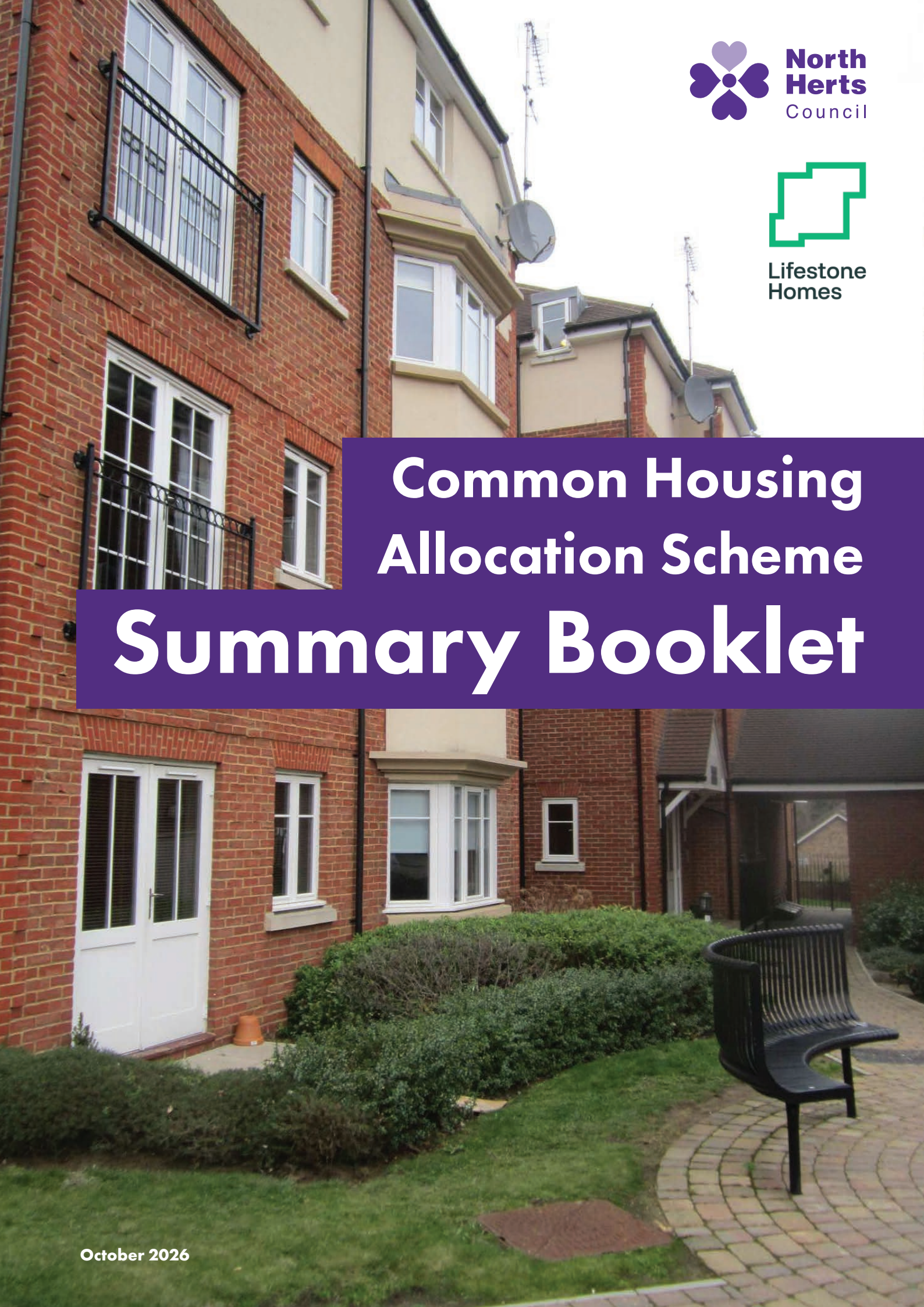


North Herts Council

Lifestone Homes

# Common Housing Allocation Scheme

# Summary Booklet

October 2026

## What is the Common Housing Allocation Scheme?

The Common Housing Allocation Scheme (CHAS) sets out who can apply for social (also known as affordable) housing in North Hertfordshire, how social housing is prioritised and how it is allocated. The CHAS is published by the **North Hertfordshire Housing Partnership** (NHHP), a partnership between **North Herts Council** and **Lifestone Homes** housing association.

This summary provides a very brief overview of the CHAS; the full Scheme can be found at **www.north-herts.gov.uk**.

## Social housing in North Hertfordshire

Social housing in North Hertfordshire is owned and managed by housing associations (known as Registered Providers), which are not-for-profit landlords. **Lifestone Homes** is the largest social landlord in the district. There is a high demand for social and affordable housing and you may have to wait a long time for a suitable property to become available, depending on your circumstances.

To apply for social housing, you will need to apply to join our **Common Housing Register**, at **www.home4u.org.uk**. The Housing Register is maintained and operated by the NHHP.

## ✓ Who can join the Common Housing Register?

To join our Register, you must be aged 16 or over and have a housing need.
You must meet the qualification criteria listed below and not be subject to laws governing immigration control.

Please note that acceptance on to the Housing Register is not a guarantee that you will be successful in securing a property.



## ✗ Who can join the Common Housing Register?

**You will <u>not</u> qualify if:**

- ✗ you or a member of your household has been convicted of, or is facing legal action for, anti-social behaviour or certain types of crime and time limits set out in the CHAS have not yet been met; **or**
- ✗ you have an outstanding housing debt from your current tenancy; **or**
- ✗ you have an outstanding housing debt from a previous tenancy and 25% of the original balance has not been paid with a repayment arrangement in place to clear the remainder; **or**
- ✗ you or a member of your household has been evicted from social housing within the past five years; **or**
- ✗ your gross annual household income exceeds £44,000 (if you require a 1 bed/studio property), £56,000 (if you require a 2 bed) or £69,000 (if you require a 3+ bed property). These thresholds do not apply to households requiring sheltered housing; **or**
- ✗ you have household savings over £16,000 and require general needs accommodation; **or**
- ✗ you are a home owner and require general needs accommodation.

For further detail on qualification criteria, including for homeless households and care leavers, please refer to paragraphs 5.6 – 5.16 of the CHAS.

**It is an offence under section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 for a person to knowingly make a statement which is false, or withhold information which is relevant to their application. Applicants who have been found to do so will have their application cancelled and will not be able to qualify for the Housing Register for five years.**

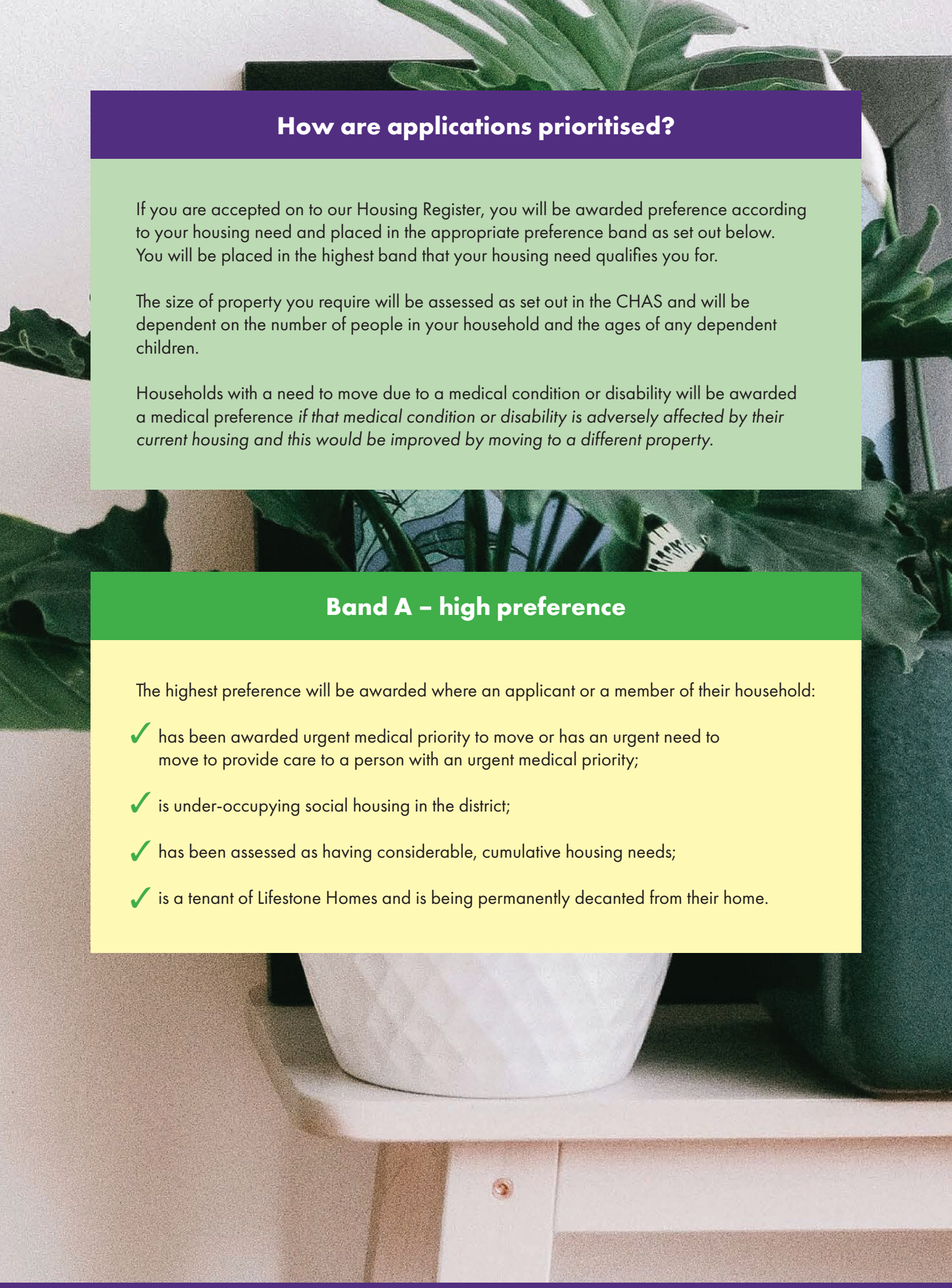
## Local connection

You will also need to have a local connection to North Hertfordshire to join our Housing Register*. You have a local connection if you:

- ✓ have been continuously resident by choice in the district for the last 12 months, or for 3 out of the last 5 years; **or**
- ✓ have immediate family (normally a parent, sibling or adult child) in the district and they have been living in the area by choice for at least 5 years; **or**
- ✓ are a member, or former member, of the Armed Forces or are a bereaved spouse or civil partner, or an estranged spouse or civil partner; **or**
- ✓ have permanent employment (or self-employment) in the district; **or**
- ✓ are a care leaver aged 16 to 24 or meet the agreed criteria set out in the Hertfordshire Joint Housing Protocol; **or**
- ✓ have another special reason why you need to live in the district, including if we owe you a main housing duty, you are a victim of domestic abuse who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse, or you are a former asylum seeker in NASS accommodation in the district.

* You do **not** need to have a local connection to the district if you are applying for sheltered accommodation (also known as Retirement Living). Those with a local connection will, however, receive a higher priority on the Housing Register.

Applicants who are tenants of social housing in England who need to move for work related reasons are **not** required to have a local connection to North Hertfordshire.



## How are applications prioritised?

If you are accepted on to our Housing Register, you will be awarded preference according to your housing need and placed in the appropriate preference band as set out below. You will be placed in the highest band that your housing need qualifies you for.

The size of property you require will be assessed as set out in the CHAS and will be dependent on the number of people in your household and the ages of any dependent children.

Households with a need to move due to a medical condition or disability will be awarded a medical preference *if that medical condition or disability is adversely affected by their current housing and this would be improved by moving to a different property.*

## Band A – high preference

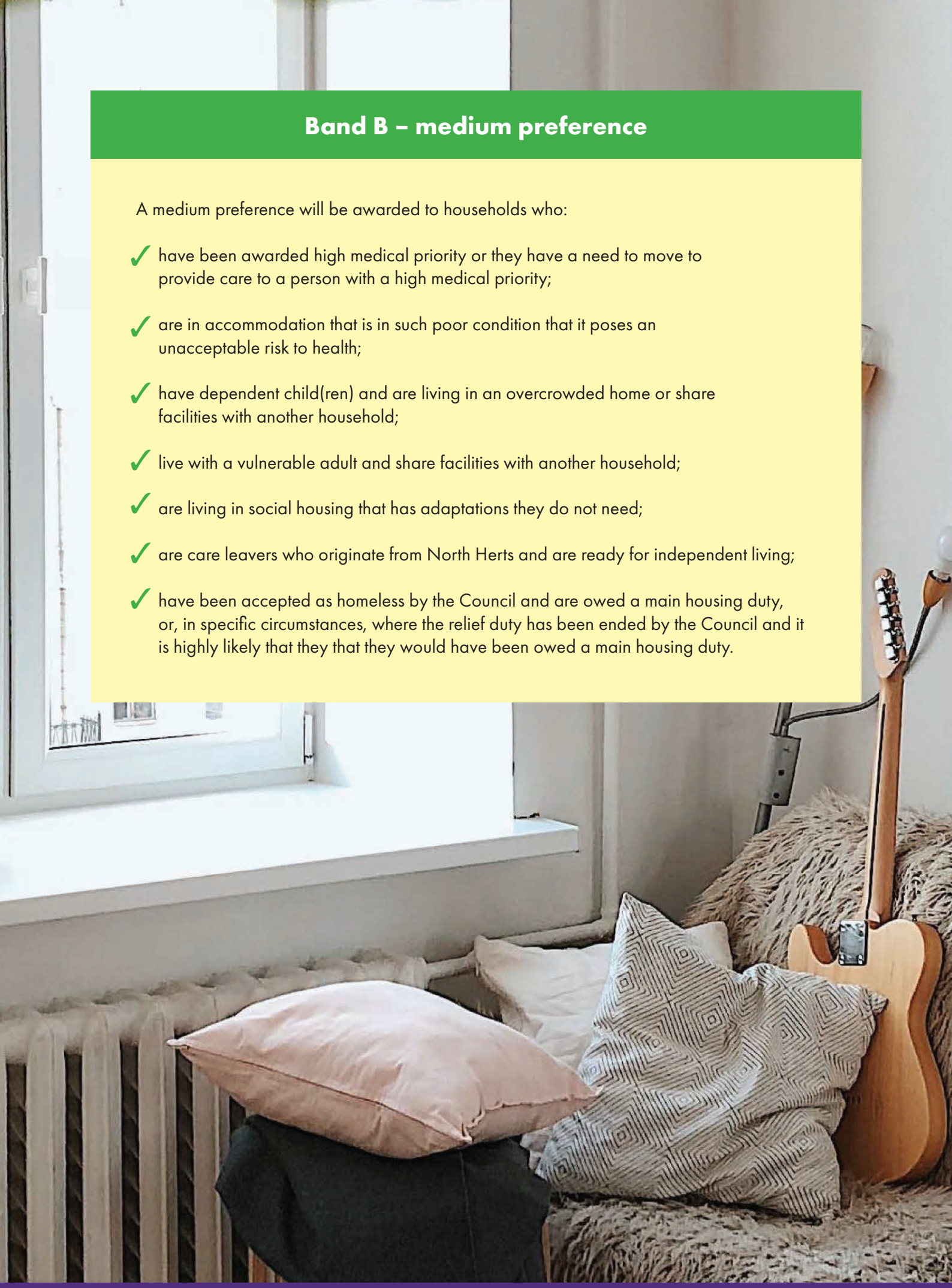
The highest preference will be awarded where an applicant or a member of their household:

- ✓ has been awarded urgent medical priority to move or has an urgent need to move to provide care to a person with an urgent medical priority;
- ✓ is under-occupying social housing in the district;
- ✓ has been assessed as having considerable, cumulative housing needs;
- ✓ is a tenant of Lifestone Homes and is being permanently decanted from their home.

## Band B – medium preference

A medium preference will be awarded to households who:

- ✓ have been awarded high medical priority or they have a need to move to provide care to a person with a high medical priority;
- ✓ are in accommodation that is in such poor condition that it poses an unacceptable risk to health;
- ✓ have dependent child(ren) and are living in an overcrowded home or share facilities with another household;
- ✓ live with a vulnerable adult and share facilities with another household;
- ✓ are living in social housing that has adaptations they do not need;
- ✓ are care leavers who originate from North Herts and are ready for independent living;
- ✓ have been accepted as homeless by the Council and are owed a main housing duty, or, in specific circumstances, where the relief duty has been ended by the Council and it is highly likely that they that they would have been owed a main housing duty.



## Band C – low preference

A low preference will be awarded to households who:

- ✓ have been awarded moderate medical priority or they have a need to move to provide care to a person with a moderate medical priority;
- ✓ are living in an overcrowded home or share facilities with another household, and who don't have dependent children or vulnerable adults as part of their household;
- ✓ are living in a property in which a bedroom is too small;
- ✓ need to move to avoid hardship;
- ✓ are in accommodation with a limited security of tenure;
- ✓ are in an institution and have no suitable accommodation to return to;
- ✓ are over 55 years of age with a support need and require sheltered housing /Retirement Living;
- ✓ are care leavers who do not originate from North Herts or who do not meet the qualification criteria for the Housing Register;
- ✓ are victims of domestic abuse (and who do not originate from North Herts);
- ✓ are owed homeless duties other than the main housing duty;
- ✓ are owed a main housing duty by the Council but do not meet the qualification criteria for the Housing Register;
- ✓ are vulnerable and need to move but cannot be expected to find their own accommodation.

* Note that preference will not be awarded where households are sharing facilities with another household not included in their application but who does have a legal right to reside in the property (ie joint tenants).

## The awarding of points

You will be awarded housing needs points if you have more than one housing need - for example if you have a high medical priority and also live in an overcrowded home. This will give you additional priority on the Housing Register.

All households are also awarded one point for every month that they spend on the Housing Register.



## How are properties allocated?

In North Hertfordshire, most properties are let through a system of Choice Based Lettings. This means that available properties are advertised on the Home4U website and you are able to place bids on properties that meet your needs and that you are interested in. A property will be offered to the bidder with the highest preference on the Housing Register and who meets the advertised criteria for that property.

Some properties will be restricted to bidders with certain household characteristics or need. For example two bedroom houses are only available to households with dependent children and bungalows may be restricted to older households. Some properties/schemes may not allow households with pets, or have a local lettings policy or planning conditions.

Support is available for those who may find it difficult to participate in the Choice Based Lettings process.

Note that housing associations (with the exception of Lifestone Homes) may have their own allocations criteria and may also conduct additional affordability checks before proceeding with a tenancy. An offer of accommodation through the Housing Register does not legally require a housing association to accept you as their tenant. You should also be aware that some housing associations now ask for rent in advance.

## Further information

For more information, you can visit the Council's website (search, *Apply for Social Housing*) or call us on **01462 474000** and ask to speak to a member of the Housing Register and Accommodation team. Alternatively, you can contact Lifestone Homes on **0330 343 0016**.

There may also be other housing options that are suitable for you and may offer a quicker solution than waiting for a social property. If you would like to explore these, please visit our website (search, Find a Home) or call us on 01462 474000 and ask to speak to a member of the Housing Options team.

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