

REVISION OF HOMECHOICE POLICY FOR THE ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

Presentation to Environment and Community Panel
8 July 2025



Outline

- What is HomeChoice – and how does it work?
- Why are we making changes – and what are we changing?
- Consultation Process
- Next Steps

What is HomeChoice?

- Online Housing Register for social and affordable housing
- Managed by BCKLWN on behalf of 12 housing providers
- Introduced in 2004; last revised in 2013

How does HomeChoice work?



Why are we making changes?

- Changes in legislation
- Changes in demand
- Changes in the borough's overall approach to homelessness
 - Commitment in 2024-2029 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (action point 3.8)
- Feedback from internal and external stakeholders



What's changing?

4 bands: emergency, high, medium, low

1

Introduction of fifth “no priority” band – allows people who are adequately housed to be placed below those in some need.

Priority for every 10th family-type vacancy to those in employment

2

Removal of priority.
Current policy has good intentions but impossible to implement fairly.

What's changing?

Homelessness prevention cases (owed legal duty) placed in lowest band

3

Introduction of 'no priority' band means that prevention cases will have priority – improving chances of homelessness prevention

Separate welfare and medical criteria for assessment of applications

4

Welfare and medical elements to be combined - allowing greater flexibility and a wider range of priority

What's changing?

Medium priority for households: (1) Lacking a bedroom, (2) in a 1st floor flat with a child under 12, (3) in a flat with no garden

5

Lacking bedroom* remains medium priority; other factors moved to low priority (alongside homelessness prevention cases and others)

Applicants in supported hostel** accommodation given high band when ready to move on

6

High band retained if no other option but social; otherwise, medium (same as HMO residents)

*Housing Act 1985 defines statutory overcrowding

**such as Sanctuary Supported Living, Purfleet Trust Pathways Houses

What's changing?

Armed forces are considered to have local connection for 5 years after leaving the military



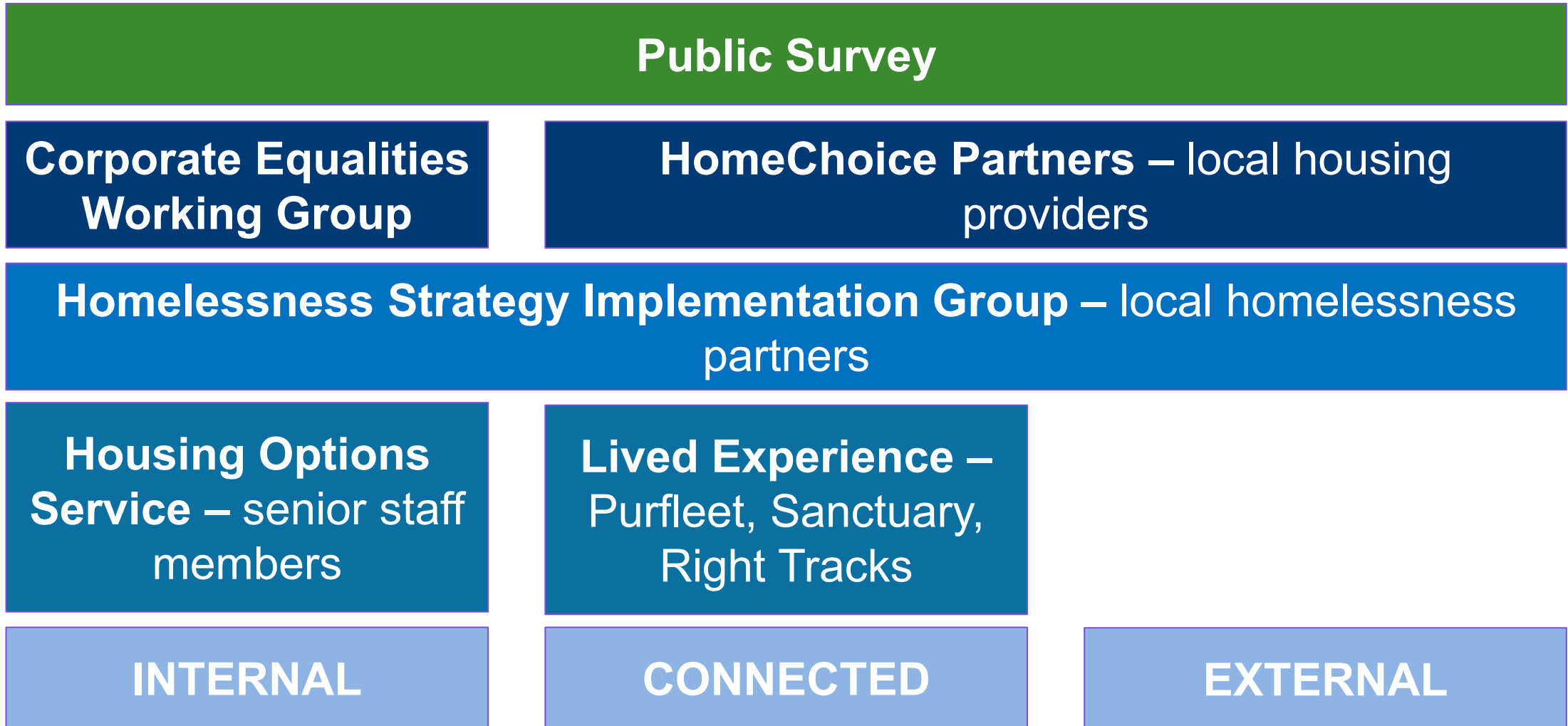
Removal of time limit – legal requirement and in line with Armed Forces Covenant

Care leavers – interim arrangements giving high band subject to conditions



Confirmation of arrangements as permanent – in line with Care Leavers Covenant

Consultation



261 contributors including at least 99 with lived experience of homelessness



Public Survey

- Widely promoted (online, word of mouth, lived experience)
- 212 respondents
 - 43% with lived experience of homelessness
 - 33% with long-term health condition or disability
- All but one of the changes supported through the public survey
- Employment – 103 against, 80 for, 29 unsure
 - Weighed mixed public opinion against partner / lived experience opinion.
 - Considered equalities impact – overall positive impact.



Next Steps

**Approval by
full Council**
(via Cabinet
and E&C)

July 2025



Redesign of
HomeChoice
website

August 2025



Inform
current
members of
register of
changes

August 2025



Manual re-
banding

September 2025

