for the person to be accommodated on the ground floor of the property.

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 property and would not be if rehoused.
- If the applicant is unable to access essential facilities in the property, such as, toilet, bathing, cooking.
- If the applicant is unable to use the facilities without excessive pain and / or difficulty.
- If rehousing will lead to a significant improvement in the applicants health

Applicants will be informed of the panel's decision in writing, within three working days by the Clinical Lead Occupational Therapist.

Members who are still seeking accommodation 3 months after A priority is awarded or 6 months after B priority is awarded will undergo a review to determine whether the priority should be removed or extended for a further period. The review will take into account bidding history and any reasonable offers refused by applicant.

If an application is awarded a band A priority and the panel have specified that a person requires a particular type of property with adaptations, the application will be referred to the Specialist Accommodation Officer (Wakefield Council) for a direct letting. If a potential property becomes available a void inspection will be carried out to check the suitability.

If the application has been referred for an OT assessment this will be done within four weeks. The application will be resubmitted to the next Special Needs Rehousing Panel.

Appeals

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

All appeals must be made in writing by the applicant 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 also be treated as an appeal.

The appeal will then go back to panel with the appeal letter / any new evidence for reconsideration.

If the panel upholds the original decision the applicant will be referred to the Specialist in Community Medicine (SCM) for a further decision. The applicant will be sent a letter explaining that the case will be heard by the SCM and that they will be notified of the decision in due course. The SCM may request further medical information or an OT assessment before a final decision can be made. The SCM is employed by the Health Authority and their decision is final, if an applicant wished to pursue an appeal from here they would have to appeal using the WDH complaints procedure.

During times where the SCM is unavailable to hear cases the applications will be sent to an Independent Occupational Therapist.

The Clinical Lead OT will refer all appeal cases on a monthly basis to the SCM.