

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ALLOCATION POLICY FOR APPLICATIONS

FOR ACCOMMODATION OF GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS

Policy Aims

The aim of the policy is to ensure that allocations are made according to the needs of applicants and in such a way as to ensure the effective management of sites.

The County Council will take a balanced and professional view on all factors outlined in the application in order to create and maintain a stable situation on the sites. Consequently due account will be taken of the need to ensure that families on the list will be compatible with other existing family groups so as not to destabilise the harmony of life for existing occupants.

1) New Applications

The application form (**name**) must be completed in full and signed and dated confirming the information to be accurate. Where assistance is required an officer of the Gypsy Service will complete the form on behalf of the applicant. If the form is completed by an officer it will be read through and agreed with the applicant that the information is correct. A note will then be made on file as soon as reasonably practicable that the process was completed in this way with the reasons for this briefly detailed

Applicants should make their choice of site accommodation as wide as possible in order to increase the chances of being allocated a plot. However, the applicant should not indicate sites that they are not interested in, as this would inhibit an offer to another family.

Background checks will then be undertaken. This will include obtaining evidence from other services and local authorities and an assessment as to any potential management problems that might arise as a result of an allocation of a plot.

Any evidence that would potentially place either an officer of the Council or current site residents in danger or likely to encounter problems will be considered in assessing the suitability of the applicant. The Council reserves the right to reject an application on these grounds.

If the applicants have previously occupied a site owned/managed by WCC checks will be made to assess any evidence of previous management difficulties eg non payment of site charges, abandonment of plots, unreasonable behaviour such as continued fly tipping,

damage to site facilities or property, verbal or physical abuse of a site officer or other CC representative harassment or abuse of neighbours. The Council reserves the right to reject an application on these grounds.

Where possible background checks will be completed within 14 days of the receipt of the application and discussed at the next review meeting to assess the acceptability of the application for the CC waiting list. Nominated officers (at least 2 gypsy team officers) and the officer responsible for admin and finance will meet on a regular basis (depending on applications) to review applications and discuss background checks.

If the applicant is considered to be a suitable candidate for allocation the officers will allocate points as determined by the attached "points system."

The applicant will then be placed on a waiting list in accordance with how many points have been allocated.

The application will stand for no less than a 12 month period. During this time the applicant should ensure any contact details are up to date with their address and/or current telephone number. Should the applicant still appear on the waiting list at the end of the 12 month period a representative from County Council Gypsy Services Team will contact the applicant to determine any change of circumstances. This will take place every January. For example: - change of address, number of children or change in marital status. If at this time no contact can be made the application will be removed from the waiting list. Additionally priority points will be re assessed according to changes in circumstances.

Once an applicant has been placed on the waiting list they will be notified as soon as a suitable vacancy arises. If it is brought to the attention of the Council that the details are inaccurate the Council reserves the right to remove the applicants from the list or withdraw any offer.

The Council aim to notify the applicant in writing, by telephone or in person of the decision within 28 days of the Review Meeting. If it is not possible to notify the applicant in writing, a written record of the decision will still be kept on file.

Appeals will be handled via a written request to the Gypsy Service Manager who will review appeal with a senior Environmental Services manager.

3) Transfers/Mutual Exchange

If an applicant is already on a site and wishes to transfer to a new plot on another site or carry out a mutual exchange the same checks as those undertaken for new applications will be carried out.

In respect of transfers or mutual exchanges there will be no need to carry out a further points system check.

No transfer or mutual exchange will take place without a plot inspection (**see Plot Inspection Procedure**) and a site charges assessment made to give an up to date account summary. All charges must be paid in full before the application can be considered at a Review Meeting.

Transfers/Mutual exchange applications may be refused if an applicant on the waiting list would be disadvantaged by such an agreement or if the management of the site would be made more difficult

Transfer/Mutual exchange should not take priority over an existing application. They may, however, be useful in order to achieve a vacancy on an appropriate site for an applicant on the waiting list.

Priority points will not be given to Transfer/Mutual exchange applications unless such an allocation can achieve a vacancy that benefits an applicant on the waiting list or management benefit. i.e. to enable works to be carried out on facilities or to reduce tension.

4. Succession

Succession is normally accepted where parent or parents are deceased leaving a dependant who has lived on the plot for more than 12 months provided the dependant is of age and does not present any management problems.

4. Allocations

A plot will not be formally allocated until the following has take place:

New allocations

Deposit paid in full (currently £250)

Two weeks site charges paid in full (currently £94)

Offer Letter.

Site Licence Agreement (signed or witnessed)

Site Charges Card issued.

Allocated plot Inspection carried out and documented.(**see plot inspection procedure**)

Keys (signed for)

Transfer/Mutual Exchange Allocation :-

Will not be completed unless;-

Plot inspection carried out.

Termination form completed.

Offer Letter has been issued.

Transfer of Deposit arranged with the Finance Department.

Return of plot keys.

Payment of any outstanding arrears.

Priority Points System

The priority points system has been developed to:-

Provide a sound, transparent and fair system that is capable of standing alone.

Ensure those families with a proven local connection are not disadvantaged

Ensure young people who are living on Worcestershire County Council sites and who wish to set up their own independent accommodation with a spouse or partner are given proper consideration thus reducing the time they would have to live away from family support.

Ensure that health, educational and welfare needs are taken into account.

Reduce any potential site tension by balancing the needs of the site residents alongside those of the potential applicant family.

Retain management confidence by reducing anti social behaviour and maintaining recovery of outstanding arrears.

Preserve inter site movement to accommodate changing patterns of living and reduce the need for current occupants to move onto the roadside.

Ensure site applications are consistent and where possible do not compound or ignore previous landlord difficulties thereby safeguarding partnership working both locally and nationally.

Give applicant families feedback on potential accommodation, and the opportunity to reregister on a 12 monthly basis or if circumstances change.

Ensure that applications remain confidential except where background checks are required to substantiate details or information is required by a Statutory Agency ie. Benefit Agency or similar.

Priority Points.

To determine a base line of points each application commences with 50 points.

Applicants will be asked to indicate site preference; North, South or West as identified within the application form and the Check list for points amassed.

Following a list of indicators (attached), points are added or removed to determine a final point number.

Where medical need is indicated confirmation of condition will be required from a medical practitioner or hospital consultant. Points from 1 – 9 will be allocated according to the seriousness of the condition. Any disability will be taken into account positively.

Allocation of a plot will be made to the application with the highest number of points.

For those applications that remain on a list for a period in excess of 12 months a number of points will be added each January to ensure that new applications do not ‘overtake’ the original applications without due regard given to length of time on the waiting list.

Example

<u>Application 0012</u>	<u>Allocated Points</u>	<u>50</u>
Married couple/partners		+1
2 children		+3
Relatives already living on site requested		+3
Previous rent arrears		-3
Proven medical need		+3
Waiting 11 months		+3
Total points		<u>60</u>

Baseline Indicators and Point Ratings

<u>Heading</u>	<u>+ indicators</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Local to Worcestershire		+5
Born/raised on WCC site		+2
Relatives on site		+3
Married couple/Partners		+1
With child/children		+3
Single		+1
Proven medical need (degree of seriousness)		+1 - +9
Registered disabled		+3
Single still living on site with parent's		+1
Children educated locally		+2
Elderly needing support from family on site		+2
Applicant needed to give sole support to elderly on site		+2
Roadside (non seasonal)		+2
Roadside (seasonal)		+1
Private site		+1
Previous positive occupation WCC site		+5
Good payment history		+3
Points (per quarter) time on waiting list		+1

Site officer discretion (this covers site stability
And would come into play where 2 applicants
have the same points) +5

<u>Heading</u>	<u>- Indicators</u>	<u>Rating</u>
	Anti social behaviour i.e. fly tipping, fires, storage of scrap/rubbish, keeping of chickens/livestock not allowed on site.	-5
	Documented verbal abuse WCC officer/s or contractors	-5
	Previous bad payment history (long periods of non payment)	-3
	Damage to County Council property	-5
	Neighbour harassment	-5
	Rent/water charges arrears	-3
	Doubling up or allowing doubling up (leaving after negotiation)	-3
	Unauthorised occupation (failure to leave after normal toleration) N.B. Aggressive/abusive to WCC officers would result in an application being denied)	-10
	Previous abandonment of plots WCC	-5
	Abandonment of housing (documented)	-3
	Proven problems- other Local Authority sites	-2
	Previous proven management issues – Housing	-2

Evicted from housing (documented)	-10
Evicted from other sites (documented)	-10

The above list is not exhaustive and may be amended at any time.

M.P. Weale
Reviewed December 2005
Reviewed April 2006