

Housing Allocation Scheme

The demand for social housing in Solihull is much greater than its supply.

The Council has decided that only people with a 'close association' to Solihull and who are in housing need can join the waiting list. Overall, the new rules will help ensure that local people in greatest housing need are given priority.

Following the publication of new Government guidance, the Council is consulting on how a 'close association' to Solihull should be defined.

Close Association - Current Definition

When the Council consulted towards the end of 2013, and taking into account existing government guidance, it had been proposed that a close association should be defined as follows,

"A close association will be established if **one** of the following circumstances exist,

The applicant or a member of their household:

- a) Is **currently resident** in the borough;
- b) Has lived in the borough of Solihull for at for at least three of the last five years in accommodation that was of their own choice;
- c) Has close relatives who have been living in the borough for at least five years (close relatives means parents, adult children or brothers and sisters);
- d) Has employment in the borough (meaning the actual physical place of work rather than, for example, the location of the employer's head office) and which is of at least 16 hours a week and is not casual or short term;
- e) Special circumstances – a close association established on these grounds is likely to be exceptional e.g. the need to be near special medical or support services which are available only in the Solihull area; able to demonstrate that they or their family face life threatening crisis and require immediate rehousing as a consequence of fire, flood or a child protection emergency
- f) A child leaving the care of Solihull Council will have a close association to Solihull"

Central Government Guidance

On 31 December 2013 new statutory guidance was published. The Council must have regard to it in deciding its rules but there is no absolute requirement to follow it.

The full guidance is available at,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-housing-authorities-in-england>

The guidance strongly encourages local councils to adopt a rule which requires an applicant to have lived in its area for a specified period of time,

‘Some housing authorities have decided to include a residency requirement as part of their qualification criteria, requiring the applicant (or member of the applicant’s household) to have lived within the authority’s district for a specified period of time in order to qualify for an allocation of social housing. The Secretary of State believes that including a residency requirement is appropriate and strongly encourages all housing authorities to adopt such an approach. The Secretary of State believes that a reasonable period of residency would be at least two years’ (paragraph 13).

The Council's Proposal

In the light of the new statutory guidance, the Council is proposing to change its definition of close association. This is set out below and the main difference is at a); a change has also been made to d) following the first consultation.

“A close association will be established if **one** of the following circumstances exist,

The applicant or a member of their household:

- a) Is currently resident in the Borough and has done so **for the two years immediately prior to their application** in accommodation that was of their own choice;
- b) Has lived in the borough of Solihull for at for at least three of the last five years in accommodation that was of their own choice;
- c) Has close relatives who have been living in the borough for at least five years (close relatives means parents, adult children or brothers and sisters);
- d) Has employment in the borough (meaning the actual physical place of work rather than, for example, the location of the employer’s head office) and which is normally continuous for the last 6 months;
- e) Special circumstances – a close association established on these grounds is likely to be exceptional e.g. the need to be near special medical or support services which are available only in the Solihull area; able to demonstrate that they or their family face life threatening crisis and require immediate rehousing as a consequence of fire, flood or a child protection emergency
- f) A child leaving the care of Solihull Council will have a close association to Solihull”

We invite your views

1. Do you agree with the proposed change in the definition of close association?

- Yes
- No

2. If you do not agree, please say how you think it should change

- Keep it the same
- Change it (please say how you think it should change)