

# ANNUAL MONITORING REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ALLOCATIONS SCHEME **2019/2020**

## **1. Introduction**

The Council's statutory allocations policy is reviewed and published annually. The review considers the impact and effectiveness of the policy and assesses it against the strategic objectives of the council to highlight whether any changes should be considered.

The Council's current scheme of allocations was approved by Cabinet in December 2014 and implemented fully by October 2015.

The key objectives of the allocations policy are to:

- Help applicants in housing need find suitable housing.
- Give priority to those applicants in urgent housing need
- Create a simple system to use.
- Respond to the housing needs of local people.
- Make efficient and best use of social housing stock in the area,
- Encourage and assist applicants to take an informed, measured and long term view on their housing options

The annual review also helps the Council understand in more depth the nature and extent of housing need for affordable housing (particularly for rent) in the borough.

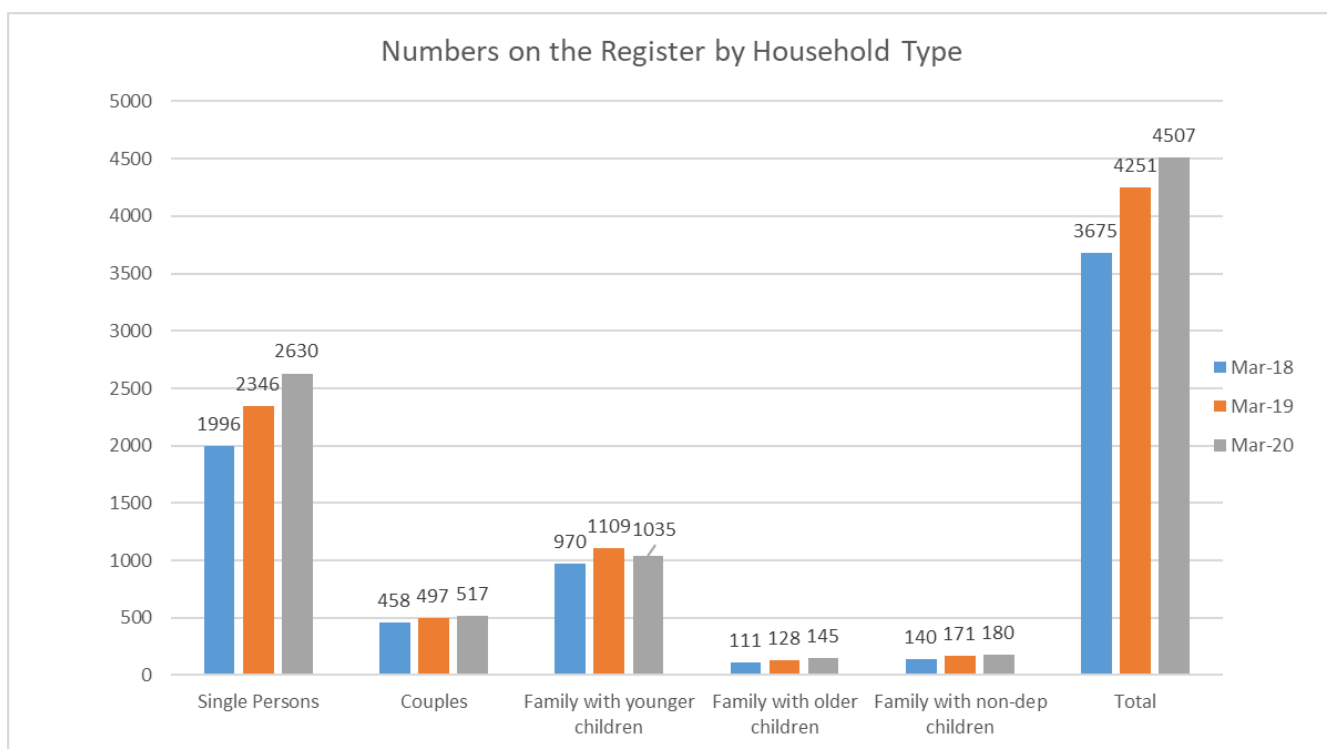
## **2. Key information**

### **2.1. Who is on the housing register, and how many households are waiting?**

As of 31 March 2020 there were 4507 households on the housing register, made up of the following households:

Table 1 (i) – Households on the Housing Register

<b>Totals on register</b>	<b>Band 1</b>	<b>Band 2</b>	<b>Band 3</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Single persons	84	2494	52	<b>2630</b>	<b>58%</b>
Couples	25	487	5	<b>517</b>	<b>11%</b>
Family with younger children	12	1022	1	<b>1035</b>	<b>23%</b>
Family with older children	2	1143	0	<b>145</b>	<b>4%</b>
Family with non-dependent children	5	175	0	<b>180</b>	<b>4%</b>
				<b>4507</b>	



There are 1382 (31%) applicants on the Housing Register who have yet to place a bid on a property, and 810 applicants (18% of the housing register) have never logged onto Basingstoke Homebid.

The Housing Register has continued to grow but at a slower rate than previous years, as demonstrated below:

**Table 2 – Year on Year Housing register totals**

Year End	Total numbers	% increase from previous year
2019/20	4507	6%
2018/19	4251	16%
2017/18	3675	21%
2016/17	3037	N/A

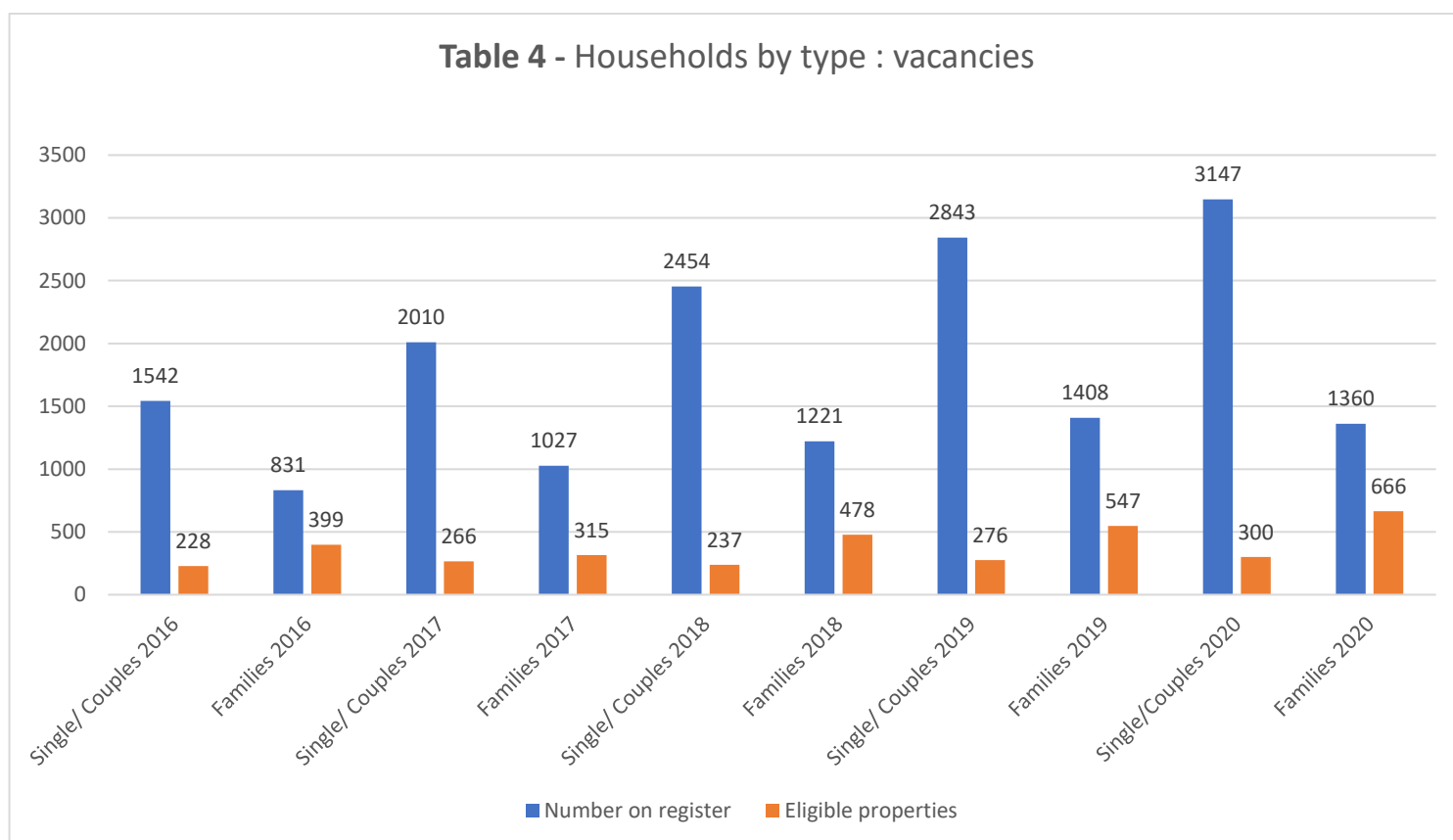
The largest group of households on the housing register remains single applicants, comprising 58% of all household types. As in previous years almost two thirds (65%) of all general needs (non-transfer) single applicants on the housing register are aged under 35 years.

**Table 3 – Age ranges of single person households on the housing register**

	General Needs	Transfers	Totals
16-19	189		189
20-24	578	3	581
25-34	710	20	730
35-54	508	109	617
55+	279	234	513
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2264</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>2630</b>

The number of single person applicants compared to properties becoming available continues to far outweigh supply to a significantly greater extent than for families. In 2019/20 the ratio of applicants to properties was 10:1, compared to less than 2:1 for families. This is demonstrated below:

**Table 4 - Households by type : vacancies**



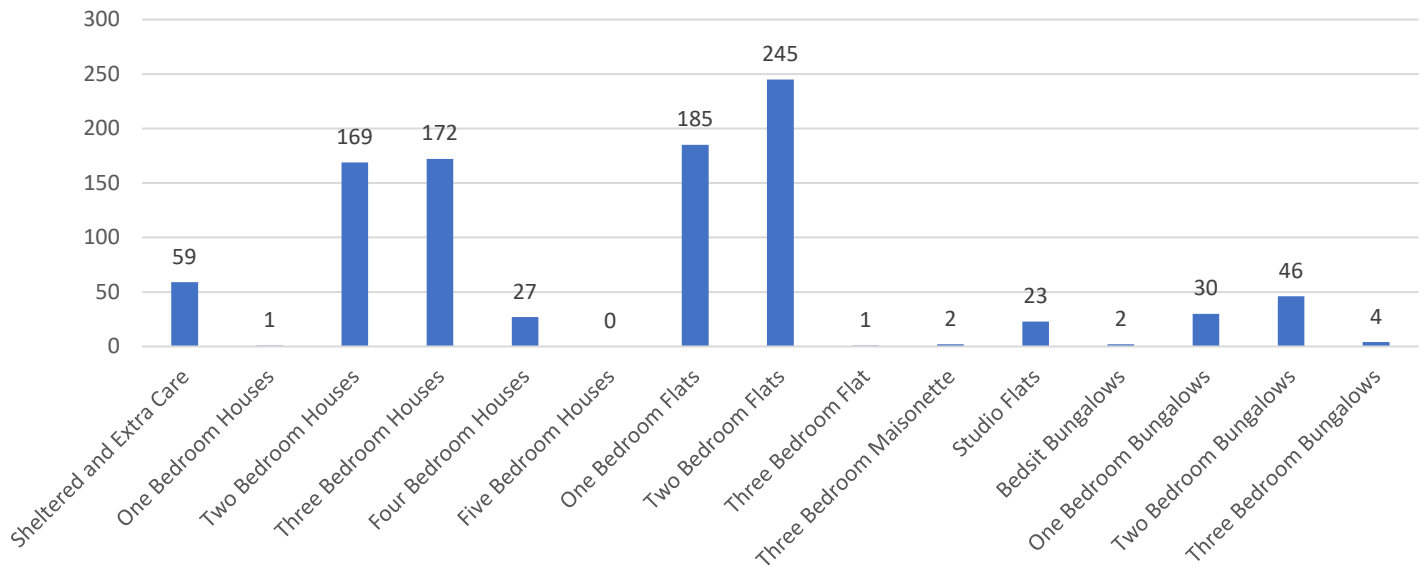
## 2.2. Properties Advertised

A total of 966 properties were advertised as available for letting during the year. This is an increase of 16% from the previous year, which is almost three times the rate of increase in numbers on the housing register.

245 flats were advertised for letting, 94 of these (38%) were either ground floor or had lift access.

The properties advertised for letting were as follows:

**Table 5 - Type of Properties advertised 2019/2020**



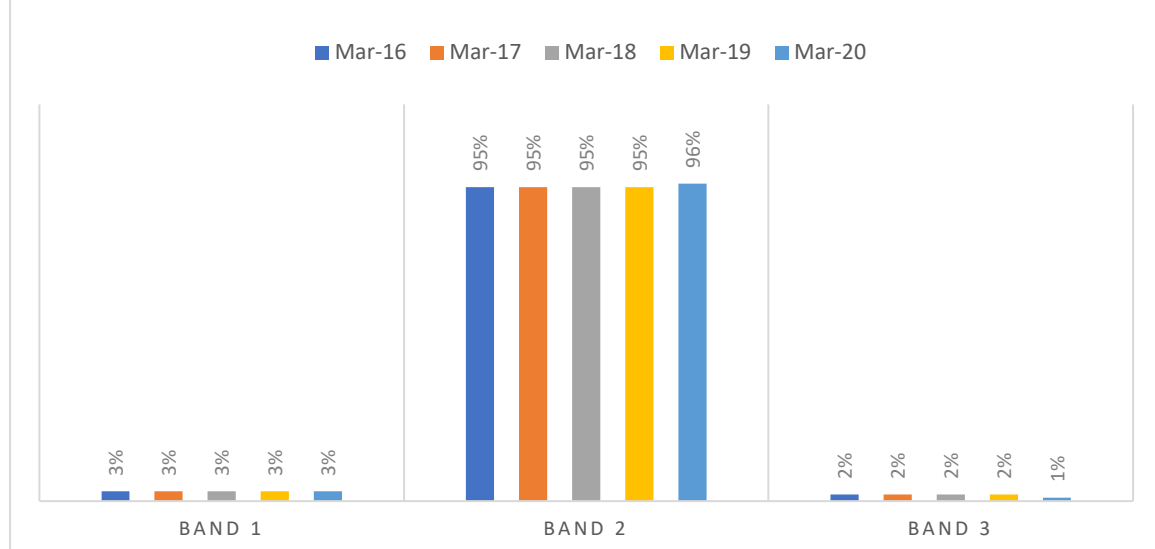
### 2.3. How are applications prioritised?

To qualify to join the housing register, all applicants must have a housing need.

Applicants are then categorised into three bands and then prioritised according to the date of their application (i.e. how long they have been waiting)

The distribution of applicants by band has remained constant since the introduction of the new scheme as demonstrated below

**TABLE 5 - PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS BY BAND**



### **Band 1 Applicants:**

Applicants in Band 1 are those with a critical / urgent need to move as well as transfer applicants under occupying a unit of social housing by two bedrooms or more.

Of the 128 applicants in Band 1, 125 are transfer applicants. The vast majority of these transfer applicants are under occupying their current accommodation by two or more bedrooms. These applicants tend to be more selective with their choice of alternative properties and locations, which explains why only 22 transfer applicants in Band 1 were housed in 2019/20.

The policy allows for "Directors Discretion" to be applied for exceptional cases where an applicant's circumstances may not be accounted for elsewhere in the policy but they have a critical need to move. There was one case awarded this priority in 2019/20.

### **Band 2 Applicants:**

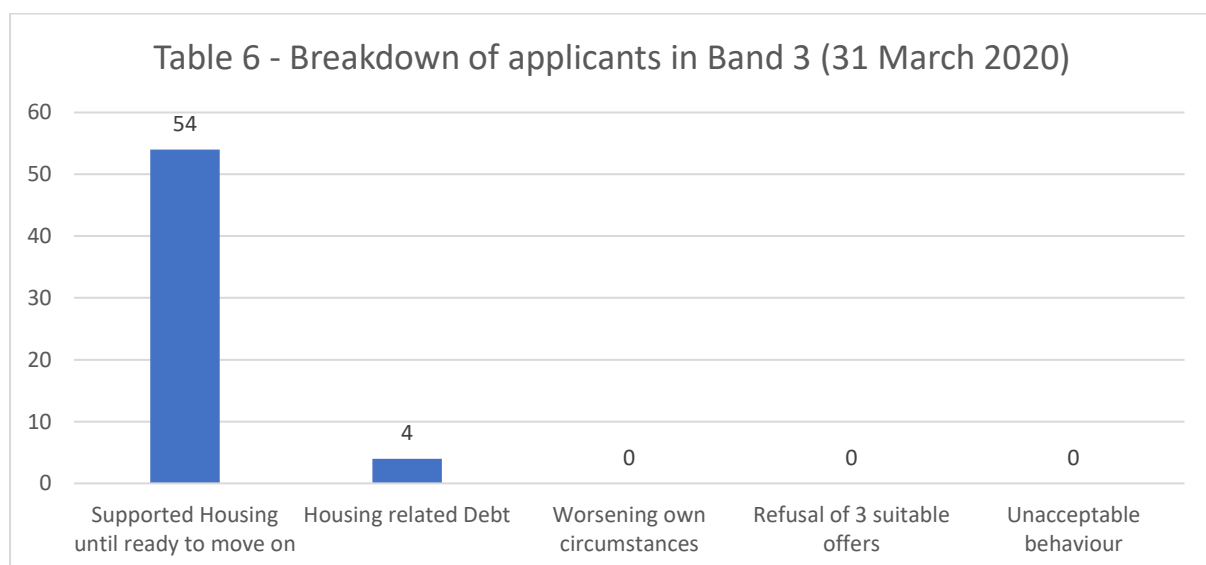
The vast majority (95%) of all applicants are placed in Band 2.

### **Band 3 Applicants:**

Band 3 applicants are in housing need but have reduced priority for one or more of the following reasons:

- Having housing related debts or unacceptable behaviour
- Deliberately worsening their housing circumstances
- They have refused three reasonable offers
- They are in supported housing and not ready for a move to independent accommodation

At March 2020 there were 58 applicants in Band 3, equating to 1% of the total number of applicants on the housing register. Reasons for reduced priority were as follows.



It is still the case that no applicants have had their priority reduced due to refusing three suitable offers of accommodation.

All of the applicants owing housing related debts are supported to arrange a payment plan and referred to appropriate support services to enable them to move into Band 2.

## 2.4. Ground floor and adapted priorities

The policy allows for priority for suitable properties to be prioritised for applicants who require specific accommodation to meet a medical need.

In 2019/20, 243 properties were allocated to applicants with a need for ground floor or adapted accommodation, which is 25% of all properties advertised.

## 2.5. Addressing housing needs in the private rented sector

The allocations scheme enables more applicants living in unsatisfactory private rented sector accommodation to move into settled social housing than under the previous scheme.

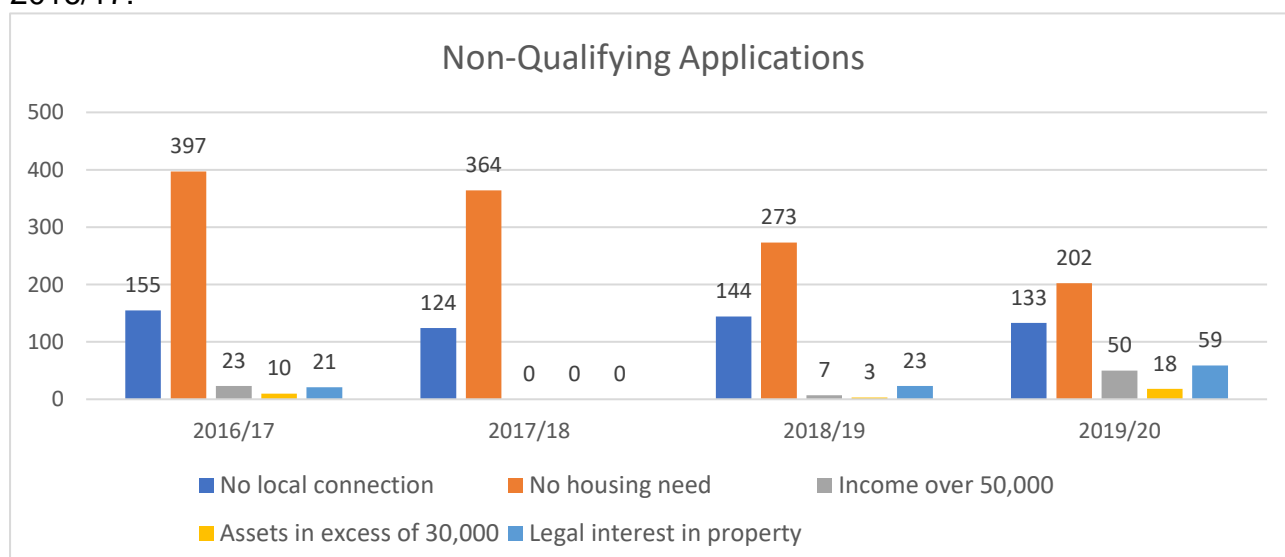
In 2018/19, 120 offers were accepted by applicants in this group. This increased by 31% to 157 during 2019/20. [Under the previous allocations scheme applicants in overcrowded or unaffordable private rented accommodation tended to be in Band 4 of 5 Bands and therefore stood little prospect ever of rehousing].

## 2.6. Who does not qualify for the housing register?

The allocations scheme introduced in 2015 set qualifying criteria. Applicants must fulfil the following criteria in order to qualify for inclusion on the register

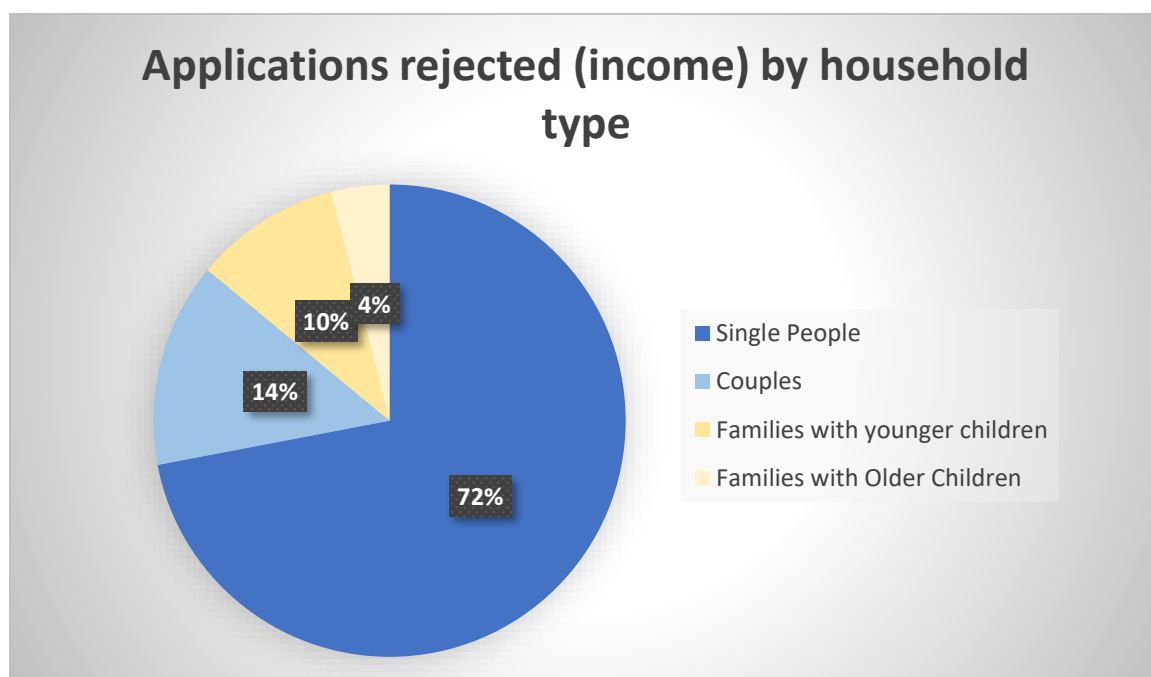
- Have a housing need
- Have a local connection [see 2.7 below]
- Have a household income of less than £50,000 per annum
- Not have savings in excess of £30,000
- Not have any legal ownership of or interest in a property

The following tables shows the reasons why applications have been rejected because the applicants do not qualify since qualification criteria were introduced in 2016/17:



The number of applications which were rejected because applicants had no housing need or local connection reduced by 20%. However, rejected applications increased from applicants whose incomes and savings exceeded the relevant thresholds, or by applicants who had a legal interest in property – in such cases applicants would have been redirected to low cost home ownership options through the Government's Help to Buy agents.

The following chart demonstrates that the vast majority (86%) of the 50 households whose applications were rejected on income grounds were single people and couples.



## 2.7. Local connection

With the implementation of the new allocations policy in October 2015, the council introduced a local connection requirement. This means that all applicants applying to BDBC for social housing must be able to demonstrate a connection by way of residence, employment or the need to live in the borough to give or receive a substantial level of support unless they are armed forces applicants.

Of the 4507 households on the register, 46 applicants are not required to meet the local connection criteria by virtue of them being current/former members of the armed forces, 3 applicants fulfilling this criteria were also housed. This demonstrates a positive working application of the Council's commitment to support the Armed Forces community through its Armed Forces Community Covenant.

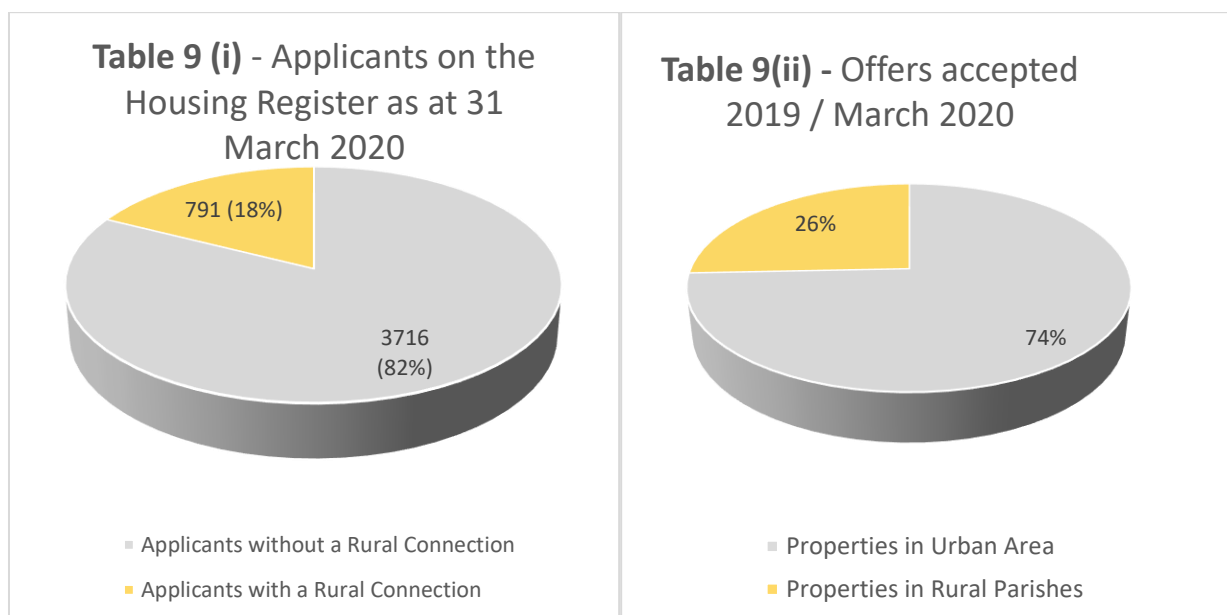
<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/armed-forces-community-covenant>

## 2.8. Rural / Parish Connections

The Allocations Scheme also enables priority to be given to applicants with a local connection to rural areas outside of the urban areas of the town. In 2019/20, levels

of need in rural areas rose by 5%, which is proportionate and in line with the overall increase on the housing register.

Information in tables 9 below demonstrate that the proportion of vacancies arising in urban or rural areas are broadly proportionate with these levels or rural: urban need



During 2019/20, 26% of properties advertised for letting were in rural parishes. There was a 30% increase in properties that were advertised for letting in rural parishes in 2019/20. 53% of those properties were let to households with a local connection to the parish. The primary reason for this was that locally connected residents on the register did not place a bid.

## 2.9. Type of tenancy offered

In 2019/20, 81% of all vacancies were advertised by either Sovereign or Vivid housing associations, the remainder being through other registered providers

Housing Associations are able to offer a variety of tenures. The type of tenancy is displayed on the property advert to allow applicants to make an informed decision when placing bids. Properties can be offered as:

**Social Rent** – Rents set at approximately 40% of market rent and usually let on an assured tenancy (usually following a 1 year probationary tenancy) **or**

**Affordable Rent** – Rents set at up to 80% of the rent achievable for a similar property on the open market, but should not exceed the Local Housing Allowance rates

**Fixed Term** – Tenancies let on an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) and offered for a fixed period (usually 5 years). After the fixed term has expired, the housing association will review the tenant's circumstances.

Of the 966 properties advertised in 2019/20:

- **70%** (692) were advertised at social rent levels
- **30%** (294) were advertised at affordable rent levels
- **28%** (273) were offered as fixed term tenancies



- **16% (157)** were fixed term tenancies at affordable rent levels

Sovereign and Vivid also carried out 171 mutual exchanges during 2019/20

## 2.10. How long will I have to wait for accommodation?

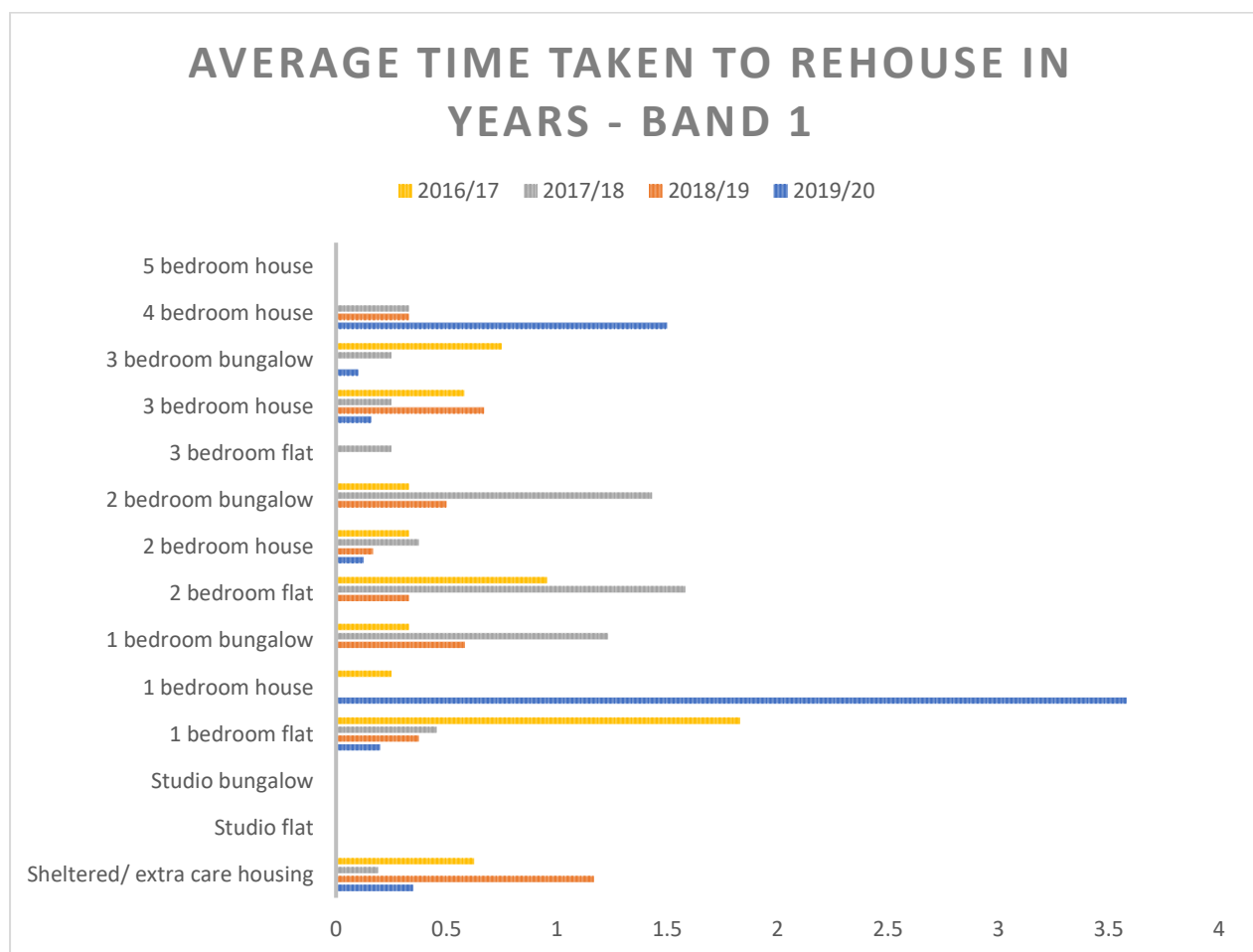
Across the borough, the demand for accommodation outweighs supply.

The length of time an applicant waits for accommodation will depend on:

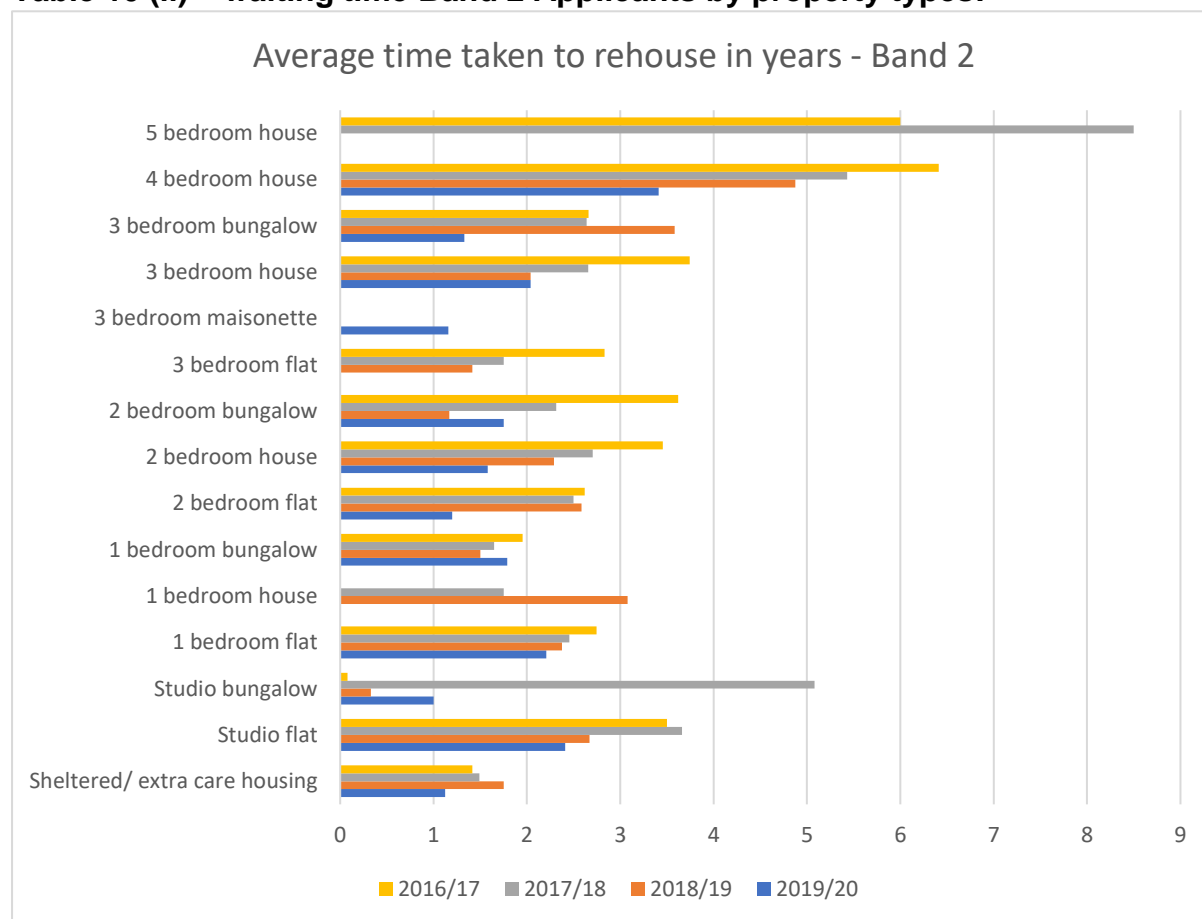
- the size and type of accommodation they require
- the location to which they wish to move
- the number of vacancies becoming available
- whether or not they choose to exercise their bid for advertised vacancies

As a general overview, the average wait for properties by size and type has tended to be as follows:

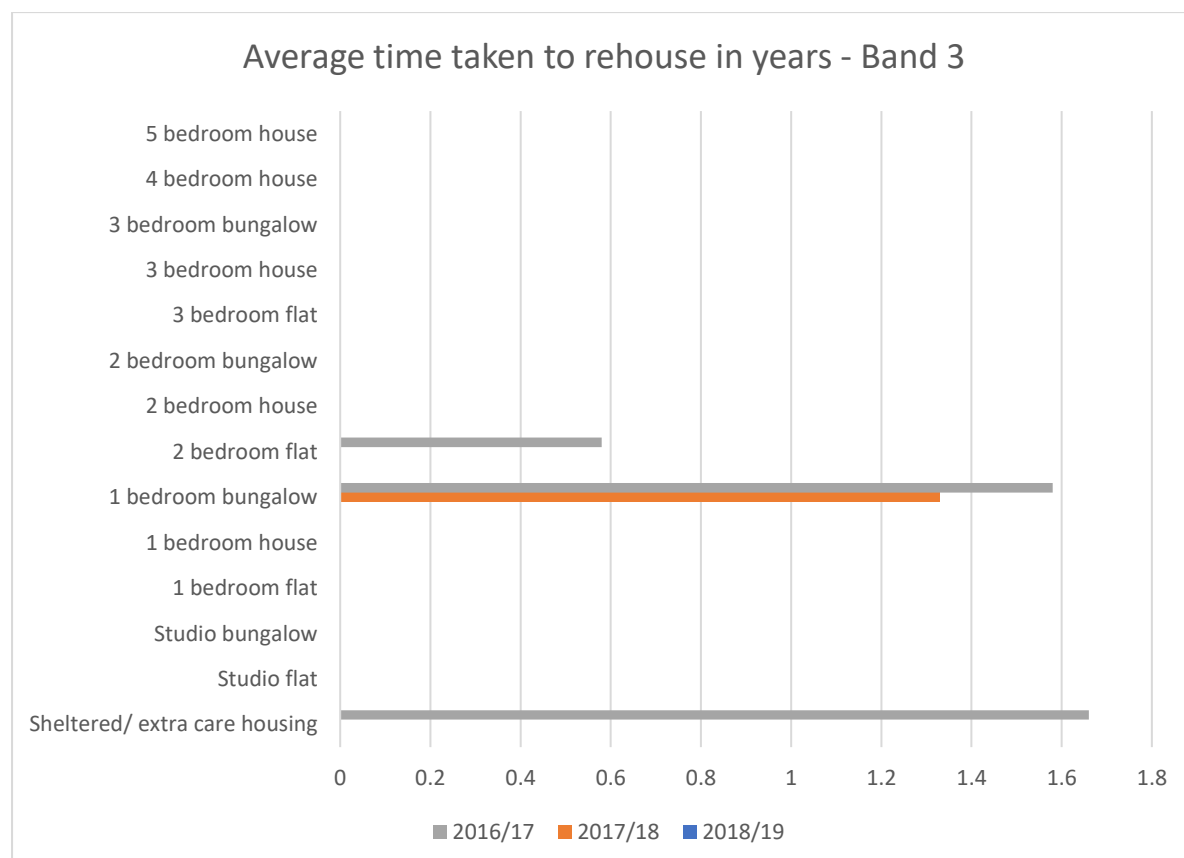
**Table 10 (i) – waiting time for Band 1 Applicants by property types:**



**Table 10 (ii) – waiting time Band 2 Applicants by property types:**



**Table 10 (iii) – waiting time for Band 3 Applicants by property type**



The longest wait is for 4 and 5 bedroom properties. This is due to the limited number of properties of this size. In 2019/20 there were 27 x 4 bedroom properties and no 5 bedroom properties available for letting.

During the year, waiting times for all property types for the majority of applicants (i.e. in Band 2) *reduced*, apart from:

- 5 bedroom houses (no vacancies)
- 1 & 2 bedroom bungalows

## **2.11. Families in upper floor flats**

In order to ensure households have the widest choice of options on the housing register the allocation scheme enables households with younger children (i.e. under 10) to place bids on upper floor flats where the landlord considers that the property is suitable for a young family.

In 2019/20 a total of 414 two bedroom houses and flats were advertised for letting to households with children. 245 (59%) of these properties were flats and 169 (41%) houses. 24 flats were let to couples and single people who have staying contact with children or require an overnight carer.

Table 10(ii) above shows that the waiting time for 2 bed flats remains slightly less than for houses, which suggests applicants are not differentiating between houses / flats when placing bids on properties.

There are currently 88 transfer applicants living in two bedroom upper floor flats registered for a move of whom:

- 22 (25%) have their accommodation assessed as unsuitable
- 42 (48%) are overcrowded
- 22 (25%) have medical, social or mental health issues requiring a move
- 2 (2%) are under-occupying

During 2019/20 a total of 57 Housing Association tenants with families applied to transfer from their flatbed accommodation. 31 of these households were considered to be living in suitable accommodation.

## **2.12. Complaints & requests for reviews**

Of all (20) complaints received by the Housing Service during 2019/20, 4 related to the housing allocations policy.

All applicants have the statutory right to request a review of any aspect of their housing application assessment.

There were 44 requests for reviews during 2019/20. In 20 of these cases the council's original decision was upheld and in 12 cases the decision was reversed. 1 applicant withdrew their request, whilst 8 households were housed before the review was concluded.

There are 3 requests that are yet to be concluded.

### **2.13. Right to Move**

This refers to statutory provisions introduced by Government in 2015 for social tenants in England who need to move to avoid hardship because the tenant works (or has been offered work) in the borough of the authority into whose are they wish to move, and has a genuine intention to take up the offer.

From June 2015 levels of Right to Move applications have been monitored in order to inform any recommendations to apply a quotas for such cases. This is in accordance with statutory guidance from Government.

In 2019/20 there were no RtM applications received and no RtM applicants on the register at March 2020.

### **2.14 Legislative Changes impacting Allocations Schemes**

None during 2019/20