



# Homefinder Torbay Common Assessment Criteria

May 2007

**Homefinder Torbay Partners:**

Riviera Housing Trust  
Torbay Council  
Devon and Cornwall HA  
Sovereign HA  
Westcountry HA  
Devon and Cornwall HS  
Tor Homes  
Teachers HA  
Signpost HA  
Magna HA  
Raglan HA

# Homefinder Torbay

## Common Assessment Criteria

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This document details the Homefinder Torbay Allocation Scheme administered by Riviera Housing Trust in partnership with Torbay Council and other RSL's operating in the Torbay area.
- 1.2 The scheme predominantly replicates the Homefinder Direct scheme currently operating within East Cornwall but operates entirely independently of that scheme.
- 1.3 The scheme's key objectives are:
  - a) To create a customer-led choice based allocations system accessible to all
  - b) To help widen the choice of housing outside traditional local authority boundaries
  - c) To ensure the scheme is open, fair and accountable to applicants and staff
  - d) To increase understanding and satisfaction in the allocation system
  - e) To give new tenants a feeling of ownership of their property
  - f) To help create 'diverse sustainable' communities
  - g) To make more efficient use of the available housing stock
  - h) To help tackle low demand
  - i) To reduce 'void' turnaround times
  - j) To reduce the number of refusals on 'hard to let' properties

### **2.0 THE SCHEME IN BRIEF**

- 2.1 The Homefinder Torbay scheme provides a new way of allocating social housing properties. It's radical approach will no longer involve social landlords 'matching' applicants to properties, instead, applicants will choose the property in which they wish to live.
- 2.2 All social landlords within the scheme are committed to advertising their empty properties to those on the housing register. Adverts will include a description of the property and which applicants are eligible to apply. Applicants can then apply for the property of their choice provided they meet the stated eligibility criteria. The successful applicant will be selected from those who have applied for the property based on the length of time they have been entered on the housing register.

### **3.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURE – WHO CAN APPLY?**

- 3.1 To apply for a property within the scheme applicants must be entered on the Homefinder Torbay register. The register is open to almost anyone. It may include existing tenants looking to transfer to another property, homeless families looking for a permanent home and other applicants who either rent in the private sector, own or are buying a property or lodging with family and friends.
- 3.2 Application packs will be available from the offices of all the partners within the scheme and will include details of scheme, the assessment process and how to find and apply for a home.

### 3.3 **Qualifying Criteria**

The Housing Register is open to all applicants except the following:

- a) Persons from abroad who fail the 'habitual residence' test, UNLESS they have refugee status, exceptional leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain.
- b) Persons under 16 years of age. It should be noted that a tenancy will not usually be given to applicants under the age of 18 years without a 'guarantor' (i.e. Social Services, parent, guardian etc). Partner organisations may have different policies in dealing with persons under the age of 18 and for more details please contact the individual landlord.

### 3.4 **Additional Restrictions**

While all other applicants may be placed on the Housing Register, the individual lettings policies of partner landlords may exclude applicants from being offered accommodation through Homefinder Torbay.

e.g. Persons who, where there is proven evidence that the applicant breached the terms of a tenancy (including rent arrears and persistent anti-social behaviour) for which there are statutory grounds for possession, or who have committed acts of physical violence against staff or other residents, so long as:

- i) the events have taken place within two years of their application,
- ii) exclusion on these grounds will not be used as a 'blanket ban' against all such people, but only be considered alongside each applicant's relative housing need.

- 3.5 Where possible, such exclusions will be identified at the verification stage of the Homefinder Torbay process and those applicants affected will be advised of their exclusion and the reasons for it.

## 4.0 **SEX OFFENDERS PROTOCOL**

- 4.1 Most social landlords within the scheme have entered into an agreement with the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary to exchange information on any applicant convicted under the Sex Offenders Act 1997. Any applicant who confirms on their application form, or who is suspected, or accused, of being a sex offender, may be subjected to the provisions set out in the information exchange protocol.

- 4.2 There is not a blanket ban preventing sex offenders from being included on the housing register. However, before any known offender is offered housing, full consultation will be undertaken with the relevant support agencies to assess the risk involved.

## 5.0 **TRANSFER POLICY**

- 5.1 All existing social housing tenants have the right to apply for a transfer. Tenants' housing needs will be assessed and placed in the relevant band on the housing register together with all other applicants.

- 5.2 Transfer policies are dealt with by individual landlords when labelling their properties for letting restrictions. For more details on these restrictions please contact the relevant landlord.

## 6.0 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

6.1 The scheme will assess all applications according to the level of housing need of individual applicants. All applications will be placed into one of three bands – gold, silver or bronze. The criteria for being placed within each band is as follows:

### Gold Band

Homeless/threatened Homelessness:	Applicants accepted as homeless by the local authority within the Homefinder Torbay area under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
Lack of bedrooms:	Applicants who lack 2 or more bedrooms, UNLESS evidence exists that proves the overcrowding is deliberate.
Shared Facilities	Applicants who require a property of two or more bedrooms and live in a 'bedsit' (not temporary accommodation) and share kitchen and bathroom facilities with people who are not members of the applicant's family.
Under-occupation:	The applicant is a tenant of a Homefinder Torbay partner who resides within the Homefinder Torbay area and under-occupies their existing property and is looking to move to a smaller, more suitable property. <b>Note: Where a tenant lives in specialist two-bedroom property this may not apply.</b>
Harassment:	Applicant is a victim of harassment (including racial harassment) or violence at their current property within the Homefinder Torbay area – providing evidence exists to substantiate claim (e.g. Police/Housing Officer etc).
Medical/Welfare:	Applicant awarded a 'high' medical priority
Disrepair:	Applicant living in a private sector property awarded a 'high' disrepair assessment by a Housing Surveyor or other inspector.
Supported Housing:	The applicant resides within a Supported Housing Project and is seeking to 'move-on' into independent accommodation. NB: The Scheme Manager must confirm in writing that the applicant is ready for such a move. The application date will be the date they entered the Supported Housing. <b>(See Section 11.9)</b>

### Silver Band

Medical/Welfare:	Applicant awarded a 'medium' medical priority
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Disrepair:	Applicant living in a private sector property awarded a 'medium' disrepair assessment by an EHO or other inspector. N.B. If an applicant has been awarded both a 'medium' medical and 'medium' disrepair then they will be placed in the Gold band.
Lodgers:	Applicant lodging with friends or family
Lack of bedrooms:	Applicants who lack one bedroom in their current home
Other Homeless:	Homeless/threatened with homelessness applicants not accepted under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 or who have no where to live (e.g. NFA).
Split Families:	Applicants who live in separate households but wish to be rehoused together
Work/Support:	Applicants who wish to move into the Homefinder Torbay area because they have secured full time employment in the area (evidence of the employment must be provided). Also applicants who wish to move nearer local facilities or relatives in order to gain greater support or care.
Relationship Breakdown:	Applicants who wish to live independently but who still reside with their ex partner/husband following a relationship breakdown.
Children in flats:	Applicant has a child/children under 10 years of age and lives in a first floor flat or above
Gardens:	The applicant has a child/children under 10 years of age and has no access to an enclosed garden

### **Bronze Band**

- (a) Applicants who, at the time of their application, live in a property which is adequate for their needs in terms of size and facilities. This applies to applicants who live in social housing, are owner-occupiers and tenants of private landlords.
- (b) Applicants who are owner-occupiers and who have equity within the property exceeding £45,000. (Note: high medical needs or disrepair problems may over-ride this rule and place the applicant in a higher band).
- (c) Applicants awarded a low medical/welfare or disrepair assessment.

## **7.0 EMERGENCY STATUS**

7.1 An 'emergency band' will be issued to any applicant who requires an 'urgent' move to ensure the applicants safety and welfare for whatever reason. Substantial evidence must exist before such a priority is awarded. This priority will be awarded where circumstances include:

- (a) the award of an 'urgent' medical assessment or
- (b) the award of an 'urgent' disrepair inspection by a housing surveyor or EHO, or
- (c) where the Police recommend an urgent move to escape violence or threats of violence,

- (d) where the applicant, or a member of their household, has suffered a sudden 'traumatic event' and living within their home will cause considerable distress (e.g. death of a family member, serious sexual assault etc.).
- 7.2 Please note that section 7.1 applies only to those applicants currently living in the Homefinder Torbay area.
- 7.3 Emergency status may also be awarded where the qualifying person requiring the property dies or leaves the property or no longer requires the service leaving another eligible occupant in the property and the landlord wishes that family member to be moved quickly to enable the property to let to an applicant who requires it.
- 7.4 Emergency bands will not be issued to applicants without agreement from of the Homefinder Assessment Panel This group meets on a fortnightly basis. Recommendations for 'emergency' status will be taken by the Lettings Co-ordinator. Where an immediate decision is required the Lettings Co-ordinator will consult two other members of the Project Group, one of which must be from another partner organisation in order for a decision to be made. The case, and subsequent decision, will be reported to the next Assessment Panel meeting.
- 7.5 Emergency status is time limited and will last for no longer than one month. If the applicant has not applied for a property suitable for their needs (size, type, adaptations etc.) within that time their emergency status will be reviewed by the Project Group and if not renewed the applicant will be placed in the band appropriate for their needs.

## 8.0 APPLICATION DATE

- 8.1 All applications will be given an 'application date'. This will be used when allocating properties to determine how long an applicant has been entered on the housing register. The date used for the application date will depend on the type of application: These are:

Move on Applicants	any applicant living in designated move on accommodation in the Torbay area will have an active date of the day they moved into the move on scheme. Verification of this will need to be provided by the scheme manager.
Homeless applicants accepted under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996:	the date they made their formal homeless application to the local authority. <b>Note:</b> If the homeless applicant was already placed in the 'gold' band as a result of some other need, then their date of application remains the same and does not change to the date they made their homeless application.
Social Landlord tenants:	date the housing register application was received for assessment
General Applicants:	date the housing register application was received for assessment *
Emergency band Holders:	length of time emergency band held.

\* If a 'general' applicant moves home then they must complete a new form in order for their level of housing need to be reassessed. If they have moved home voluntarily then the 'application date' will change to the date the new application was submitted. If they had no choice in moving (e.g. their tenancy came to an end) then the original application date will apply.

## 9.0 CHANGES OF CIRCUMSTANCES

- 9.1 Applicants whose circumstances change once they have applied for housing must either complete and sign a 'Change of Circumstances' form or write to the Lettings Co-ordinator before their application is reassessed. A change of circumstances could include the birth of a child, change in medical condition or the threat of homelessness.
- 9.2 If the applicant moves into a higher band as a result of the reassessment then their 'application date' will change to the date their circumstances changed. If the applicant moves into a lower band then their 'application date' will remain the same

## 10.0 SIZE OF PROPERTY

- 10.1 Properties will be matched to the size of the individual household applying for housing. Below are some typical examples of family types together with the size of accommodation they would generally be eligible for.
- a) **Single Person or Couple:**  
1-bed property
  - b) **Parent(s) with 1 child:**  
2-bed property
  - c) **Parent(s) with 2 children of same sex or different sexes under 7 years:**  
2 bed property
  - d) **Parent(s) with 2 children whose dates of birth are more than 5 years apart:**  
3-bed property (N.B. Applicants still have the option to bid for 2 bedroomed properties if they wish to do so provided they fall into 10.1 c above.)
  - e) **Parent(s) with 3 children:**  
3-bed property
  - f) **Parent(s) with 4 or more children:**  
3 or 4-bed property
- 10.2 The actual size property allocated will depend on the family's individual circumstances and may vary from the above where special reasons have been proven. Because of the very high demand for properties within the Homefinder Torbay area additional bedrooms cannot be given to applicants who have children living separately, but who visit and stay on occasions.
- 10.3 For any current tenant of a partner landlord downsizing to smaller accommodation, there are no restrictions on the size of property they can move to. However, the new property has to have at least one bedroom less than their current home. If the applicant can prove they are moving to less suitable family accommodation then the size of property could be disregarded. An example of this could be moving from a two bedroomed house to a flat or to sheltered accommodation.

- 10.4 In the instance's where tenants of Homefinder Torbay partner landlords, living within the Homefinder Torbay area, are overcrowded within their accommodation, account should be taken of the room sizes and how these properties may be subsequently advertised through the Homefinder Torbay system, in determining an applicants banding.
- 10.5 For example, where a tenants is living in 2 bedroom, 3 bed space unit, if there are a couple and 2 children living within the property, these applicants should be viewed as one bedroom overcrowded, silver band eligible to apply for a 2 bedroom property, as they are one bed space overcrowded. Applicants who are overcrowded by 2 bedroom spaces or more should be gold banded.

## **11.0 MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS**

- 11.1 An applicant's medical condition can be assessed in one of two ways:

Physical condition/illness: Applicants complete a Medical Assessment Form, which asks for details of the applicant's medical condition, the reasons why their current property affects that condition and the reason why they wish to move.

Mental Health: To assess an applicant's mental health condition a Special Needs Assessment Form is available. This must be completed by a professional worker (e.g. CPN, Social Services, Doctor etc.) who has knowledge of the applicant and their condition.

- 11.2 It is possible, where the applicant has both a physical illness and mental illness, that both forms can be completed to allow a complete assessment of the applicants needs to be made.
- 11.3 All medical applications will be initially assessed by Customer Services at RHT. . (In cases involving complex medical issues, the Lettings Co-ordinator may refer the application onto the Homefinder Torbay Assessment Panel for more detailed assessment.)
- 11.4 The Homefinder Torbay Assessment Panel meets on a fortnightly basis and consists of representatives from Social Services, Health, Torbay Council, Devon Partnership Trust, Supporting People Team and Riviera Housing Trust.
- 11.5 All assessments will be based on the applicants medical condition, the effect their property has on that condition and how that condition can be helped by moving to an alternative property.
- 11.6 Following the medical assessment the applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome and any change to priority band they have been placed in. If the applicant disagrees with this assessment they may appeal to have the original decision reviewed.
- 11.7 All appeals against medical assessments will be considered by the Homefinder Torbay Assessment Panel and will only be undertaken where further medical evidence is supplied by the applicant to substantiate their application
- 11.8 Where an applicants medical circumstances substantially change, a new medical application should be submitted along with any supporting evidence.

- 11.9 Applicants living in “Supported Housing” will initially be banded according to the type of accommodation they currently occupy in relation to their own particular housing need. When it is considered that the applicant is ready to move on into independent living accommodation, their support worker should submit a letter to the Torbay Assessment Panel confirming this. The Panel will then decide whether to endorse this recommendation. Following endorsement by the Panel, the applicants banding will be upgraded to Gold band and their application date will be back-dated to the date they entered their supported accommodation.

## **12.0 DISREPAIR ASSESSMENTS**

- 12.1 The Housing Register application form asks applicants about the condition of their current home. Where an applicant lives in the private sector and indicates the property is in a bad state of repair they will be sent a Housing Needs Report Form to complete and return to the Homefinder Torbay team. The form asks the applicant for details of the property’s disrepair and will be used by an inspector (normally an Environmental Health Officer or Housing Officer) when conducting an inspection of the property.
- 12.2 Following the inspection, and depending on the condition of the property, a level of priority will be allocated – either nil, low, medium, high or urgent, which will determine the band the applicant is placed in.
- 12.3 If the applicant is an existing social housing tenant the relevant landlords Repairs Team will be notified of the problem.

## **13.0 NOTIFICATION**

- 13.1 Once an application has been assessed and entered onto the housing register the applicant will receive a letter within 21 days confirming their application details. This notification will include:
- (a) The ‘band’ in which the applicant has been placed (bronze, silver or gold)
  - (b) The size property the applicant is eligible for
  - (c) The ‘application date’
  - (d) A reminder about informing us of any change in circumstances
  - (e) The Homefinder Torbay appeal procedure
- 13.2 Applicants will also receive notification of their application details within 21 days if they have submitted a Change of Circumstances’ form.

## **14.0 APPEALS PROCEDURE**

### **14.1 Banding Assessment appeals**

- 14.2 Once an applicant has been notified in writing of the band in which they have been placed they will have a right to appeal against the assessment. Appeals must be submitted within 21 days of the date on the notification letter and include the reason why the applicant believes their assessment is wrong together with any additional information that the applicant believes is relevant.
- 14.3 The application will be reviewed, within 10 days of the receipt of the appeal letter, by the Homefinder Torbay Lettings Co-ordinator. Following the review the applicant will be informed of the outcome in writing.

- 14.4 If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal then they can appeal further to the Manager of the Lettings Co-ordinator who will reconsider the original banding assessment. The Managers decision will be final.
- 14.5 Any further changes to an applicants' banding will only be considered if they experience any adverse changes in their health or housing circumstances. Such changes should be notified to Homefinder Torbay as soon as possible
- 14.6 **Medical Assessment appeals** - See **Section 11 MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS – SUB-SECTION 11.7**

## **15.0 FINDING A HOME**

- 15.1 Once applicants have been entered on the housing register they can start to look for a property of their choice.

## **16.0 ADVERTISING**

- 16.1 All social landlords within the scheme are committed to advertising their available properties as widely as possible. Properties will be advertised on a fortnightly basis. To obtain the best coverage possible properties will be advertised in the following ways:

### **Newspapers:**

The Homefinder Torbay advert will appear in the following newspaper:

The Herald Express plus any other newspaper deemed appropriate by the Project Group or an individual partner to Homefinder Torbay.

### **Website:**

A dedicated Homefinder Torbay website is available ([www.homefindertorbay.org.uk](http://www.homefindertorbay.org.uk)) and is accessible to anyone with Internet access. The website will allow applicants to view available properties and apply 'on-line' for properties of their choice.

### **Touch-screens:**

A Touch-screen display units will be placed in Torbay Councils' offices for applicants to visit and view available properties. Other sites may also be considered depending on the accessibility.

### **Hotline:**

A FREEPHONE number is available for applicants to call to hear what properties are available. Applicants will hear an options menu where different size properties can be selected and heard. This service is important to the Homefinder Torbay service and our efforts to assist disabled applicants, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted to access the service. The Hotline service will also benefit those applicants who are unable to read.

The FREEPHONE telephone number is: **08000 725 895**

- 16.2 **All social landlords committed to the scheme will ensure that all documentation, adverts and website are in an accessible format to reflect the local diverse community within the Homefinder area.**

## **17.0 ADVERTISEMENTS DEADLINES**

- 17.1 All advertisements will carry a deadline by which time applications for particular properties must be received. This will normally be one week from the date of the advert. Any applications received after the deadline has been reached will not be considered for the property.

## **18.0 PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS**

- 18.1 Properties advertised using the above methods will carry (where possible) a photograph of the property and a full description. The description will include:

- (a) Type of property
- (b) Number of bedrooms
- (c) Location of property
- (d) Any adaptations (e.g. disabled facilities etc.)
- (e) Services provided (e.g. warden, caretaker, cleaning etc.)
- (f) Heating type
- (g) Rent charged/service charges

## **19.0 LABELLING PROPERTIES**

- 19.1 Adverts will also give information on who will be eligible to apply for the property. For example, if the property is a sheltered housing unit the advert may state that only applicants above a certain age would be eligible.

- 19.2 Properties will only be offered to applicants in certain 'bands' according to the size and type of the property, the annual turnover and level of demand. For example a three-bedroom property in a high demand area may only be advertised to 'gold' band applicants, whilst other less popular areas may be offered to both 'gold' and 'silver' band applicants, or in some cases, all bands. The decision on which band the property will be offered to will be taken by the landlord prior to the advert's publication.

## **20.0 APPLYING FOR A PROPERTY**

- 20.1 Where an applicant meets the eligibility criteria, and is placed within the stated band or bands on the advert, they may apply for that property within the deadline given.

- 20.2 Applicants may only apply for a maximum of four properties on each fortnightly advert.

- 20.3 Applicants may apply for properties by contacting Homefinder Torbay on 01803 696123

## **21.0 SELECTION PROCEDURE**

21.1 Once the advert deadline has passed the Homefinder Torbay team will run a report from the computer system which will list all the advertised properties and all the applicants who have applied for each of them. For each property advertised the successful applicant will be those in the highest band. for the longest period of time The length of time on the housing register is indicated by using the individual 'application dates' given to each applicant. The application date will be determined depending on the type of application, as described in the section 'Application Date' above. Each successful applicant details will be checked to ensure they are eligible for the property. Only those applicants who meet the stated criteria will be offered the property.

21.2 The name of the successful applicant will be forwarded to the agreed officer within each landlord. Each individual landlord is responsible for the verification of the successful applicant.

## **22.0 FEEDBACK**

22.1 An important part of the Homefinder Torbay scheme is the need to give applicants feedback on who has recently been allocated properties. Accompanying each advert will be a feedback section giving details of the properties allocated in the previous fortnight's advert.

22.2 Applicants personal details will, of course, not be included. However, it is envisaged that the feedback form will include:

- (a) Property size and type
- (b) Property location
- (c) Band the property was placed in
- (d) Number of applicants who applied for each property
- (e) Band of successful applicant
- (f) Application Date of successful applicant

22.3 An overview of this information for the previous quarter will be published in January, April, July and October concentrating on results for an area.

22.4 Using this information, applicants will begin to appreciate where properties are more likely to become available and where the best chances of making a successful application are. It is essential that with any choice-based lettings scheme that applicants have as much information as possible in order to help them make an informed evaluation of their housing options.

## **23.0 REFUSALS**

23.1 If an applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, either at the accompanied viewing, or when an initial verbal offer is made, the housing officer will refer back to the Lettings Co-ordinator for another applicant. An offer of the property will then be made to the next shortlisted applicant.

23.2 If a homeless applicant refuses an offer of accommodation the refusal will be referred to Torbay Councils' Housing Services Section. They will investigate whether or not the refusal is 'reasonable' and inform the Lettings Co-ordinator within 24 hours. If the refusal is 'reasonable' then the second placed applicant will be made an offer of the property. However, if the refusal is deemed 'unreasonable' then the applicant will be advised by the homeless section that their duty may be discharged and the applicant re-offered the property.

23.3 The Lettings Co-ordinator will be required to keep a record of the number of refusals for each property and the reason why the applicant decided to refuse.

## **24.0 DIFFICULT TO LET**

24.1 If a vacancy cannot be filled via the Homefinder Torbay scheme then the property can be let in anyway deemed appropriate by the landlord.

## **25.0 FALSE INFORMATION**

25.1 Applicants who are found to have deliberately given false information on their housing register application form will have their application reviewed immediately. This may result in the 'band' awarded being changed as a result.

25.2 An immediate review of an application may also be undertaken if an applicant is found to have deliberately changed or worsened their housing situation in order to be placed into a band higher than they would normally have been awarded.

25.3 All landlords in this agreement are committed to taking legal action against any applicant found to have gained a tenancy based on false information in their application form.

## **26.0 Contrivance**

Where an applicant deliberately worsens their housing situation, so as to gain an advantage under the HFD banding system, this may be considered as "contrivance". Where such cases are proven, the application should be reviewed, with a view to excluding the applicants "contrived" criteria and re-banding the application on the basis of any remaining housing need criteria.

26.2 Examples:

- a) Where an applicant deliberately leaves suitable accommodation, for no reasonable reason and moves into accommodation which is less suitable to their needs.
- b) Where applicants have been considered to be "intentionally homeless" and have moved into overcrowded accommodation.
- c) Where applicants deliberately move into properties which are more adverse to their health or more environmentally worse.
- d) Where applicants intentionally overcrowd their present accommodation."

26.3 If an applicant is considered to have contrived their housing circumstances, any decision to review their banding must be agreed by at least two senior managers of Riviera Housing Trust and any appeal against this decision, from the applicant, must be considered by a third manager.

## **27 ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION**

27.1 All applicants have the right under the Data Protection Act to inspect their housing register file and to correct any information held which is inaccurate. Applicants may also request a copy of their computer record **although there may be a charge.**

## 28. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

28.1 All landlords in the Homefinder Torbay scheme are committed to a fair and equitable housing policy and to providing equality of opportunity when advertising and allocating available properties. All housing applicants will be assessed objectively according to their housing need.

28.2 All landlords are opposed to direct or indirect discrimination and recognise the need for appropriate monitoring systems to actively prevent discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexuality, mental status, religion, physical disability or mental health. Any allegations or concerns that an organisation has not acted appropriately have to be made directly to that organisation. All partner landlords are publicly accountable and have to have a complaints policy and an independent Ombudsman.

## 29.0 **SOCIAL INCLUSION**

29.1 All landlords within the Homefinder Torbay scheme believe that applicants should be given every assistance to access the housing register and search for suitable properties. For example, the provision of the Homefinder Torbay 'Hotline' number will assist those applicants who experience literacy problems or who are either blind or partially sighted and unable to read the fortnightly newspaper adverts.

29.2 Homefinder Torbay has also introduced an "Assisted List" whereby particularly vulnerable applicants are registered to receive a personalised service to help them submit bids and so better access the service. This provision allows for applicants to receive regular adverts to their homes, fortnightly contact by HFT staff or for bids to be made on their behalf. Responsibility for the maintenance and co-ordination of the Assisted List lies with the Lettings Co-ordinator.

29.3 To assist further, all statutory and voluntary agencies who work within the community either helping or advising applicants will be given information and training in order to fully understand the Homefinder Torbay scheme and thereby assist at first hand their clients to search and apply for suitable housing. To actively promote Homefinder to diverse organisations that work with diverse groups.

## 30.0 **POLICY REVIEW**

29.1 The Homefinder Torbay scheme is regularly reviewed and any changes to the Common Assessment Criteria are implemented only after majority agreement amongst Homefinder Torbay partners and consultation with the East Cornwall HomefinderDirect Partnership.

## 31.0 **COMPLAINTS**

- 31.1 Riviera Housing Trust, (RHT), is the operating body for Homefinder Torbay on behalf of the Torbay Housing Partnership. Any complaints regarding the standard of service by RHT staff should be submitted, in writing, to the "Neighbourhood Services Manager, Riviera Housing Trust, Woodview House, Paignton, Devon. TQ4 7HP". Details of applicants, allocations and complaints will be extensively monitored in relation to diversity to ensure equality of access.
- 31.2 Any complaints regarding the labelling of properties must be directed to the individual landlord of the property. If it is not clear who the landlord is, then the Homefinder Torbay Lettings Co-ordinator can be contacted on 01803 696123 and advice or assistance will be given to the applicant.