



A guide to the banding scheme



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Section 1

Introduction

We receive a lot of applications each year from people wanting re-housing in the West Lancashire area. Because it is not possible to house all of them, we must have a way of deciding who to allocate properties to.

To help us make that decision, we use a banding system.

Questions we are often asked

What is the banding scheme and how does it work?

We use the banding system instead of awarding points. There are four bands, A,B,C and D. Each is made up of a set of conditions. If your circumstances meet at least one of a band's conditions, that is the band we will put your application in.

The scheme is designed to be as fair as possible and to make sure we take into account all your circumstances. The information you provide on your application form will help us assess your housing need and decide which band to put your application into.

What happens if I meet more than one condition in the same band?

If your circumstances meet more than one of the conditions in the same band, your application will stay in that band.

The exception to this is if you meet two or more of the conditions for band B. If this happens, we will consider you to have multiple housing need, and we will put your application in band A.

What happens if I meet the conditions in more than one band?

If your circumstances meet the conditions for more than one band, we will put your application in the highest of these bands.

For example, if your circumstances meet the conditions in band C and band D, we will put your application in band C.

How will I know what position I will be in on the register?

We sort the register in band order, band A is the highest and band D is the lowest. We then sort the bands in date order using the date we put people in each band.

The register is a guide to how long you will wait to be housed and your position on the list can change.

What happens if my circumstances change before you offer me a home?

You must tell us of any changes in your circumstances. We will then assess your application bearing in mind the changes, and review the band we have placed you in.

If your circumstances become worse through no fault of your own and you now meet the conditions of a higher band, we will put your application in that band. Your position within the band will depend on the date we put you in that band.

If your new circumstances mean you would qualify to go in a higher band, but you have deliberately worsened your housing conditions in order to get into a higher band, your application will stay in its original band.

You could be prosecuted if you give false or misleading details on your application. If we give you a tenancy but then find out you gave false information, we will take action to make you leave your home.

Section 2

What are the conditions for each band?

Band A

- You are unintentionally homeless and in priority need because you are moving to escape violence.
- Your current home is severely overcrowded.
- You need to move because of an urgent medical condition.
- Your current home is unsafe for living in.
- You are the victim of anti-social behaviour.
- You have multiple needs.

These conditions are explained in more detail in section 3.

Band B

- You are unintentionally homeless and in priority need for reasons other than moving to escape violence.
- You are living in a council property but you have no rights to the tenancy.
- Your current home is overcrowded.
- You have unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- You need to move because of a medical condition.
- You need to move closer to your family to give or receive support.
- You need to move because of your work.
- You cannot afford to stay in your current home.
- You need access to medical treatment or specialist services in a certain area.
- Your current home is too big for your household's needs.
- You are leaving care.

These conditions are explained in more detail in section 3.

Band C

- You are currently staying with family or friends.
- You are living in a mobile home on a non-residential site.
- You are intentionally homeless with a priority need.
- You are homeless with no priority need.
- You have already refused three properties.
- You are homeless and have already refused two properties.

These details are explained in more detail in section 3.

Band D

- You are an owner-occupier with no housing need.
- You are living in a mobile home on a residential site.
- You are a tenant of ours and want to move to a property that is similar to your current home.
- You do not have any housing need

These details are explained in more detail in section 3.

Section 3

What the conditions mean

Band A

You are unintentionally homeless and in priority need because you are moving to escape violence

This includes the following.

- Victims of violence.
- Victims of racial harassment where someone has been violent towards you or threatened you with violence.
- Victims of sexual harassment where someone has been violent towards you or threatened you with violence.
- Witnesses or victims of crime if you are at risk of violence or intimidation.

Before we can put you in band A, a senior housing options advisor must have assessed your application and accepted you as unintentionally homeless due to violence.

Your current home is severely overcrowded

If you need an extra two or more bedrooms because of the size of your family, we may put you in band A. The following table shows how we work out how many bedrooms you need.

A single person	A single bedroom
A couple	A double bedroom
Two children of the same sex with an age difference of more than five years sharing a room	An extra bedroom
Two children of the opposite sex with one child over 5 years old sharing a room	An extra bedroom
An adult (over 16) sharing with a child (under 16)	An extra bedroom
A woman over 20 weeks pregnant	An extra bedroom needed for the baby

A housing options advisor will visit your home to confirm the size of the property before we can accept that your property is severely overcrowded.

If you have two children of the same sex with more than 5 years age difference but you are happy for them to share a room if this helps you get housed quicker, you can write to the Housing Options Team and ask to be listed for a smaller property. However, if you do this and then ask to transfer to a bigger property, you will not get priority for being overcrowded because you have asked to be housed in a smaller property.

If you live outside the West Lancashire area, we may need to see proof of the size of your home, and proof that the people you list on your application are permanently living with you.

You need to move because of an urgent medical condition

If your current home is unsuitable for you or a member of your household because of a medical condition, there is a **high risk of physical or mental injury** if you are not re-housed and you are asking to move to a more suitable property type, we may put you in band A.

You will need to ask your GP or consultant for proof of the condition, and they will need to tell us why your current home presents a risk to you. Once we have received this information, a housing options advisor will visit your home to assess it.

The advisor will not assess your medical condition as they are not medically qualified.

The housing options advisor will write a report about your property, for example, whether it has stairs and how steep they are and so on. They will take this report, along with the proof of your medical condition, to our medical panel. The panel is made up of an independent senior doctor and a housing options advisor. The panel will then decide which band to put your application in.

Your current home is unfit for living in



We may put you in band A if our Private Sector Housing Section has assessed your home unfit and has had a closing order, a demolition order, a clearance order or a compulsory purchase order served on it.

The Housing Options Team will contact the Private Sector Housing Section to check whether they have served any of the above orders.

If you rent your current home from us, you will also meet this condition if you have to move either permanently or temporarily while we carry out major work to your home.

You are suffering because of anti-social behaviour

If you are a council or housing association tenant and you are the victim of anti-social behaviour, you may be awarded band A priority for a transfer.

If you are a tenant of West Lancashire District Council, band A will be awarded after the anti-social behaviour team have sent written confirmation to the housing options team that they have been investigating the complaints and they have done everything they could to stop it. If the report recommends that the tenant be moved for their own safety, band A may be awarded.

If you are the tenant of another council or housing association your anti-social behaviour team must send a report showing that they have done everything they can to stop the anti-social behaviour before we can consider awarding band A.

You have multiple needs

If you meet two or more of the conditions in band B, you have multiple housing need and we will put your application in band A.

Band B

You are unintentionally homeless and priority need (for reasons other than moving to escape violence)

If you are unintentionally homeless, you will be in priority need if you:

- are pregnant;
- have dependant children;
- are vulnerable due to old age, mental illness or a physical disability;
- are homeless because of an emergency for example, a flood or fire and so on;
- are 16 or 17 years old;
- are under 21 and have previously been in care;
- are over 21 and vulnerable because you have been in care;
- are vulnerable because you were a member of HM Forces; or
- are vulnerable because you have been in prison;

Before we can put you in this band, a senior housing options advisor must have assessed your application and accepted you as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

You are living in a council property but you have no rights to the tenancy

If you have been living with a council tenant and they have died, we may put you in band B if you do not have any rights to take over the tenancy.

Your current home is overcrowded

If the size of your household means that you need an extra bedroom, we may put you in band B.

Before we can accept that your home is overcrowded, a housing options advisor will visit you to assess the size of your home.

If you live outside the West Lancashire area, we may need to see proof of the size of your home, and proof that the people you list on your application are permanently living with you.

You have unsatisfactory housing conditions

If one or more of the following applies to you, you may meet this condition.

- You live in a flat above ground floor and have a child under 10 or you are pregnant.
- Your home does not have a kitchen, bathroom or toilet.
- You are sharing a kitchen, toilet or bathroom with unrelated households (for example you are living in a shared house with people you did not know before you moved in).
- Your home does not have a hot or cold water supply.
- Your home is very damp.
- You rent your home and our Private Sector Housing Team (Environmental Health) has given your landlord a repair notice.

A housing options advisor will visit your home before we accept any of the above conditions.

In some circumstances, if there are serious repair issues, a private sector officer may visit you.

You need to move because of a medical condition

We may put you in band B if you or a member of your family have a serious medical condition which makes your current home unsuitable.

You will need to ask your GP or consultant for proof of the condition, and show how your current home is leading to your condition becoming worse. Once we have received this information, a housing options advisor will visit your home to assess it.

The housing options advisor will write a report about your property, for example, whether it has stairs and how steep they are and so on. They will also take details of the type of property you are asking to move to.

The advisor will not assess your medical condition as they are not medically qualified.

The housing options advisor will take the report, along with the proof of your medical condition, to our medical panel. The panel is made up of an independent senior doctor and a housing options advisor. The panel will then decide which band to put your application in.

We may not give you priority for medical reasons if the property you are asking to move to would not help ease the problems you have in your current home, for example, if you are asking for a house with stairs but you cannot manage the stairs in your current home.

Medical priority is not given for medical conditions alone.

You need to move closer to your family to give or receive support

If you need to move closer to your family to give or to receive support because of a medical condition, we may put you in band B.

You will need to provide proof of the medical condition and letters from the family members you are asking to move nearer to. These letters should say how they will be giving or receiving the support.

You will also need to show why you cannot provide or receive the care from your current home.

You need access to medical treatment or specialist services in a certain area

If you need to move to an area or stay in the area where you live at the moment to access medical treatment, specialised services and so on, we may put you in band B.

You will need to show either that those services are not available to you where you currently live or that you will not be able to use them if you moved.

You cannot afford to stay in your current home

If you can no longer afford your home because of an unexpected change in your circumstances, we may put you in band B.

We will ask you for proof of all your income (wages, benefits and so on) and all your outgoings, (rent, gas, electricity and so on).

If the amount you need to spend to keep your home is more than the money you have coming in, we will consider you to be in economic need.

We will only take into account your essential outgoings when we are making our assessment. This does not include personal loans, catalogue repayments and so on.

If you knew that you would struggle to afford your home before you moved in, we will not accept you as being in economic need.

If you want us to assess you for economic need, please fill in the 'economic need assessment form' provided with your application pack.

You need to move because of your work

If you need to move to an area because you have been offered a new job, we may put you in band B.

We will need to see a letter from your employer offering you the job, and you must also show why you cannot take up the offer unless you move to the area.

If you would be at risk of losing your current job if you moved away from a certain area, we may put you in band B. Again, we will need to see a letter from your employer to show that you would not be able to keep your current job if you moved.

Your current home is too big for your household's needs

If you rent your home from us and it has two or more bedrooms more than you need, we will put you in band B if you are asking to move to a smaller property.

If you rent your home from us and you are over 60, we will put you in band B if you are asking to move into sheltered housing.

If you own your own home, you have more bedrooms than you need and you want to move to a smaller property, we may put you in band B. You must be able to show that you cannot afford to buy a smaller property. If after assessing your circumstances, we feel you would be able to buy a smaller property, we will put your application in band C.

You are leaving care

If you are currently in the care of Social Services and you will soon be old enough to leave your current home, we may put you in band B.

We will work with you and Social Services before you leave your current home so that you do not become homeless and so that we can work out the most suitable property for you.

If you leave your current home without Social Services asking you to, we may consider you to be intentionally homeless, and you may not qualify for this band.

Supported housing

If you are due to leave supported housing, we may put you in band B. This does not apply if you have been asked to leave supported housing because you have broken the conditions of a tenancy agreement or you have not co-operated with a support plan.

Band C

You are currently staying with family or friends

If you do not own or rent your own home and you live with your parents, other family or friends, and you do not meet any of the conditions in bands A or B, we may put you in band C.

We will need to see proof that you do not own any other property or hold a tenancy anywhere else, before we will accept you into this band.

You are living in a mobile home on a non-residential site

If you own and live in a static mobile home on a non-residential caravan park, and you do not meet any of the conditions in bands A or B, we may place you in band C.

A non-residential caravan park is one where you have to leave for a certain number of weeks each year. We will take into account how long you have lived in the mobile home and whether you have owned your own home in the past.

You are intentionally homeless with a priority need

If a senior housing options advisor has assessed you as intentionally homeless and in priority need, and has put you in temporary accommodation, we may put you in band C.

You are homeless with no priority need

If a senior housing options advisor has assessed you as homeless but with no priority need, we may put you in band C.

You have already refused three properties

If you have refused three reasonable properties, we will put your application in band C, if you were originally in either band A or B.

You are homeless and have already refused two properties

If we have assessed you as homeless and you have refused two reasonable properties, we will put your application in band C if it was originally in band A or B.

Band D

You are an owner occupier with no housing need

If you own your own home, could buy a different property or rent privately, and you do not meet any of the conditions in bands A, B or C, we will put your application in band D.

You are living in a mobile home on a residential site

If you own and live in a mobile home on a residential site, we will put your application in band D if you cannot meet any of the conditions for bands A, B or C.

You want to move to a property that is similar to your current home

If you are a council or housing association tenant and you want to move to a similar property in the same or different area, we will put your application in band D if you do not meet any of the conditions for bands A, B or C.

Section 4

Appeals

Do I have the right of appeal?

Yes. You have the right to appeal against any decision we make regarding your housing application. You can appeal against not being accepted onto the register, the band we have put you in and so on.

How do I appeal?

If you want to appeal against a decision we have made about your application, you must **write** to the Housing Options Manager within 21 days of receiving the decision.

Your letter should explain why you think our decision is unfair and against council policy, and you should include any evidence you have to support your appeal.

The Housing Options Manager will reply to your letter within 10 working days of receiving it to confirm we have received it. You will then have 20 working days to send us any further supporting evidence.

If you do not want to provide more supporting evidence, you can write to the Housing Options Manager and ask for the review to start immediately.

The Housing Options Manager will make a decision and tell you the outcome within 10 working days of the review starting.

Can I appeal if I am unhappy with the review decision?

You have 21 days to ask for a review of the Housing Options Manager's decision. However, you can only appeal if you can show that the Housing Options Manager:

- made a mistake in the review decision; or
- did not interpret council policy or legislation appropriately

Our Housing Review Sub-Committee will then hear your appeal. The committee is made up of our main solicitor and elected councillors.

We will invite you to attend an informal hearing, and you can have a representative to act on your behalf.

You and the Housing Options Manager will have the chance to put your case forward.

The committee will then make their decision and you will receive it, in writing, within 10 working days of the hearing.

Section 5

Useful addresses

Customer Contact Point (Ormskirk)

52 Derby Street
Ormskirk
Lancashire
L39 2DF

Phone: 01695 577 177

Customer Contact Point (Skelmersdale)

Unit 142 The Concourse (First Floor)
Skelmersdale
WN8 6LJ

Phone: 01695 577 177

Housing Options

(For housing application enquiries)

61 Westgate
Sandy Lane Centre
Skelmersdale
WN8 8LP
Tel: 01695 577 177
(Office closed to the public)

Voids & Allocations Team

(Covers lettings across the district)

61 Westgate
Sandy Lane Centre
Skelmersdale
WN8 8LP
Phone: 01695 577 177
(office closed to the public)

