



28 April 2025

Dear Applicant

**Our Ref: FOI 737**

Your request for information received on 01 April 2025 has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

**Request**

*Can i request information on the NIHE policy on what they considered a trauma to be which gives 20 points for primary social needs?*

*Can i ask if there is a list available online or on record of what the NIHE class as trauma*

*Can i ask how the housing executive decide that only certain traumas count as traumas*

*Can i ask why it states on the points section in psn4 that  
"Where the applicant, or a member of the applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced distress/anxiety caused by recent trauma which has occurred in the applicant's current accomodation"  
how does does the NIHE decide the difference between what is a trauma and what is a trauma but not one to be awarded these points*

*Can i ask how PTSD and Perinatal Trauma due to a post partum haemorrhage which occured in the property which brought a threat to life, additionally resulting in ongoing complex anxiety and chronic depression (confirmed in support letters) arent classed as trauma for psn4 or psn8*

*Can i ask how the NIHE can refuse points for trauma and what a trauma is for these points when professionals, clinical psychologists, medical evidence and support letters confirm traumas.*

*Can i ask what policy is in place for tenant with a trauma, (multiple traumas) not*

*included in the psn4 classification but is in constant re-traumatisation and continued therapys as they are still in the property to which housing are fully aware of the situations and have been since day 1*

## **Our response**

I have provided a relevant extract of the Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual. This contains the available guidance in relation to the assessment of Primary and Other Social Needs points.

This concludes our response.

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

All factors affecting the Applicant should be recorded onto the matrix and then keyed onto **HMS**, even if the Applicant is not specifically seeking Sheltered or Supported Housing. The maximum number of points that can be awarded on a Support / Care Matrix is 16 points for Home Management and 14 points for Self Care respectively.

When assessing an Applicant using the Support / Care matrix, Designated Officers should also give consideration as to whether a homelessness investigation should be initiated. In deciding whether a homelessness investigation should be initiated because of the severity of the Applicant's support / care needs, the Designated Officer should consider the Applicant's complete housing circumstances and how reasonable it would be for the Applicant to remain in his / her current accommodation. A homelessness investigation should be initiated where any such doubt exists.

Following a Support / Care needs assessment, it may also be necessary to investigate any complex needs issues that may be evident, establish the most suitable housing option and a possible referral to the Area Housing Support officer. Staff should refer to Chapter 4 of the Housing Selection Scheme for Complex Needs Guidance.

### 3.21 SOCIAL NEEDS

The assessment of an Applicant's social needs is covered by **Rules 40 – 44**.

#### 3.21.1 GENERAL

Social and Environmental factors affecting the Applicant will be recognised by the award of points at an upper and lower level to reflect Primary Social Needs and Other Social Needs respectively (Rules 40 & 41).

An Applicant will be awarded 20 points for each Primary Social Need Factor and 10 points for each Other Social Needs Factor, for which they qualify.

Applicants **will not** be awarded points for *both* a Primary Social Needs Factor and the equivalent Other Social Needs Factor e.g. an Applicant who has been awarded Primary Social Needs points for harassment *will not* also be awarded Other Social Needs points for harassment.

#### 3.21.2 CAPPING OF POINTS: **RULE 42**

An Applicant may be awarded points for a combination of factors. These points, however, will be capped. Applicants may be awarded a maximum of two Primary Social Needs Factors and a maximum of four Other Social Needs Factors.

However, all factors affecting the Applicant should be recorded appropriately and keyed, as **HMS** will automatically cap the award of points.

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

#### 3.21.3 PRIMARY SOCIAL NEEDS FACTORS (PSN): **RULE 43**

An Applicant will be awarded 20 points for each Primary Social Needs Factor that applies. The points for a maximum of 2 factors (i.e. maximum 40 points) will be added to an Applicant's total points score, but **all** relevant factors should be keyed to **HMS**. This will enable Designated Officers to build up an overall picture of the Applicant's circumstances.

Assessment of PSN points can be based on information received in writing or verbally from appropriate authorities and or organisations.

A record of any written reports should be recorded on the appropriate and relevant HMS 'Notepad' Tab.

Verbal Information received should be recorded on appropriate and relevant HMS 'Notepad' Tab and include the following;

1. The name and contact details of the person providing the information.
2. How the information was received i.e. through a meeting or telephone call.
3. All the relevant facts.

In all cases where Primary Social Needs points are being awarded, Designated Officers should consider the possibility that a homelessness investigation may be required if the individual circumstances of the case warrant such an investigation. If, however, an Applicant qualifies for any Primary Social Needs factors 1 – 7, **excluding PSN Factor 6**, he / she **must** be considered under the homelessness legislation. In relation to PSN 8 a Homeless assessment may be appropriate; see guidance below.

**Points must only be awarded for one of the first three Primary Social Needs factors.**

#### **PSN Factor 1**

**Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced violence or is at risk of violence including physical, sexual, emotional or domestic violence or child abuse.**

These points apply to violent circumstances which have occurred, or are occurring, in or around the Applicant's home. This may be physical, sexual, emotional or domestic in nature and includes physical assault, child abuse, terrorism, racism or sectarianism and other similar situations. In such cases it is

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

not necessary for documentary evidence to be produced by the Applicant. Confirmation may be based on the facts presented by the Applicant, confirmed by interview or visit (if possible), or on the basis of a report from Social Services, the Police or a Care agency.

All Applicants awarded points for this Primary Social Needs Factor **must** be referred to the Housing Executive for consideration under the homelessness legislation and for referral to temporary accommodation if required. Applicants claiming domestic violence should discuss the option of referrals to Women's Aid Refuges, or other such agencies, in particular with the designated officer.

#### **PSN Factor 2**

**PLEASE NOTE: Whilst Rule 23 is removed effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, references to Intimidation Points have been retained below due to Rule 23B Saving Provision.**

**Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced harassment, including racial harassment and there is fear of actual violence (but the criteria for the award of Intimidation points (see Rule 23) are not met).**

This award should only be given where the harassment being experienced results in the Applicant fearing that actual violence will occur. Where the Applicant is claiming that he / she, or a member of the household, is experiencing harassment and is in fear of actual violence, then verification will be needed. Such evidence may be supplied from the Police or other statutory or voluntary bodies involved with, or representing, the Applicant.

An example is where there has been harassment or persecution suffered by the Applicant and he / she is afraid of actual violence occurring and where, for example, the Police confirm the harassment and the Applicant's fears, but do not feel that there is a likelihood of actual violence taking place.

Points will only be awarded for this Primary Social Needs Factor in cases where the Applicant's circumstances are such that they do not warrant the award of Intimidation points (see Section.3.3). Applicants who are awarded points for this Primary Social Needs Factor must also be referred to the Housing Executive for investigation under the homelessness legislation.

#### **PSN Factor 3**

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

**PLEASE NOTE: Whilst Rule 23 is removed effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, references to Intimidation Points have been retained below due to Rule 23B Saving Provision.**

**Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced fear of actual violence for another reason and the Applicant is afraid to remain in his / her current accommodation.**

These points may be awarded where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced fear of violence (which may not have been preceded by any instances of harassment) and where the Applicant is afraid to remain in his / her current accommodation.

Verification is required for the award of these points. For example this award may be made where there is / has been a perceived threat of actual violence against the Applicant because of his / her religion, race, sexual orientation, medical condition or other reasons and there are recorded incidents or other evidence to indicate the perception of the threat is legitimate. .

This category will include Applicants who will have moved or will need to move quickly because of their fear of actual violence occurring. The absence of any readily available confirmation from the Police, Victim Support and any other statutory or voluntary bodies should not influence the need to offer temporary accommodation or the award of Primary Social Needs points.

Points will only be awarded for this Primary Social Needs Factor in cases where the Applicant's circumstances are such that they do not warrant the award of Intimidation points (see Section 3.3).

Applicants who are awarded points for this Primary Social Needs Factor **must** also be referred to the Housing Executive for investigation under the homelessness legislation.

#### **PSN Factor 4**

**Where the Applicant, or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced distress / anxiety caused by recent trauma which has occurred in the Applicant's current accommodation.**

This award may apply to an Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household who is experiencing or has experienced distress / anxiety due a recent traumatic event, within the last 6 months (or 12 months exceptionally). The event will

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

normally have been of a violent nature e.g. the Applicant has witnessed a murder or suicide, or has witnessed or been the victim of a rape, sexual assault or physical assault causing serious injury in his / her current accommodation or the immediate surroundings, and where re-housing is likely to alleviate the associated distress / anxiety.

Applicants who are awarded points for this Primary Social Needs Factor **must** also be referred to the Housing Executive for investigation under the homelessness legislation.

#### **PSN Factor 5**

**Where, in the opinion of Social Services, there is a need for re-housing, to prevent the Applicant or a member(s) of the Applicant's household going into care.**

In this case, verification is required from Social Services to confirm that re-housing will prevent the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household going into care.

Applicants who are awarded points for this Primary Social Needs Factor **must** also be referred to the Housing Executive for investigation under the homelessness legislation.

#### **PSN Factor 6**

**Where Social Services recommend that the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, move to larger or more suitable accommodation to enable him / her to become or continue to be a foster parent.**

In this case, verification is required from Social Services to confirm that re-housing is required to enable the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household to become, or continue to be, a foster parent.

#### **PSN Factor 7**

**Where families with dependent children are living apart because of overcrowding or tension in previous accommodation, or where living together would result in children living in unsuitable accommodation.**

Where an Applicant with dependent children (see 3.11) is forced to live apart because of overcrowding or just cause i.e. family quarrels (where the situation has

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

/ had reached an intolerable level to the point that there is / was a complete breakdown in communications or an unrealistic set of conditions placed on the Applicant), Designated Officers may award the above level of Primary Social Factor points. These points will not apply, however, where the applicant has children that are not dependent on them i.e. the arrangement is one of access only.

Such points must not be awarded where the separation is deliberate and designed to gain the additional point's award.

It is recommended that visits should be completed in all cases where PSN Factor 7 points are being considered which will allow the Designated Officer to verify any information provided by the applicant in respect of the family's circumstances and to satisfy themselves that the family is living apart. In any cases where a visit is not carried out; good reason for this should be recorded. In determining whether the points under PSN Factor 7 should be awarded, information gathered following any visits and any further supporting evidence, e.g. from a Health Visitor, Support Worker or Social Services should also be taken into consideration.

#### **Application of 'no detriment' policy**

An Applicant should not be awarded points for mutually exclusive circumstances simultaneously on their assessment (i.e. points for a child living in overcrowded conditions with the applicant and PSN 7 points for the same child not being able to share/having to live apart).

The policy of 'no detriment' will apply to those Applicants with Full Duty applicant status (staff should refer to Chapter 3.4.3 for further guidance). Following an award of PSN Factor 7 points, the applicant's circumstances should be updated and assessed according to the facts presented. *It is important to note that the applicant's total points should not decrease.*

#### **Example A:**

Applicant 'A' is a single parent with 1 child, who has been awarded FDA status along with 10 overcrowding and 40 sharing points (under band F) in their current accommodation as they are staying with a single relative in their two bedroom property. Due to overcrowding and tensions in the accommodation, the child has to leave to stay with A's other relative. The Advisor conducts a visit and obtains



# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

supporting information from social services which verifies same. In this scenario, 'A' will be awarded 20 points under PSN 7, however due to a change in the overcrowding in the current accommodation, 'A' is no longer entitled to 10 overcrowding points. Furthermore, 'A's sharing points would potentially decrease from 40 points to 20 points as 'A' is now entitled to sharing points under band A, rather than band F. Accordingly, based on the change of circumstances, 'A' would have a potential decrease of 30 points in sharing and overcrowding, and an increase of 20 points for PSN Factor 7. Given that this would result in an overall reduction in total points, the sharing and overcrowding points should remain as is, PSN Factor 7 should **not** be keyed, and a note on the case should be recorded to reflect this. 'A's points cannot decrease due to the 'no detriment' policy, therefore, in this example, the total points would remain the same.

#### **Example B:**

Applicant 'B' is a couple with 3 children who have been awarded FDA status along with overcrowding and sharing points in their current accommodation. The family receive 20 points for overcrowding and 40 points for family sharing. They have a three bedroom entitlement and are sharing a single friend's two bedroom property. One of their children goes to stay with a grandparent. Without this child they have a two bedroom need. Following the applicable checks and receipt of supporting information, this information is verified. 'B' would still be entitled to family sharing points, however overcrowding points would have to be reassessed and will reduce by 10 points. PSN Factor 7 points would be applicable in this case with an award of 20 points, therefore their total points would increase by 10 points reflective of their current circumstances. In this scenario 10 of the overcrowding points should be removed and the 20 points for PSN Factor 7 awarded and notes detailing this placed in the system. This example illustrates that under the 'no detriment' policy overall points award cannot decrease but may increase.

#### **Example C:**

Applicant 'C' is a family unit with 4 children who apply from their own two bedroom accommodation. They are awarded FDA status and are assessed as having a four bedroom need as one of the children cannot share a bedroom. Their current accommodation is assessed as being 2 bedrooms less than their requirements, therefore 20 overcrowding points have been awarded at their initial assessment. In this instance, no sharing points are applicable as they are

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

residing in their own accommodation. One child from the household moves out to share elsewhere in order to ease overcrowding, leaving the parents, two children who can share a bedroom and one child who cannot. Supporting information is obtained to verify this change in circumstances. In 'C's case, PSN Factor 7 may be considered but the overcrowding points should be reduced by 10 if the decision is made to award PSN Factor 7 points. Therefore the total points would increase by 10 points, rather than 20 points, which would be the case if PSN Factor 7 was

awarded without a reduction in the overcrowding award. Notes detailing this must be placed in the system. As above, this example illustrates that under the 'no detriment' policy overall points award cannot decrease but may increase.

#### **Example D**

The same principles should be applied to any cases where PSN 7 is awarded before the applicant subsequently moves into shared accommodation. For example, applicant "D" is a single mother with 4 dependent children residing with her in her 2 bedroom accommodation and 1 dependent child ("E") residing with a relative. They are awarded FDA status and assessed as having a four bedroom need, including the absent child, and a three bedroom need without the absent child. No sharing points are applicable but following all necessary investigations 10 overcrowding points and 20 PSN 7 points have been awarded. Applicant "D" is then forced by circumstances and through no fault of their own to move in a sharing situation with the single relative who already had one of her dependent children living with them. This reunites the entire family in the relative's two bedroom property. When (re)assessed the family are now entitled to 40 sharing points alongside 30 points for overcrowding in their new accommodation. 10 of these overcrowding points include being a bedroom short for child (E). However as the family are all back living together the 20 PSN points for children living apart would no longer be applicable if assessed purely on their current circumstances. However, the policy of no detriment still applies. As a consequence then no overcrowding points should be awarded in respect of child (E) only rather, the 20 PSN 7 points should be retained on the application and a note keyed on to the system to this effect. Overcrowding points will however be awarded for all other family members i.e. 20 points.

Applicants who are awarded points for this Primary Social Needs Factor **must** also be referred to the Housing Executive for investigation under the homelessness legislation.

#### **PSN Factor 8**

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

**In circumstances analogous to those listed at 1) to 7) above.**

An award of Primary Social Needs Factor points may be made where the Applicant has a similar urgent social need not covered in the above list. The Designated Officer will make the award of such points in this category, in addition to any other points.

As with other Primary Social Needs Factors, supporting evidence and the reasons for the award of points should be clearly stated and recorded appropriately as part of the housing needs assessment.

Where these points are awarded, Designated Officers may consider that a homelessness investigation is required, depending on the circumstances pertaining to each individual case.

#### **3.21.4 OTHER SOCIAL NEEDS FACTORS (OSN): RULE 44**

An Applicant will be awarded 10 points for each Other Social Needs Factor that applies. The points for a maximum of 4 factors (i.e. maximum 40 points) will be added to an Applicant's total points score, but **all** relevant factors should be keyed to **HMS**. This will enable Designated Officers to build up an overall picture of the Applicant's circumstances.

Applicants **will not** be awarded points for both a Primary Social Needs Factor and the equivalent Other Social Needs Factor e.g. an Applicant who has been awarded Primary Social Needs points for harassment **will not** also be awarded Other Social Needs points for harassment.

The reasons for the award of these points should be based on the facts presented by the Applicant, confirmed by interview or visit, and recorded as part of the record of housing needs assessment.

Other Social Needs Factors 11 - 14 are area-based factors i.e. Designated Officers must consider individually whether these points apply to the Applicant's , area(s) of choice with reasons recorded as part of housing needs assessment. Please note: OSN 17 can be either area based or ordinary depending on which OSN Factor it is analogous to.

Other Social Needs points will be awarded in the following circumstances: -

#### **OSN Factor 1**

# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

**Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced neighbour disputes and re-housing is likely to resolve the situation.**

Points will be awarded for the above category in situations where there is an unresolved, long running neighbour dispute and where, in the opinion of the Designated Officer, re-housing is likely to result in a solution to the dispute. If there is any harassment, fear or risk of violence, or actual instance of violence, the Applicant should first be considered for the relevant Primary Social Needs Factor, and a homelessness investigation should be initiated where applicable.

Designated Officers should refer to records of such neighbour disputes and any other local knowledge.

#### **OSN Factor 2**

**Where the Applicant, or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced harassment but there appears to be no fear of actual violence.**

Such points may be awarded where the Applicant, or a member of the Applicant's household, is being harassed on a continual basis but there does not appear to be any threat or fear of violence which would warrant the award of points as a Primary Social Needs Factor. Situations where this award of points may be considered are where the Applicant is being subjected to verbal abuse or bogus calls, or where an elderly or vulnerable person is suffering persecution by youths.

No verification is required for points to be awarded in this category but Designated Officers may refer to local knowledge, complaints and any other transfer or housing applications from neighbours etc.

#### **OSN Factor 3**

**Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household, is experiencing or has experienced burglary or vandalism and there is an inability to cope at his / her current accommodation.**

Points may be awarded where the Applicant is or has been subject to crime or vandalism at his / her current accommodation or in immediate vicinity, and where the Applicant feels unable to continue to cope at this address as a result.

Designated Officers should take into account the area in which the Applicant is living and his / her ability to deal with any such incidents.

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

Police confirmation or other reasonable evidence of the burglary or vandalism will be required.

#### **OSN Factor 4**

**Where the Applicant, or a member of the Applicant's household, has been awarded staying or weekend access to dependent children and his / her current accommodation is unsuitable to facilitate this access.**

These points will **not** apply to applicants in priority need due to having dependent children (3.11) but only to those with staying or weekend access to children from a previous relationship.

For those applicants in priority need due to having dependent children, PSN Factor 7 (see 3.21.3) will apply where the family is living apart.

Supporting Evidence is required to confirm the agreed access to children from a previous relationship e.g. copies of the relevant Court papers or confirmation of such arrangements from the Applicant's solicitor. Where arrangements for access have been agreed between the concerned parties without recourse to the legal process, points may be awarded where there is other reasonable supporting evidence e.g. written statements from both parties (see 3.11).

#### **OSN Factor 5**

**Where the Applicant's current accommodation is too expensive.**

These points will be awarded where the Applicant can show that he / she is unable to meet the housing / heating costs of his / her current accommodation i.e. rental payments, mortgage payments, Housing Executive district heating costs or housing association fixed heating and hot water charges.

These points will not be awarded, however, where the Applicant is having difficulty meeting the maintenance upkeep of the accommodation - this is considered under OSN Factor 6.

For Private Sector tenants, these points may be awarded where, for example, the eligible rent used for assessing the Applicant's Housing Benefit entitlement fails to meet the full rental charge, thus rendering the Applicant unable to pay their rent and rates and resulting in arrears accruing. The award does not apply where full Housing Benefit is not received due to non-dependant charges, or where a tenant advises they had checked the NIHE website for the LHA amount and was aware

# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

that there would be a shortfall in Housing Benefit, prior to tenancy commencement.

For Owner-Occupiers, these points may be awarded where, for example, the Applicant is in Financial Hardship. Where such an Applicant is being forced to sell their home, they should also be considered for Insecurity of Tenure /Other Homeless points (see Chapter 3.5.2 (b)).

For Public Sector tenants, these points may be awarded where, for example, a tenant is unable to meet the heating / hot water charges or district heating charges, and arrears are accruing.

In all cases the Designated Officer must be satisfied that the Applicant cannot meet the relevant costs and that arrears may accrue. Examples of evidence required to support an award of points may include proof of arrears of rent / mortgage arrears accruing due to the Housing Benefit level in payment, district heating charges / arrears etc.

#### **OSN Factor 6**

**Where the Applicant and member(s) of the Applicant's household are unable to maintain their current accommodation.**

These points may apply where, in the opinion of the Designated Officer, the Applicant's current accommodation (including the curtilage / garden) is either too expensive or too difficult or too large to maintain to a reasonable standard of repair.

Points may be awarded, for example, where the Applicant is elderly or disabled or frail, the accommodation occupied is much larger than is required, and the Applicant is on a low income such as social security benefits, (including Housing Benefit), retirement pension etc. Points may also be awarded where a property is falling into disrepair i.e. qualifies for any Lack of Amenities points, and the Applicant is unable to afford to maintain it.

These points will not apply to Housing Executive or housing association tenants, where maintenance is normally the responsibility of the landlord, except in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances may arise where, for example, the garden (which is the responsibility of the tenant) is too large to maintain and the tenant is elderly / disabled / frail and on a low income, and there are no other household members who can afford / carry out the necessary work.

# Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual

## Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants

### Updated April 2025

#### **OSN Factor 7**

**Where a member of the household, who will not be moving with the Applicant, has a medical condition which is exacerbated by having the Applicant(s) in his / her home.**

These points may be awarded where, in the opinion of the Designated Officer, the Applicant is living with another person who wishes to remain in the accommodation, but who has a serious or terminal illness which is being aggravated by the Applicant continuing to live there.

These points should not be awarded to any Transfer cases as vacant possession of the property will be required if an offer of alternative accommodation is accepted.

#### **OSN Factor 8**

**Where the Applicant, or a member of the Applicant's household, has experienced recent bereavement in his / her current accommodation and requests re-housing and the same is likely to be beneficial.**

This award of points may be awarded where the Applicant has suffered stress associated with a recent bereavement (within the last six months) and there is a strong association of the bereavement with the current accommodation. In addition, it must be the opinion of the Designated Officer that re-housing is likely to help the Applicant come to terms with the bereavement. For example, the death of a household member who had been nursed at home following a long-term illness.

There is no requirement for formal verification of the bereavement. Points may be awarded on the basis of local knowledge and any other information available.

#### **OSN Factor 9**

**Where the Applicant is unable to reside with his / her partner for reasons beyond their control and there are no dependent children.**

Where the Applicant is forced to live apart from his / her partner because of overcrowding or other just cause, e.g. family quarrels, Designated Officers may award the above level of Other Social Factor points. Such points must not be awarded where the separation is deliberate and designed to gain the additional point's award. Designated Officers should consider carrying out home visits to

# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

both addresses to satisfy themselves that the Applicant is living apart from his / her partner.

#### **OSN Factor 10**

**Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household is socially isolated in their current accommodation and re-housing would be of clear benefit to him / her.**

Points may be awarded where, in the opinion of the Designated Officer, the Applicant is living in social isolation, e.g. is unable to regularly get out of his / her current accommodation because of its location (and there is no suitable transport available), or there is a genuine inability to leave the accommodation for some other reason. These points will also apply where the Applicant is isolated due to a terminal illness or a serious long term illness which has forced him / her to remain in the current accommodation and where they are unable to communicate / mix with others. Elderly or vulnerable Applicants suffering loneliness due to extreme isolation may also be awarded points in this category.

Designated Officers should take into consideration the following factors: access to and frequency of transport; proximity to amenities; need to be near services; any disabilities or vulnerability.

In all cases where points are awarded for this factor it must be clear that re-housing would help alleviate the Applicant's social isolation.

#### **OSN Factor 11**

**Where the Applicant needs to move to take up a new job or a full time course of study and he / she does not reside within reasonable travelling distance.**

Note: This is a preference- based OSN Factor.

These points will be awarded where the Applicant has changed his / her employment, or is taking up employment or a full time course of study, and does not reside within reasonable travelling distance from his / her new place of work or education. As a general rule, such Applicants must reside 20 or more miles from their place of work or education to qualify. Exceptionally, where the travelling distance is less than 20 miles, these points will apply where the Applicant can demonstrate that he / she is experiencing excessive travelling difficulties e.g. where the Applicant is obliged to use public transport which is unable to deliver



# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

him / her at their destination on time or which it would be unreasonable to expect the Applicant to use.

For the purposes of this assessment, a full time course of study is defined as being one of 16 hours (or more) per week duration, which lasts for 52 weeks or more.

In addition, the “distance from work” rule (20 + miles) will be waived where the Applicant’s conditions of employment, or nature of occupation, require him / her to live close to his place of work. Applicants who provide some special or much needed service to the community that necessitates them living in the relevant area will normally also qualify under this provision.

Verification of his/her employment or course of study is required along with the distances involved and the travelling difficulties experienced. This verification can be taken verbally or in writing from the new employer or place of study. Where verbal verification is obtained, all the relevant detail should be recorded on the appropriate and relevant notes tab in HMS.

#### **OSN Factor 12**

##### **Where the Applicant needs to live in area to receive or give support.**

Note: This is a preference - based OSN Factor.

Points will be awarded where the Applicant can demonstrate that there is a need for him / her to move to *another* area in order to provide support to, or receive support from, another person e.g. moving closer to a frail or elderly person in order to provide support.

Designated Officers will need to consider various factors when deciding whether or not a move is required e.g. the nature of the support, who is best placed and willing to provide it, the physical distance that the Applicant would have to travel, and the corresponding level of difficulty that would be experienced by the Applicant if a move closer was not made.

Designated Officers will need to verify with the second party involved that support is given / received, or will be, once a move has occurred.

Applicants moving within the same locality should not be awarded these points, as this OSN is there to recognise an unmet housing need.

#### **OSN Factor 13**

# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

**Where the Applicant needs re-housing to be near to family for the provision of child-care to assist employment.**

Note: This is a preference - based OSN Factor.

Points may be awarded to Applicants who wish to move closer to family so that the Applicant may actively seek work or take up an offer of employment.

Designated Officers will need to verify with the second party involved that arrangements for child-care are, or will be, put in place. Confirmation that the Applicant will be taking up employment, or acceptable proof that he / she is actively looking for work, will also be required. This verification / proof can be obtained either verbally or in writing. Where verbal confirmation is obtained, the relevant details should be recorded in the notes tab on HMS.

#### **OSN Factor 14**

**Where the Applicant needs to move to be near hospital, day centre, specialised unit of education or other essential facilities which would be of clear benefit to the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household.**

Note: This is a preference - based OSN Factor.

Where the Applicant wishes to move closer to a particular facility, points will only be awarded where a need for such a move can be identified and where there would be a clear benefit to the Applicant. Designated Officers should consider a range of factors when determining if a genuine need exists e.g. the distance from the Applicant's current home, his / her age and disabilities (if any), the difficulties that he / she is experiencing in travelling to the facility concerned and the frequency and duration of appointments.

Evidence (verbal or written) to confirm that the Applicant *needs* to be closer to the facility will be required e.g. a recommendation from Health and Social Services. Verification should be recorded and stored appropriately.

#### **OSN Factor 15**

**Where alternative accommodation is recommended by Social Services to meet the specific needs of the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household because:**

- a) an extra room is needed for specialist medical equipment, or**

# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

- b) an additional room is needed to accommodate a live-in carer, or**
- c) the Applicant's current accommodation is particularly unsuitable.**

When considering awarding points in this category, a recommendation from Social Services **will** be required. This recommendation can be taken either verbally or in writing and all relevant information should be recorded in the notes tab on HMS. In the case of c) above, this relates to the particular location of the property in relation to its immediate surroundings and is not necessarily related to the associated CLA. For example where social services advises that the specific location of the property next to a busy road is particularly unsuitable for a member of the household. Factors concerning the layout of the accommodation will be considered when completing the Functionality Matrix. 4.5. (In any circumstances where a verbal confirmation is accepted, it is important that details of the date and officer receiving the information, is recorded).

#### **OSN Factor 16**

**Where the Applicant's household contains a child less than 10 years of age and they are living in accommodation above ground floor level.**

Points will be awarded to the Applicant where his / her household contains a child of 10 years old or less and the accommodation occupied is above the ground floor.

A Critical Date should be keyed on **HMS** to reflect the 10th birthday of the youngest child in the Applicant's household and points awarded under this factor should be removed when this date is reached (unless FDA points have been awarded).

#### **OSN Factor 17**

OSN 17 points are awarded where an applicant's circumstances are similar to but do not exactly meet the criteria for the award of OSN points 1-16. As such OSN 17 can be analogous to either an Ordinary or Area Based OSN.

When considering or awarding these points the designated officer must indicate on the Housing Solutions Form (HSF) and HMS notepad which factor these points are analogous to.

Supporting evidence should be obtained to justify the award of these points.

# **Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual**

## **Chapter 3 Ranking of Applicants**

### **Updated April 2025**

Please ensure that an applicant who has already been awarded points for an OSN factor are not awarded points analogous to the same OSN.

OSN 17 remains an Area Based question on the Circumstance Table in HMS. Therefore, where OSN 17 is being awarded analogous to an Ordinary OSN factor (1-10, 15 or 16) all CLAs listed on the application 'Choices' tab must be keyed against the question for OSN 17 on HMS. These areas will need to be updated each time an applicant changes their areas of choice.

Where OSN 17 is being awarded analogous to an Area Based OSN factor (11-14) only CLAs where the designated officer is satisfied that the points apply should be keyed.

The award of such points in this category must be made by the Designated Officer and the reasons for the award, and any suitable documentary evidence, should be held on file.

### **3.22 COMPLEX NEEDS POINTS: RULE 45**

#### **3.22.1 GENERAL**

Where an Applicant, or a member of the Applicant's household, has been identified as having complex needs, a multi-disciplinary care assessment has been carried out and their housing need could be met within general needs accommodation, the Applicant will be made an award of Complex Needs points and ranked as a pointed Applicant on the Waiting List used by all Participating Landlords.

#### **3.22.2 NUMBER OF POINTS**

Complex Needs points will only be awarded to Applicants as a result of an instruction from the relevant Housing Executive designated officer. An Applicant who meets the criteria will be awarded 20 points.

The policies and procedures to be used when dealing with potential Complex Needs cases are identified in Chapter 4, Applicants with Complex Needs.

### **3.23 "CARE OF" / "CORRESPONDENCE" / "NO FIXED ABODE"**

It is important to distinguish between Applicants who are living "care of" a particular address and those who are treating an address as a "correspondence address" only. Those who are living "care of" (i.e. actually staying in the accommodation) should have Housing Conditions / Health and Social Well Being Assessment carried out at that particular accommodation.