

Housing Allocation Policy - your questions answered

<p>Why are you changing the allocations scheme?</p>	<p>The number of households seeking social housing in Hackney now significantly exceeds 13,000, while the proportion of these families considered to be in high priority has also increased; from 18% in April 2014 to 35% in July 2020. There are now over 4,700 households identified as in urgent or very urgent need. Demand has increased but the number of social properties becoming available to be let has reduced. The number of social rented homes becoming available has reduced by almost 50% over the last 5 years: in 2018/19 only 640 lettings became available.</p> <p>We want to create a simpler, more transparent housing register, better suited to the housing crisis and the housing situation in Hackney today.</p>
<p>Will I have the same priority under the new scheme?</p>	<p>Most households who remain on the register will be in Band B and their priority will be based on their existing band or application date. This will mean that households previously in the priority/homeless band may see a slight increase in their priority, those in the urgent band may see a slight decrease in their priority.</p> <p>Applicants who qualify for Band C will see little change in their priority.</p>
<p>I have a medical need, how will the change affect me?</p>	<p>Households with a high medical priority will be accepted onto the register.</p>
<p>I have been accepted by the Council as homeless and live in temporary accommodation provided by the council. How will the change affect me?</p>	<p>You will not be affected by the changes.</p>
<p>I am a social housing tenant and overcrowded. Will I still be eligible to join the register?</p>	<p>If you require two more rooms (rooms that can be used as bedrooms) than you currently have you will still be able to join the register.</p> <p>If you require less than two more rooms you will not be able to join the register but will be given advice and assistance to move through mutual exchange, Homeswapper or other rehousing schemes such as Housing Moves, Seaside & Country Homes. Tailored advice and assistance will be available to help identify and pursue other options.</p>
<p>What happens if I don't satisfy the new qualifying/eligibility criteria?</p>	<p>If you do not qualify or are not eligible to join the register following the changes, you will be offered advice and assistance to pursue other rehousing solutions that meet your household needs. Tailored advice and assistance will be available to help identify and pursue other options.</p>
<p>Why can't the Council build more properties to meet the needs of Hackney residents?</p>	<p>We're doing everything we can to tackle the housing crisis, and our pioneering housebuilding approach is delivering one of the most ambitious programmes of new genuinely affordable Council homes in the country. However, since 2010 the Government has</p>

	<p>provided no government funding to build Council housing, and although some funding is now available from the Mayor of London, it is barely a fraction of what is needed to build the thousands of genuinely affordable Council homes that we need most.</p> <p>This means that, although the Council will continue to deliver as many genuinely affordable homes for local people as possible, the changes to the allocations policy are still needed to manage the current demand.</p>
Do the changes mean I will get a property sooner?	Waiting times are not likely to change significantly for those that remain on the register.
How do you decide if I am overcrowded?	Identifying whether or not you are living in overcrowded accommodation is based on the number of rooms you need and the number available within your accommodation. If your household lacks two or more rooms, (rooms that can be used as bedrooms) you will be considered as severely overcrowded.
I was born and bred in Hackney. Will I be prioritised for social housing?	The current housing crisis has meant that there is not enough social housing in the borough to meet demand, and these proposals aim to prioritise those most in need.
How am I supposed to get a larger property if I can't go on the housing register?	<p>There are a range of other housing options available and, as part of these changes, we are keen to assist households who will not be prioritised for social housing to consider and take up these options.</p> <p>If you have a social housing tenancy with the Council or a housing association you can register for rehousing schemes such as Housing Moves, Seaside & Country Homes, Homeswapper or Homefinder UK. You can also have a mutual exchange; tailored advice and assistance will be available to help identify and pursue other options</p> <p>If you are renting in the private rented sector the Council can provide you with advice and assistance to secure more suitable privately rented accommodation.</p>
Will I lose the priority I have due to the number of years I've already been on the list?	If you qualify to go onto the new register you are unlikely to lose your priority on the list as long as there have been no changes to your household.
Will the Council be honouring any cases which were previously accepted?	<p>Everyone will have to reapply and only those applicants that meet the new conditions will be able to join the register. Where the applicant's circumstances are unchanged they will retain the same band date as before.</p> <p>Many applicants who are currently on the register, mostly those in the General and Reserve Bands, will not meet the new conditions and will not be able to join the register after the changes. We will offer specific advice and assistance to these residents to</p>

	help them find a suitable home.
Why do you have a reserve or general band when there is no chance of securing social housing?	This is one of the reasons we are proposing to change the current allocations policy and housing register. When the current scheme was created, the general and reserve bands did have a chance of securing social housing. However, over the years, increased demand and reduced supply have meant that those currently in these bands have almost no chance of ever securing social housing.
Will tenants who wish to downsize still be able to bid on the new system? Which band will they be placed in?	Tenants residing in social housing who wish to downsize would be accepted onto the proposed scheme and would be able to bid. We are proposing to place tenants who wish to downsize in Band B.
Where would I stand if I'm currently in the reserve or general band?	Applicants who are in the reserve or general band in the existing scheme would be unlikely to qualify to join the housing register under the proposed scheme unless their circumstances have changed. If the proposed scheme goes ahead everyone would be asked to re-register so that any changes in your circumstances can be taken into account. Applicants who do not qualify to join the register would be offered tailored housing advice and assistance to secure suitable accommodation.
What is a significant need and how is it determined?	We are not proposing to change the qualification criteria for households with significant need. Significant need can be defined as households where there is a threat or risk to life - this includes fire or flood, risk of harm/violence e.g domestic abuse/gang related, homelessness, and complex medical/health needs.
What sort of dedicated advice and support in finding suitable, alternative accommodation would be given?	This would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personalised, dedicated housing advice and support. ● Help finding suitable privately rented accommodation. ● An enhanced mutual exchange offer to help households already in permanent social housing to find and agree a transfer to alternative accommodation. ● Dedicated downsizing support for households looking for a smaller home.
Can I transfer to another borough's housing register?	Each borough has its own allocations policy and most require a period of residence in the borough before you are eligible. You should check on the eligibility conditions for the borough you are interested in. You are eligible to use Homefinder UK if you are looking to move outside of Hackney. Homefinder UK advertises social housing across the country.
What help is there if you wish to buy a property in Hackney?	Although not suitable for everyone, affordable home ownership is an option for some people living in Hackney who are unlikely to qualify for social housing but would struggle to buy their own home

	<p>outright, it's also known as 'low cost home ownership'. Options include shared ownership through Hackney Sales, and Homes for Londoners. You can find out more at:</p> <p>hackney.gov.uk/affordable-home-ownership</p>
Do you verify that people are not on the register fraudulently?	We verify resident qualification and eligibility at the time of application and when residents are shortlisted for properties.
How will you prevent people falling into debt if they have to live in private rented sector housing?	Our offer of advice to residents moving to private rented sector accommodation includes income maximisation and welfare benefit advice, budgeting and debt management and signposting to appropriate third party organisations. When assisting residents with a new private tenancy we always discuss affordability.
How will you prioritise families who need to move for medical reasons?	Families with a significant medical need would be placed in Band B in the proposed scheme and normally retain their existing band date. Only those with specific housing needs will be able to bid for specific properties that meet a medical need and will be prioritised above those applicants without medical requirements.
Why don't you prioritise those who have been on the register for many years?	Priority on the housing register is based on housing need rather than the amount of time spent on the register. As applicants with a greater housing need join the register they will take priority over those with lower needs who may have been on the register longer.
Why are you changing the register? You should be changing the system so that everyone in need can access social housing.	We recognise that the number of residents on the housing register does not reflect the far greater number of households in the borough that are in housing need. While we would of course prefer to provide a suitable social rent home for every household on our register, we need to be honest with those who are unlikely to be prioritised for a home and ensure they get more useful support and advice. In the meantime, we will continue to do what we can to deliver more social housing in Hackney and make the case to the government for more support and funding to tackle the housing crisis facing Hackney.
What support is available for victims of domestic violence who cannot live in certain areas?	The Council's Domestic Abuse Intervention Service and the Benefits and Housing Needs service will continue to support residents at risk because of Domestic Abuse. Where there is an immediate danger of harm we will find safe suitable housing as a priority. Where there is a less immediate risk residents will continue to be able to bid for properties in areas of the borough where they are safe and will not be forced to take properties in areas where they will be at risk.

Can I appeal?	The right to request a review will not change. You would still have the right to request a review under the proposed scheme.
What support is available for key workers to secure housing?	The Council would like to see affordable housing for all residents, including key workers, that need it. Sadly the supply of social housing does not meet the increasing demand and as a result accommodation is prioritised for those with the greatest need. We can provide tailored housing advice and assistance to help you secure suitable accommodation.
How would temporary accommodation be affected?	Temporary housing is not affected by the allocations policy so would remain the same under the proposed scheme. Residents who approach the council as homeless and in need of emergency assistance are offered temporary housing that is available.
Will there be a chance to bid for more than one property?	<p>There is no proposal to change the bidding process. Residents are advised to bid for the property that meets the needs of their household. Where a resident is lower ranked in the bidding process they are encouraged to change their bid to alternative properties where they have a better chance of success.</p> <p>If you have any comments about the bidding system and suggestions of things that could be improved, please do include them in your consultation response.</p>
How would bidding work in the proposed scheme?	In the proposed scheme residents who are in Band A would not normally bid as they will be made a direct offer of a suitable property. Those in Band B will be able to bid through the choice based lettings scheme. Priority will be given to the applicant who has the earliest band date and whose requirements meet those of the property. Band C applicants will be able to bid only for specific properties through Choice Based Lettings and will be prioritised by band date.
Is there another borough that has done the same process?	Most councils have an allocations policy which is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet local and national changes. Each council has different levels of social housing stock, levels of demand and demographics so it is difficult to make direct comparisons between schemes.
Will waiting times change?	Estimated waiting times for social housing are unlikely to change significantly under the proposed scheme. Only applicants with an identified medical need will be able to bid for adapted accommodation or properties that meet specific needs (level access or ground floor for example). The proposed allocations policy will make it clear that applicants with a specific need for ground floor or adapted accommodation will be prioritised for

	accommodation that meets their needs.
How will people with health conditions access housing?	If the proposals go ahead, the application process for those with health conditions will remain unchanged. People with disabilities or health issues will be required to complete a health questionnaire to support their application.
How are council new build properties allocated? Why can't people be given priority for these?	If you live on an estate where the council is building new homes, our Keeping Communities Together Policy will apply to you. This gives tenants on existing estates first dibs on the new homes that we are building on their estate.
How can you support residents to access private rented sector housing?	<p>If you decide to look for privately rented accommodation, the Council may be able to provide the following assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One month rent in advance • Security deposit paid • Landlord compliance check • Longest possible tenancy terms • Pre-inspection of the property • Practical and financial help with removals • Transport costs for viewing and moving if outside of London • Financial help to purchase white goods if these are not provided
What would happen if you were offered an unsuitable property?	You would have the right to request a suitability review if you refuse a property.
Who developed this solution? Have you based it on other council's policies?	The proposals have been developed by Council to reflect local circumstances, taking into account housing supply, demand, levels of housing need and the profile of residents on the current housing register. Whilst we have referenced allocations policies from other boroughs, there can be no direct comparison because of the differences between councils.
What is your plan for managing all the reapplications at once?	We are proposing to use new digital software so that residents can re-register online. We will put a plan in place to manage the re-registering process and those already on the register would be able to continue to bid during the transition period.
Can't the council petition for more funding for social housing from the government?	Hackney Council will continue to lobby central government for increased funding to build new social homes and for changes in the private rented sector to make housing more secure and affordable. Building more social housing is a long term process and would not address the immediate demands on social housing.

How can I speak to someone about my personal circumstances?	If you would like to discuss your personal circumstances in more detail, you can call the team on 020 8356 2929. They will be able to talk to you about your circumstances, including any medical or overcrowding need, and the potential impact of the proposals on your situation.
How can you have your say?	You can have your say by completing the online questionnaire by Monday 8 March 2021. You can also request a paper copy by calling the Benefits and Housing Needs service on 020 8356 2929.
What happens next?	Following the closure of the consultation on Monday 8 March 2021, responses will be collated during Spring 2021. A report will be written setting out the Council's recommendations. This will be submitted for approval to the Full Council, the elected councillors who represent the people of Hackney.

Current Banding	Proposed Banding
Emergency	BAND A - Those needing emergency rehousing
Urgent	BAND B - Those who have a significant housing need
Homeless	BAND B - Those who have a significant housing need
	BAND C - Other households meeting specific conditions and who are to be restricted in the type of accommodation they can apply for e.g. Older Persons Housing, quota cases
General	Removed - Offer of alternative rehousing options with tailored advice and assistance available to help identify and pursue other options
Reserve	Removed - Offer of alternative rehousing options with tailored advice and assistance available to help identify and pursue other options.