



The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
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Dear Colleague

I am today publishing new statutory guidance on social housing allocations. This guidance, together with new provisions in the Localism Act 2011 which came into force on 18 June, gives councils more freedom to manage their own waiting lists. These changes are further important steps in our programme to radically reform the way social housing is managed.

Under the previous Government housing waiting lists almost doubled, with many people left languishing on waiting lists for years. That is why we have taken decisive steps to tackle this problem, including an affordable homes programme set to exceed expectations and deliver up to 170,000 new homes and lever in £19.5bn of new investment – in stark contrast to the net reduction of 421,000 affordable homes for rent from 1997 to 2010.

The final allocations guidance has been revised in the light of consultation. It encourages councils to make full use of the flexibilities within the allocation legislation to ensure that social homes go to people who genuinely need and deserve them the most, such as hard working families and Service men and women, rather than to those who do not, such as people who already own a home that is suitable for them to use.

The new guidance repeals all the existing statutory allocations guidance and is half the size of the guidance it replaces.

Alongside the guidance, we consulted on two sets of draft regulations relating to the Armed Forces, designed to ensure that former Service men and women who have urgent housing needs are always given 'additional preference' (i.e. high priority) for social housing – so that they will be at or near the top of housing waiting lists; and that Service personnel who move from base-to-base do not lose their qualification rights.

Following consultation, we have decided to make a number of changes to these regulations. Specifically, and subject to Parliamentary approval, we propose to extend both sets of regulations to bereaved spouses of Service personnel and to seriously injured members of the Reserve Forces; to extend the additional preference regulations to serving members of the Armed Forces who have been seriously injured – not just former personnel; and to strengthen the qualification regulations, so that when setting their qualification criteria councils would be required to disregard – not just residency requirements – but any local connection to their district.

I aim to lay the revised regulations as soon as possible.

A copy of the new guidance is enclosed with this letter. The guidance together with a summary of responses to the consultation on the draft guidance and regulations are also available on the DCLG website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/allocationaccommodationguide>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/allocationaccommodationresponses>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', with a small dot at the end.

GRANT SHAPPS MP