



## **Changes to Lincs Homefinder with effect from 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Over the last 12 months we have been reviewing our Lincs Homefinder Policy, to move from one joint policy between North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council, to each Council having their own separate policies.

Applicants, tenants and stakeholders were consulted on the proposed changes. Our revised Policy was approved by the Council's Executive Board on 21 May 2020. Our website and systems have now been updated to reflect the revised policy. All applications registered and all new applications will be subject to the revised Lincs Homefinder Policy, with effect from **Tuesday 26 January 2021** regardless of when the application was made.

So that these changes can take place, the Lincs Homefinder website will be down between 1am and 1pm on **Tuesday 26 January 2021**. Please do not attempt to access your account, nor call the Council as the system will not be accessible. You will be able to see how the revised Policy has affected your application from **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021**. We appreciate your co-operation and apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

The full revised policy is available on both the Council's website [www.n-kesteven.gov.uk](http://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk) and that of Lincs Homefinder [www.lincshomefinder.co.uk](http://www.lincshomefinder.co.uk). Below is a very brief summary of those changes:

### **North Kesteven Applications and/or those with a confirmed local connection to North Kesteven :**

- **Assessments and eligibility** - Applicants wishing to be considered for housing in both North Kesteven and Lincoln will require two separate housing assessments for each of the two separate policies. Otherwise you will only have one assessment, in accordance with the NK policy
- **Local Connection** - Applicants who have a local connection to NK, due to previously living in the area, will need to evidence this for a minimum of 3yrs out of the last 5yrs (no longer 12months in the last 5yrs)
- **Care leavers** – those confirmed as leaving care can join Lincs Homefinder before 18yrs, but not normally eligible for tenancies until 18yrs old
- **Bandings**
  - Applicants directly assisted by NKDC into private rented accommodation, through our rent advance and/or deposit guarantee scheme, will retain their initial application date and awarded Band 3, providing the application is updated
  - Applicants in supported accommodation who have received a positive notice will be awarded Band 2 (no longer Band 1)

- Applicants at risk of homelessness awarded a Relief Duty & completed 56 days or more in temporary accommodation will be awarded Band 1
- Applicants with a welfare need including the support of Children Services/Adult Social care will be awarded Band 3
- **Advertised vacancies** - you will no longer be able to view City of Lincoln vacancies unless your application has been assessed by them as meeting their eligibility criteria. This means that you are only able to bid for accommodation in the area you have been assessed for.

### **Applicants with confirmed local connection to Lincoln AND NK**

- As detailed above, AND
- **Assessments and eligibility** – you will have 2 assessments, one for each policy. This may mean different Banding and different property eligibility. The assessment applies to the area the vacancy is located.
- **Advertised vacancies** - During a bid cycle you will now only be able to view properties for City of Lincoln or North Kesteven if you meet the property eligibility for the area of that vacancies.

### **City of Lincoln applicants and/or those with no local connection to NK or City of Lincoln who are deemed no longer eligible:**

- **Assessment and Eligibility** - City of Lincoln Council have revised eligibility criteria now requiring a period of 2yrs residency within the Lincoln area. Applications that do not meet this residency criteria will no longer be eligible for Lincs Homefinder, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Such applications will be suspended until one of the following happens:
  - 1) You request a right to review of this decision within 14days, such requests should be sent to [housingsolutions@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:housingsolutions@lincoln.gov.uk) stating the reasons for your request, or
  - 2) No response within 14 days, your application will be cancelled, you will then be advised that if you would like to apply in the future it would be a new application, or
  - 3) You request to be considered for housing in North Kesteven. Your application will then be subject to assessment in accordance with North Kesteven's Lincs Homefinder Lettings Policy

**If you have any further queries about how this may affect your application with Lincs Homefinder, you can view our frequently asked questions on the following page. If you are unable to find the answer to your question you should contact the administering Council for your application....**



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. Will my Banding Change?**

Your Banding will only change if you are in one of the categories listed – list of changes can be found under banding information on the previous page or in your recent email or letter that was sent to you, otherwise your banding should remain unchanged

### **2. My application is with NK, am I still able to look at & bid for Properties with City of Lincoln Council?**

If you are an NK applicant with no verified local connection to City of Lincoln then you will no longer be able to view their vacancies or bid for their properties on the Lincs Homefinder website.

### **3. Why can't I see vacancies on the website?**

If you can't see any vacancies on the website during a bid cycle your application has not been given 'allowed to bid' status and you should contact your administering Council to find out why. It could be as you no longer meet the criteria in relation to the new policies that take effect for both NK & COLC from 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 but they will be able to check your application and advise you further.

### **4. The criteria has changed for former local connection from 12 months out of 5 years to 3 out of 5 years, does this affect my application?**

Yes. If previously you have been awarded a local connection to North Kesteven based on having resided in the area previously for 12 months out of the last 5 years, you will now only qualify for a local connection if 3 out of the last 5 years has been completed. This does not mean that your application will be cancelled but it does mean that should you place bids for vacancies, your application will be prioritised after those who do have a local connection and meet the new criteria.

### **5. Will Lincs Homefinder bid cycles work in the same way?**

Yes. Bid cycles will continue to run from each Wednesday at midnight through to the following Monday. Vacancies will then be shortlisted and you will be notified if successfully featuring for a property.

**6. Who should I contact about my application?**

If you are an NK applicant then you should contact NKDC Housing Options Team for support and if a Lincoln applicant initially contact COLC for guidance.

**7. I can't bid on Lincoln Properties but want City of Lincoln area, what do I do?**

You should login to your Lincs Homefinder account and update your details requesting City of Lincoln as a preferred area. This will generate a change of circumstances and your application will then be referred to COLC for consideration and assessment in accordance with their policy. This is separate to your assessment with NKDC and their criteria for eligibility and Banding is no longer the same

**8. I have local connection to NK & City of Lincoln, how does this affect me with 2 different policies?**

This means that your application will need to be assessed by both NK & COLC and if eligible for both, you will receive 2 separate Banding awards and 2 separate property entitlements based on each individual policy.

**9. I was registered with City of Lincoln but I'm no longer eligible for that area as I don't meet the new criteria for local connection, can I still be considered for NK area?**

Yes, even without a local connection you can be considered on the housing register subject to verification and assessment, however priority is given to those applicants with a local connection so your prospects for obtaining accommodation may be very limited. Details of what you need to do can be found on the previous pages under the category of those with no Local Connection.