



Housing Allocations Policy



London Borough
of Hounslow

Effective from 3 April 2018



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1. Introduction

This document sets out Hounslow Council's policy for:

- Assessing applications to the council's Housing Register, and
- Allocating homes owned by the council and housing associations within the London Borough of Hounslow, and
- The use of private rented home it procures, which may be located within and outside the borough, for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

There is an extremely limited supply of homes owned by the council and housing associations in Hounslow. There are simply not enough to go round. In reality only around 2 people in 10 on Hounslow Council's Housing Register have a real prospect of being housed in these types of homes every year.

The Council's Housing Placement Protocol for placements into the private rented sector is included in this policy at appendix A. This formalises the procedure the Council follows when making placements in the private rented sector to prevent homelessness, provide temporary accommodation and bring the housing duty to homeless applicants to an end. Private rented homes are included in this policy because there is such a small supply of homes owned by the council and housing associations in Hounslow.

The council wants to provide more housing choice for people on the Housing Register and to reduce the time they spend on the Housing Register waiting for a suitable home. To do this the council will find and offer homes in the private rented sector, within and outside the borough, to offer to applicants in housing need including:

- Those living in temporary accommodation provided by the council because they were homeless;
- Care leavers or those living in supported housing;
- Those living with family or friends;
- Those already living in the private rented sector;
- Council or housing association tenants (in exceptional circumstances).

The council is committed to providing a fair and transparent service to everyone who is eligible and qualifies to join the Housing Register.

For up to date information about Hounslow as a borough, including information on housing, go to the council's data website "Hounslow Insight" at the following web address: **<http://insight.hounslow.gov.uk>** click on Reports, and look for Area Reports.



2. Legal and Policy Framework

Hounslow's Allocations Policy sits within a tight and complex legal and policy framework.

2.1 The legal framework

S166A of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with a published Allocation Policy. This Allocations Policy takes into account reasonable preference, the position of restricted persons and the council's equalities duties.

Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996¹ Hounslow's Allocations Scheme is framed to ensure '**reasonable preference**' (which means giving more priority) to some types of applicants. These types of applicants are summarised below:

- People who are homeless;
- People occupying insanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing;
- People who need to move for medical or welfare reasons;
- People who need to move to a particular location, for example to be nearer to special medical facilities.

Hounslow also has some groups of applicants to which it will give a local priority. These include:

- Council tenants who would like to move to a home with fewer bedrooms than they have now;
- Applicants occupying council-owned homes with adaptations which they no longer need.

Where an applicant would be awarded reasonable preference because their household is homeless, they will not be awarded that preference if they are only homeless or in priority as a result of a member of their household being a '**restricted person**' within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996². However, this does not prevent them being taken in to account when assessing other preference criteria, for example, preference for overcrowding or medical reasons.

The policy complies with the council's equality duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and has been subjected to an equalities assessment which has been published³.

2.2 The policy framework

The content of this Allocations Policy also takes into account the following:

- Statutory guidance on allocating homes such as the Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for Housing 2012;
- Hounslow's Housing Strategy (2014-2018), particularly Objective 4 which focuses on homelessness;
- The council's Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy (2013);
- The Mayor of London's Housing Strategy 2014, Homes for London.

2.3 How this Housing Allocations Policy was developed

This policy was developed following extensive data analysis and in consultation with Hounslow Residents, service users and equality groups, Council Members and staff, corporate and professional partners of the council and area forums. Following consultation the policy was approved by Cabinet on 11 October 2016.

2.4 Delegated authority to make minor changes to this Housing Allocations Policy

To enable this Housing Allocations Policy to operate fairly and within the law, the Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing is able to approve minor amendments to the scheme. Minor amendments to the scheme are those which do not significantly change existing policy or procedures and/or affect a small number of lettings or applicants.

¹Which deals with assessing applications for and allocating council and housing association homes

²Which deals with homelessness

³Equality Analysis was completed on 21 September 2016 and is available to view on the Council website



3. Applying to the Housing Register

3.1 Who can apply to join the housing register?

Anyone aged 18 or over (with the exception of Children Looked After by London Borough of Hounslow who are 16 or over) who is **eligible** and **qualifies** can join the Housing Register. The sections below explain who is ineligible or eligible to apply and the criteria that disqualifies an applicant.

Where an applicant does not satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in section 3.1.1 or is disqualified because of any one of the criteria set out in section 3.1.2, they will **not** be able to join the Housing Register.

3.1.1 Eligibility

Only applicants who are eligible can be included on the Housing Register. Eligibility is set out in S160ZA of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), which describes eligibility for an allocation of housing under an Allocations Policy, and explained in detail in statutory guidance⁴. Applicants should note that eligibility criteria is subject to change and their eligibility could change over time.

Ineligible applicants comprise:

- People who are subject to immigration control;
- Certain other people from abroad not included in the list of eligible people below.

People who are eligible include:

- British Citizens, if they are habitually resident in the UK;
- Certain Commonwealth citizens with right of abode;
- Citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) country ('EEA nationals') and their family members who have a right to reside in the UK that derives from EU law.

The question of whether an EEA national (or family member) has a particular right to reside in the UK (or in another Member State) depends on the circumstances, particularly the economic status of the EEA national (e.g. whether he or she is a worker, self-employed, a student or economically active);

- People who are exempt from immigration control under the Immigration Acts, including diplomats and their family members based in the UK and some military personnel.

3.1.2 Disqualifying criteria

The Housing Act 1996 (S160ZA) sets out guidelines for local authorities to set qualifying criteria for applicants applying to the Housing Register. The council only allocates homes under this policy to applicants it defines as being "qualifying persons." These are applicants who have not been disqualified as a result of the criteria described below.

Housing Register applicants will be reminded about the consequences of making false statements or withholding information relevant to their application set out in section 8.3 *Making false statements or withholding information*.

Prevention of Fraud

It is a criminal offence for Housing Register applicants and/or anyone providing supporting information to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application (s171 Housing Act 1996 or s2 and s3 Fraud Act 2006).

If there is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed the council may take proceedings that could result in a criminal record, a fine or imprisonment. The council will seek possession of any home obtained as a result of fraud.

⁴Department for Communities and Local Government (2012), Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England, Chapter 3

(a) Does not qualify due to unacceptable behaviour or actions

This applies where the Council is satisfied, having considered all available evidence, that an applicant (or a member of their current or prospective household) has not kept to the terms and conditions of any current or previous council, housing association or private rented sector tenancy agreement terms. It includes (but is not restricted to):

- Serious anti-social behaviour, nuisance or annoyance to neighbours;
- Illegal or immoral use of the property;
- Serious deterioration in the condition of the property, whether owned by the council, a housing association or a private landlord, resulting from the actions of the applicant or a member of their current or prospective household;
- Substantial rent arrears (which the applicant should have reasonably been able to afford to pay);
- The applicant or a member of their current or proposed household obtaining a tenancy fraudulently.

Applicants will be able to qualify after a period of 12 months (from the date of their application), if they (or a member of their prospective household) has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Hounslow Council that circumstances have changed such that the previous conduct is unlikely to reoccur. This could include demonstrating cooperation with support agencies which has led to a substantial improvement in behaviour.

(b) Does not qualify due to length of residency in the borough

All applicants must be currently resident in the borough of Hounslow and have lived in the borough continuously for 5 years or lived in the borough for a total of 5 out of the last 7 years.

Exceptions to the residence requirements are:

- Those who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and Hounslow Council has accepted a full housing duty to them;
- Existing secure or fixed term tenants of Hounslow Council;
- Former homeless applicants owed the full housing duty who accepted a qualifying offer of housing outside the borough;

- Young people leaving the care of Hounslow Council whether or not they currently live in Hounslow;
- Serving members of the British armed forces, former members of the British armed forces who have served in the previous five years, bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner, and serving or former members of the Reserve Forces needing to move on medical grounds due to a medical condition resulting from their service. Those who have served within the last five years but have been or are going to be dishonourably discharged are excluded from this exception;
- Those residing in supported housing schemes commissioned by Hounslow Council;
- Verified rough sleepers, where there is proof of rough sleeping in the Borough over the previous 6 months, prior to applying to the Housing Register;
- Persons in prison who were living in Hounslow continuously for 5 years, or 5 years out of 7 years, immediately before going to prison;
- Existing council or housing association tenants living in other local authority areas who have a reasonable preference on hardship grounds to move to the borough of Hounslow for work-related reasons.

(c) Does not qualify due to income, savings and assets

Applicants do not qualify if they have:

- A household gross income of more than £50,000 per annum unless the council agrees an exception, e.g. a household including disabled members with income above this level;
- Savings of more than £50,000 unless the council agrees an exception, e.g. older applicants applying for sheltered or extra care sheltered homes;
- Owns or has an interest in a property as a freeholder, leaseholder, a part-owner through shared ownership, including part commercial/residential property, in the UK or abroad. This includes people who own caravans, mobile homes, houseboats and accommodation in seasonal holiday parks.

Household gross income is defined as income (before any deductions are made) from employment, working and child tax credits, child benefit, universal credit, housing

benefit, income from investments or savings and overtime if worked on a regular basis.

Applicants who have sold a property in the last 7 years will be asked to provide evidence of the sale and details of any capital gained from the sale. Applicants will be disqualified if they disposed of capital without making adequate housing arrangements, for example, by gifting the capital to relatives or friends.

At the discretion of the council's Chief Housing Officer, an offer of a home under this Allocations Policy may be made in exceptional circumstances under this disqualification criteria on a case by case basis.

(d) Does not qualify under statutory reasonable preference categories or the council's local priorities

Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Hounslow's Allocations Scheme is framed to ensure 'reasonable preference' (which means giving more priority) to some applicants. Applicants who do not meet the statutory reasonable preference categories will not qualify to join the Housing Register. The reasonable preference categories are:

- All homeless people as defined by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 including people who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need;
- People owed a duty by the council under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Housing Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any other housing authority under s192(3);
- People occupying insanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing;
- People who need to move for medical or welfare reasons;
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the housing authority area, for example to be nearer to special medical facilities, and failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others. This includes Right to Move grounds.

Hounslow also has some groups of applicants which it gives a local priority to. These are:

- Council tenants who would like to move to a home with fewer bedrooms than they have now;
- Applicants occupying council-owned homes with adaptations which they no longer need.

From 3 April 2018, the following categories are also given a local priority:

- Looked After Children and Children Leaving Care under the responsibility of London Borough of Hounslow;
- Applicants living in Supported Housing commissioned by London Borough of Hounslow;
- Applicants who are working but on a low income;
- Applicants who are at risk of homelessness and those owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty.

Applicants who do not meet the statutory reasonable preference categories or local priorities cannot join the Housing Register and will instead be directed to the "Find a home" page on the council's website for information on alternative housing options.

3.1.3 Housing applications from, and lettings to Members of the council, staff members, board members of housing associations and their relations

So that Hounslow Council is seen to be acting transparently and equitably, the following rules apply:

(a) Applications

Any housing applicant, including existing council tenants, must tell the council when they apply to Hounslow's Housing Register if they are:

- An elected member of the Council; or
- A council member of staff; or
- A board member of a partner housing association; or
- Related to any of the above.

All applications in any group set out above will be identified on the council's computer systems to show their status under this section of the Allocations Policy.

Where an applicant fails to disclose the above information but it subsequently comes to the council's attention, the Housing Register application will be closed. The council reserves the right to take action set out in section 8.3 of this Housing Allocations Policy.

(b) Lettings

The approval of the council's Chief Housing Officer is needed for any lettings made to these applicants under this Housing Allocations Policy.

3.1.4 Duty of the council's Housing staff to declare they are related to a Housing Register applicant

Any member of staff dealing with an application for housing from a person to whom they are related must:

- Declare this immediately to their line manager, and
- Not be involved in validating or verifying the application or amending it in any way on the council's computer systems.

The council will take disciplinary action where a member of staff fails to declare they are related to a Housing Register applicant.

3.1.5 Notification of not being able to join the Housing Register

Applicants found to be ineligible and/or disqualified by any of the criteria in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 will receive a letter setting out:

- The council's decision, and
- The applicant's right to request a review of that decision (see section 9.2), and
- Advice and information on alternative housing options.

Where an applicant is eligible and qualifies to join the Housing Register but the council is satisfied subsequently that the applicant has become ineligible or disqualified, their housing register application will be cancelled and the applicant will receive written confirmation of this from the council.

Any applicant classified as being ineligible or not qualifying can apply to join the Housing Register again in the future if they can demonstrate they meet the eligibility and qualification criteria.

3.2 How to apply to join the Housing Register

Applicants are firstly required to complete the council's

online self-assessment (pre-qualification questionnaire) and then the online Housing Register application form. If the applicant, or other family members included as part of the application, have a disability or medical condition, an online medical self-assessment must also be completed.

Following successful submission of the online forms, applicants are requested to provide supporting documentation to enable their application to be accurately assessed. Failure to provide requested documentation will result in the application being cancelled. There are time limits imposed for applicants to complete and submit information and details of the time limits are available on the council website.

The online forms can be found on the council website in the housing pages.

Applicants can seek help with completing the online self-assessment form, application form and medical form, from a range of voluntary and statutory agencies in the borough.

For applicants who are seeking help from the council because they are homeless, Housing Register application may be completed by council officers.

The council's Housing Assessment Team assesses an applicant's housing need using the information given in the online Housing Register forms and any supporting information the council requires.

Applicants who do not have a current address in Hounslow, but may be eligible and qualify to apply, must contact the council's housing assessment team who will make alternative arrangements for an application to be completed.

3.3 Who can be included on a Housing Register application?

An applicant can include only members of their immediate family who normally live with them (or who would live with them if it were possible for them to do so) or other people who have an extenuating need to live with them.

3.3.1 Immediate family

Immediate family includes:

- The applicant's spouse, civil partner or partner. By 'partner' we mean anyone who lives with the applicant as their partner or who would live with them as a couple if they were able to do so.

- Dependent children. This includes children aged under 21 who live with the applicant all the time, including those for which the applicant has legal guardianship and children that are adopted or fostered.

The applicant is required to provide the council with official papers when requested, such as an order from a court, and other documents relating to any agreement that is currently in place regarding the residency of children.

Exception to the above rule

If an applicant has been accepted as statutorily homeless by the council, the household will be assessed as all members who are reasonably expected to reside with the applicant, included as part of the original homelessness application. Changes to the household composition will be assessed on a case by case basis and a reduction in the number of household members will be taken into account in the size of property allocated.

3.3.2 People, who are not an immediate family member (see 3.3.1 above), who have an exceptional need to live with the applicant in order to provide or receive care or support.

People who have an exceptional need to live with an applicant means people who are currently living with the applicant but are not included in the definition of immediate family, but who have a real need to live as part of the household in order to give or to receive care or support. This may include the following people who have not applied for housing separately:

- A child (of the applicant or partner) aged 21 or over who has lived with the applicant for at least the last 5 years and cannot live independently because of a disability or care need;
- A carer, if someone in the household needs full-time care which cannot be provided with a care package and no one in their immediate family is able to provide this;
- An adult (or elderly) relative who has lived with the applicant for at least the last 5 years and needs to receive care that cannot be provided with a care package and can only be provided by the applicant.

Applicants must explain in their Housing Register application why they wish to include people who are not regarded by the council as immediate family. The council requires applicants to provide supporting documents to confirm this need such as:

- A court order;

- A social services care plan;
- An occupational therapy assessment;
- Proof of carers allowance being received;
- Other evidence the council thinks appropriate.

3.3.3 Family members not currently living with the applicant

The council will not include in Housing Register applications any family members who are not resident in the UK at the time an application is submitted. These household members will only be considered once the family has been reunited in the UK and can clearly demonstrate that the family member added to the application for housing is residing in the UK lawfully.

3.3.4 Parents with shared residence of children

In cases where parents share the residency of children, and wish to include those children as part of their housing application, the housing arrangements of both parents will be considered. If one parent has adequate accommodation for the children, the children will not be taken into account on the other parent's application. Where a formal residence agreement is not in place, the council will consider:

- Who the children usually live with; and
- Who has financial responsibility for the children; and
- The length of time any arrangement has been in place; and
- Where the children go to school; and
- Any other relevant information, for example, from social services or health care professionals.

3.4 Opportunity to express preference

At application stage, applicants are given the opportunity to express their preferences about their future housing. The following sections set out the council's position on various aspects of preference.

3.4.1 Area

Area preference will be carefully considered when the council considers suitable offers for an applicant. However, it may not always be possible to offer a home in applicants' preferred areas. This is because of the severe shortage of homes of all types available to the council.

Applicants cannot exclude geographical areas except in circumstances relating to domestic, hate or gang violence or other exceptional circumstances which a Housing Assessment Manager has agreed.

The council reserves the right to make an offer of accommodation outside an applicant's area of choice, including outside the borough of Hounslow if such properties are available.

3.4.2 Garden

The provision of a garden will not be considered unless recommended by the Council's Housing Medical Adviser (CHMA). Whether the CHMA's recommendation is accepted lies with the team responsible for the assessment of housing applications.

3.4.3 Type of home and floor level

The medical/disability and social needs of an applicant will be considered when allocating the type of housing, e.g. a house, a flat, a maisonette, and floor level. Households with medical priority or a disability will be considered for lower level accommodation. Where no recognized need has been identified, any type and level of accommodation may be offered.

Single applicants will be considered for studios or homes with one bedroom. A studio is considered adequate unless a senior manager has accepted the recommendation of the Council's Housing Medical Adviser (CHMA) for a one bedroom home.

3.4.4 Pets

The council will not take an applicant's pet(s) into account when considering a suitable offer of a home for them. A refusal of an offer because the landlord has a no-pets policy will be regarded as unreasonable. The consequences of refusing an offer are set out in section 5.8.

An exception to this policy is where the council is satisfied the applicant or a member of their household requires a trained and certified working animal to live with them, for example, a dog which assists their owners who have a sensory or cognitive impairment (such as a sight or hearing impairment or autism).

3.4.5 Rents

There will be differences in rents charged by different landlords for the same size of home. The council will consider the affordability of the home being offered to a Housing Register applicant, taking into account their income and eligibility to apply for appropriate welfare benefits to help pay the rent.

3.5 Changes in circumstances and contact details

3.5.1 Informing the council about a change in circumstances

All applicants must let the council know immediately of any change in their circumstances which may affect their priority for housing.

A change in circumstances includes:

- A change of address for the applicant or any other person on their application.
- Any additions to the household or any other person the applicant would like included in the application, for example, the birth of a baby. The council will decide whether the additional person can be included in the application.
- Any member included in the Housing Register application who has moved out of the applicant's current home.
- Any change in income, assets or savings, where these are above the thresholds set out in section 3.1.2(c).
- A change in medical condition.
- Urgent social issues such as actual or threat of domestic, hate or gang violence.

3.5.2 How the council deals with an applicant's changes in circumstances

When the council is informed of an applicant's change in circumstances, their Housing Register application is reassessed to take into account the new information. The council will confirm in writing to the applicant whether they are still eligible to remain on the Housing Register and whether there is a change to their priority for housing.

3.5.3 Consequences of not telling the council about a change in circumstances or failure to advise about a change in contact details

(a) Not informing the council about a change in circumstances

When the council becomes aware that an applicant's circumstances have changed, for example, when verification is being done before the offer of a viewing of a home (see section 5.5), or the renewal of an application shows changes in circumstances, their Housing Register application will be changed to "pending" while the council obtains further information to find out if the applicant is still eligible to remain on the Housing Register. The council will provide written confirmation to the applicant of the outcome of its investigations which will include whether the applicant is still eligible (see section 3.1.1) or qualifies (see section 3.1.2) to remain on the Housing Register.

(b) Not informing the council about a change in contact details

When applicants have failed to advise the council of a change in their contact details and the council is unable to get in touch with them when needed, the council will assume the applicant no longer requires its assistance and will remove their application from the Housing Register.

3.5.4 How to tell the council about a change in circumstances or their contact details

Applicants can tell the council about any change in their circumstances or their contact details by filling in the online "change in circumstances" form available on the council website.

3.6 Renewing Housing Register applications

Periodically, the council contacts all Housing Register applicants to:

- Request them to renew their applications, and
- Confirm if their household and housing circumstances have remained the same or if they have changed.

Applicants are given 28 days to respond to the council's renewal request.

3.6.1 What happens if applicants do not respond to the renewal request

When an applicant does not renew their Housing Register application within 28 days of the request, the council will assume the applicant no longer requires its assistance and will remove their application from the Housing Register.

3.6.2 What happens with renewed Housing Register applications

When applicants renew their Housing Register applications:

- They are reassessed for eligibility, qualification and priority for housing; and
- Where a change of circumstances is indicated, the council requests further information from the applicant to decide whether this changes their eligibility, qualification or priority for housing; and
- On completion of its reassessment, the council confirms the outcome in writing.



4. Assessing and prioritising housing applications

This section sets out how the council assesses and prioritises housing applications

4.1 Types of applications

Applicants who are eligible and qualify for inclusion in the Housing Register, are placed into one of three groups:

Homeseekers

These are applicants who do not already have a permanent tenancy with the London Borough of Hounslow and are not applying to the Housing Register because they are homeless. This category includes housing association tenants living in the borough who want to move and homeless households to whom the council has not accepted a duty to house under the homelessness legislation.

Homeless Homeseekers

These are applicants who have asked the council for help because they are homeless and the council has accepted a duty to house them under the homelessness legislation.

Transfers

These are applicants who are existing tenants of the London Borough of Hounslow whose reasons for moving are recognised in this policy (see section 4.3.1).

4.2 Working out the size of home needed by an applicant

The council uses the Government's Bedroom Standard to:

- Decide the size of home (ie, how many bedrooms) an applicant needs
- Decide the extent of overcrowding an applicant and their household are enduring
- Find out whether an applicant has too many bedrooms in their current accommodation (under occupying).

The Government's bedroom standard is set out below:

A separate bedroom is allocated to:

- Each married, civil partnership or co-habiting couple or single parent;
- Any other person aged 21 years or over that the council has agreed can be included in the housing application;
- Each pair of children aged 10-20 of the same sex;
- Each pair of children aged under 10;
- Any unpaired person aged 10-20 is paired, if possible with a child under 10 of the same sex, or, if that is not possible, he or she is given a separate bedroom, as is any unpaired child under 10;

Adult siblings (including step siblings) over 21 living as part of a larger household will be expected to share with same sex siblings of any age (unless there are safeguarding issues).

The council will only allow bedrooms for people who are entitled to be included on an application.

In exceptional circumstances the council may exercise its discretion and apply the Bedroom Standard flexibly. This means a household may be assessed as needing a home with more or less bedrooms than indicated by the bedroom standard. The circumstances when this flexibility could be applied include:

- When applicants require more bedrooms on health grounds. This may be awarded where an applicant or a member of their household needs their own bedroom for medical reasons; needs a carer/personal assistant or some special large medical equipment. These cases will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the advice of the council's Housing Medical Advisor and reports from Adults' or Children's Services. This will also be subject to current housing benefit regulations (e.g. the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy).

- London Borough of Hounslow council tenants who are downsizing to smaller accommodation, may be allocated a home with one additional bedroom than the bedroom standard allows (as an alternative to receiving a full downsizing incentive payment).
- With the landlord's agreement, where a household is prepared to accept smaller accommodation. Offers will only be made in these circumstances where the applicant agrees to this in writing and the overall permitted occupancy of the property does not result in statutory overcrowding.

4.3 Prioritising Housing Register applicants

The council uses a banding system to prioritise each housing

application. Each band takes into account the statutory reasonable preference categories of housing need and the council's local priorities (see section 2.1 for more information).

The bands are:

Band 1: High Priority

Band 2: Medium Priority

Band 3: Low Priority

4.3.1 Placing applicants in Bands

This section provides a summary of which categories of housing need are placed in each of the Bands 1, 2 and 3. Appendix B explains in more detail each of the categories of housing need.

(a) Band 1

Applicants in Band 1 are assessed as having high priority because:

- They have an urgent need to move; or
- They will release a larger sized home or an adapted home.

The council reviews housing applications in Band 1 annually to ensure there is still an urgent need to move.

Band 1: High priority to move	Summary of criteria
B1.1 – Medical Needs High priority medical or disability cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where an applicant has a life expectancy of 12 months or less and rehousing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care. ■ The applicant's health is so severely affected by the home they currently occupy that it is likely to become life threatening. ■ The applicant is housebound in their current home and needs to move to an alternative home suitable to their needs. <p><i>See Appendix B: B1 and B2 for more information</i></p>
B1.2 – Exceptional Needs High priority need to move approved by the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Self-explanatory, including threats of domestic, hate or gang violence. Cases approved for Band 1 by the Chief Officer using their discretion will also be placed in this Band reason. <p><i>See Section 6.2 for more information on the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel</i></p>
B1.3 - Overcrowding Households who lack 3 or more bedrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Housing applicants lacking more than 3 bedrooms according to the bedroom standard set out in section 4.2 of the policy. <p><i>See also Appendix B5 on Overcrowding</i></p>
B1.4 – Property Conditions Homes containing serious long-term hazards and/or are in such a state as to pose a risk to the health of the Housing Register applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applicants living in Hounslow in the private sector or in a home owned by the council or a registered provider (housing associations) and the home contains Category 1 hazards set out in the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The council is satisfied that there is no prospect of the hazards being resolved in a reasonable period, and – Continuing to occupy the home would pose a serious risk to the health of the applicant or member of their household. ■ Applicants living in the borough of Hounslow in the private sector or in a home owned by the council or a registered provider and the home is affected by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A Demolition Order served under S265 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended), or – A clearance area has been declared under S289 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) and the clearance area includes the applicant's home. <p><i>See Appendix B6 for more information</i></p>
B1.5 - Decants Permanent moves of London Borough of Hounslow tenants – less than 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A council tenant is required to move in less than 6 months because their home will be affected by demolition, refurbishment, lease expiry or the sale of their home has been approved. <p><i>See Appendix B7 for more information</i></p>

⁵ Formerly the Joint Assessment Referral Panel

B1.6 – Adapted Property Release of an adapted home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An applicant currently living in an adapted council or housing association owned home in Hounslow and does not require the adaptations in the home. The applicant is usually a statutory successor to the tenancy or the council has used its discretion to grant a tenancy. They will be transferred to a suitable non-adapted home. <p><i>See section 5.9.5 (a) and (b) for more information</i></p>
B1.7 – Under Occupation Under occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A council or housing association tenant in Hounslow moving to a home with fewer bedrooms so that the one they currently occupy can be let to another Housing Register applicant in need of it. <p><i>See Appendix B4 for more information</i></p>

(b) Band 2

Applicants in Band 2 are assessed as having a medium priority which is less urgent than applicants in Band 1. The council reviews housing applications in Band 2 annually to ensure applicants' continued priority and need to move.

Band 2: Medium priority to move	Summary of criteria
B2.1 – Medical Needs Medium medical priority grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where an applicant's housing is unsuitable due to severe medical reasons which significantly aggravate the medical condition of the applicant or a member of their household but is not life-threatening. ■ Where the applicant's current home is highly unsuitable for them or a member of their household but is not life-threatening. <p><i>See Appendix B: B1 and B2 for more information</i></p>
B2.2 – Exceptional Needs Medium priority to move approved by the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Self-explanatory. Cases approved for Band 2 by the Chief Officer using their discretion will also be placed in this Band reason. <p><i>See Section 6.2 for more information on the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel</i></p>
B2.3 – Overcrowding Households who lack 2 bedrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Housing applicants lacking 2 bedrooms according to the bedroom standard set out in section 4.2. <p><i>See Appendix B5 for more information</i></p>
B2.4 – Property Conditions Applicants living in unsatisfactory housing lacking basic amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applicants are without access to one or more of the following amenities and it is unlikely this will be remedied within a reasonable time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A bathroom or kitchen/kitchen area, – An inside toilet, – Hot or cold water supplies, electricity, gas or adequate heating.
B2.5 – Decants Permanent moves of London Borough of Hounslow tenants – within 6-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A council tenant is required to move within the next 6-12 months because their home will be affected by demolition, refurbishment, lease expiry or the sale of their home has been approved. <p><i>See Appendix B7 for more information</i></p>
B2.6a – Homeless Homeless applicants owed the full housing duty by London Borough of Hounslow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An applicant assessed under the homelessness legislation who is eligible and homeless and owed a full statutory duty under S193(2) of the Housing Act 1996. <p><i>See Appendix B8.1 for more information</i></p>
B2.6b – Homeless Prevention Households who are at risk of homelessness and who are actively engaging with the council to prevent their homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applicants assessed by the council as being at risk of homelessness, who would be owed a homelessness relief duty or the main housing duty by the council, and where the household is actively engaging with the council to prevent their homelessness, or making their own temporary arrangements in agreement with the council, and an offer of social housing would be the only way to prevent or resolve homelessness.⁶ <p><i>See Appendix B8.1 for more information</i></p>
B2.7 – Hardship Hardship / welfare / exceptional need to move for care or support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Urgent cases assessed by the Housing Assessment Team as requiring care or support to be given or received.

⁶ This Band reason applies to new applications received on or after 3 April 2018

B2.8 – Supported Housing Move to independent living from council commissioned supported housing schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant currently living in a council commissioned supported housing scheme. Applicants must be assessed by the council as being ready to live independently within the next 6 months before they will be considered for any offers of accommodation. <p>See Appendix B9 for more information</p>
B2.9 – Leaving Care Move to independent living for young people who are in the care of the council needing a studio or 1 bed property or have an overriding need for social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant who is a young person currently being cared for by the council under the Children Act. Applicants must be assessed by the council as being ready to live independently within the next 6 months before they will be considered for any offers of accommodation. <p>See appendix B10 for further information</p>

(c) Band 3

Applicants in Band 3 have been assessed as having a low priority for housing which is less urgent than the needs of applicants in Bands 1 and 2.

Band 3: Low priority to move	Summary of criteria
B3.1 – Medical Needs Low priority medical need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the home, currently occupied by an applicant or member of their household, aggravates their medical condition. <p>See Appendix B1 and B2 for more information</p>
B3.2 – Exceptional Needs Low priority need to move approved by the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-explanatory <p>See Section 6.2 for more information on the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel</p>
B3.3 – Low Income and Overcrowding Low income working households who are lacking one bedroom and/or sharing/lacking amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant where at least one member of the household, included on the application, is working but on a low income. Applicants must also be lacking one bedroom and/or sharing/lacking amenities.⁷ <p>See Appendix B14 for more information</p>
B3.4 – Rough Sleepers Verified rough sleepers and prevention of rough sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Rough Sleeper assessed by the council in conjunction with partner agencies as having slept rough in the borough for at least 6 months prior to applying to the council's Housing Register or a person assessed by the council as being at high risk of rough sleeping.⁸ <p>See Appendix B8.4 for more information</p>
B3.5 – Right to Move Right to move applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing tenants of local authorities or housing associations living outside the borough of Hounslow who to avoid hardship need to move to the borough for work-related reasons. <p>See Appendix B15 for more information</p>
B3.6a – Homeless Homeless applicants assessed by the council not to be in priority need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant assessed by the council under the homelessness legislation who is eligible but not likely to be in priority need. Applicants may be placed in this Band during prevention and relief duties and after a full decision has been reached which specifies that the applicant does not have a priority need. <p>See Appendix B8.2 for more information</p>
B3.6b – Homeless Prevention Households at risk of homelessness who engage with the Council to prevent their homelessness for at least 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant assessed by the council as being eligible under the homelessness legislation, is at risk of homelessness or owed a prevention or relief duty and where it is likely that engagement by the applicant with the council can prevent or relieve homelessness for a minimum of 12 months. <p>See Appendix B8.2 for more information</p>
B3.7 – Homeless Households placed in temporary accommodation in Hounslow by other local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant placed in temporary accommodation in the borough of Hounslow by another local authority who has accepted the full duty to house them and they have an overriding need to remain in the borough. The applicant must also meet the council's qualification criteria set out in section 3.1.2. <p>See Appendix B8.3 for more information</p>

⁷ Sharing or lacking amenities applies to new applications received on or after 3 April 2018

⁸ People assessed as being at high risk of rough sleeping applies to new applications received on or after 3 April 2018

B3.8 – Older People Housing need due to age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The council has homes designated for older people. <p>See Appendix B11 for more information</p>
B3.9 – Armed Forces Members of the British Armed or Reserve Forces, Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An applicant currently serving in the Armed or Reserve Forces who will be discharged within 6 months of joining the Housing Register) or those who have served in the previous 5 years. <p>See Appendix B12 for more information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An applicant who is the spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces who has died in service and the applicant is required to move out of Services Family accommodation. <p>See Appendix B13 for more information</p>

As set out in section 5.1 (What are Allocations under this Policy), Housing Register applicants may be offered a suitable home owned by either the council or a housing association and for most applicants one offer will be made, see section 5.3 (Letting by preference-based, single direct offer).

4.3.2 Prioritising between applicants in the same Band

To prioritise between applicants in the same Band, the council uses the priority date for the applicant. An applicant's priority date is usually the date they joined the Housing Register (except for homeless applicants and those moving on from supported housing schemes – see below). Where, for example, the council finds there are two suitable applicants for a home available for letting, the applicant with the most priority is the one who has the earlier priority date. Where the priority dates are the same, the council prioritises according to which applicant:

- (i) Has higher medical needs
- (ii) Is working; and/or
- (iii) Has lived in their current accommodation longest (this only applies to council tenants needing to move for regeneration or redevelopment requirements (decants)).

The priority date may change if an applicant is moved between Bands, for example, from Band 2 to Band 1 or from Band 2 to Band 3 because of a change in

their circumstances. See section 4.3.3 below for more information on the effect of a change in circumstances on the priority date of a housing application.

For homeless applicants where the full duty is accepted, the priority date is the date when the homelessness relief duty ends.⁹ For Housing Register applicants moving on from supported housing schemes, the priority date is the date they moved into supported housing rather than the date of their Housing Register application.

4.3.3 Moving between bands

A change in an applicant's circumstances may trigger a reassessment of their housing application. This may result in one of the following changes for the applicant:

- An increased level of priority in accordance with the Policy and being moved to a higher band;
- A reduction in the level of priority and being moved to a lower band;
- Staying in the same band;
- Becoming ineligible to stay on the Housing Register.

Below are examples of how, following a re-assessment and a change in Banding, an applicant's priority date would be affected:

Example	Priority Date
An applicant applies to the Housing Register in January and is awarded Band 2 priority because they are found to be severely overcrowded.	January
In February the applicant's case is reassessed and awarded Band 1 priority because they lack 3 or more bedrooms.	February
In March the applicant's case is assessed again as some children have moved out and the applicant is no longer severely overcrowded. However, Band 3 priority is awarded as the applicant is a low income working household lacking one bedroom.	January (the original priority date)

⁹Applies to new applications from 3 April 2018



5. How the council allocates homes available for letting

5.1 What are Allocations under this Policy?

The following are “allocations” of accommodation under this Housing Allocations Policy:

- The selection of a Housing Register applicant to be a secure or probationary (introductory) tenant of the London Borough of Hounslow;
- The grant of a new tenancy to an existing tenant by way of “transfer” upon the tenant’s request;
- The nomination of a Housing Register applicant to be an Assured or an Assured Shorthold tenant of housing accommodation owned by a registered provider (including a housing association) through the council’s Nomination Rights Agreement.

Allocations may be for an initial one year term followed by a further fixed term tenancy, usually of 5 years (see Appendix C).

5.2 Allocations not covered by the policy

The following are not “allocations” under this Housing Allocations Policy:

- An offer of accommodation to a tenant of the London Borough of Hounslow who does not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria. Under the Localism Act 2011 such cases are not subject to the allocation rules set by section 166A of the Housing Act 1996;
- Succession to a tenancy on a tenant’s death pursuant to section 89 of the Housing Act 1985 or section 131 of the Housing Act 1996;
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of mutual exchange;
- Assignment of a tenancy to a person qualified to succeed to the tenancy on the tenant’s death;
- Transfer of the tenancy by a court order under family law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004;

- A probationary (introductory) tenancy becoming a fixed term tenancy;
- Where the council initiates transfers (e.g. temporary moves (decants) to alternative accommodation to allow for major works);
- Re-housing due to being displaced from previous accommodation by the London Borough of Hounslow or being re-housed by the London Borough of Hounslow pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973;
- A person being granted a family intervention tenancy;
- Provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power;
- Allocations which housing associations make outside of nominations agreements;
- Allocations dealt with by the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel to an individual where there may be public protection risks;
- Offers of tied accommodation made to Hounslow Council employees;
- Contractual accommodation duty owed by the London Borough of Hounslow to ex-service tenants where stipulated in council employment contracts;
- Cases where the London Borough of Hounslow has a contractual duty to provide ongoing accommodation; This only applies where caretakers or sheltered scheme managers have been provided with accommodation as part of their employment and the contract of employment guarantees ongoing accommodation.
- Moves via Housing Moves, the pan-London mobility scheme.

5.3 Letting by preference-based, single direct offer

All homes owned by the council and homes owned by housing associations to which the council has nomination rights are let through:

- a single direct offer for most applicants taking account as far as is possible any preferences the applicant has expressed about their future housing (see section 3.4).
- By exception, the following categories of applicant can receive up to three offers:
 - Council tenants who wish to move to a smaller home so that their larger home is released for another Housing Register applicant who needs it;
 - Council tenants whose move would release an adapted home for another Housing Register applicant who needs it;
- Applicants who need to move to an adapted home.

5.4 Matching Housing Register applicants' housing needs with available homes

The council takes into account the following characteristics about homes available for letting when making decisions about matching them to housing register applicants:

- Whether a home is a house, maisonette or flat;
- The size of the home, and whether it has double or single bedrooms so the council can match the minimum and maximum number of people suitable for that home (for example, a home with 3 bedrooms of which two are double rooms and one is a single room is suitable for a household with 4 or 5 people in it);
- Where a home has two or more living rooms, the council, where possible, designates one as a bedroom. For example, a three-bedroom home with two living rooms, one of which can be used as a bedroom, is designated and let as a home with 4 bedrooms;
- Whether children are allowed to live in the home;
- Whether age limits apply. For example, for some homes for older people applicants have to be aged over 50 and others over 60;
- Whether pets are allowed (see section 3.4.4);
- The floor level of the home;
- Whether the home has lift access;
- The weekly rent charged and any other additional charges and whether an affordability assessment indicates the applicant can afford them;
- Whether the home has any adaptations;
- If the home available is owned by the council or a housing association, which London Accessible Housing Register (LAHR) category it falls into (see Appendix F for more information on LAHR);
- The area in which the home is located. See section 3.4.1 on how the council deals with an applicant's area preference.

The council makes every effort to match applicants preferences as far as is possible given the supply of housing available to it.

5.5 The verification process before being offered a viewing of a suitable home

5.5.1 Verification

The council reserves the right to verify the circumstances and housing conditions of a Housing Register applicant before offering them a viewing of a suitable home.

There are important points to note about the process of verification:

- (a) The process must be completed at least 24 hours before the applicant is offered a viewing of a home. If all is satisfactory to the council, the applicant will be offered a viewing of the home identified as suitable for them.
- (b) The process involves an interview in person with the applicant at which they must produce prescribed information and proof (see section 5.5.2) along with documents to confirm medical or other needs if not previously provided. This may include a visit to the applicant's current home.
- (c) If the applicant currently occupies a council-owned home or temporary accommodation (provided by the council because the applicant was homeless) and a surveyor's inspection establishes wilful damage to the home, the council will not make an offer of a viewing of an alternative home and will bypass the Housing Register application until the damage has been repaired to the satisfaction of the council.
- (d) If the applicant does not engage with the verification process, the council will cancel the housing application.

Housing Register applicants will be reminded about the consequences of making false statements or withholding

information relevant to their application – see section 8.3 (Making false statements or withholding information).

It is the responsibility of the Housing Register applicant to keep the council updated with their contact details.

5.5.2 Documents needed for verification

Housing Register applicants must produce the following documents for each member of the household within 24 hours of being asked if they wish to be offered a viewing of a home:

- (a) Proof of identity – original documents are required as photocopies are not accepted; and
- (b) Proof of address(es) lived at for the past 5 years for the main and joint applicant; and
- (c) Proof of eligibility to receive an offer of accommodation (see section 3.1.1); and
- (d) Proof of any welfare benefits received (if relevant); and
- (e) Other documentary proof as appropriate and requested at the time.

The council will also carry out its own checks to:

- verify employment and income and other information provided by the applicant, and
- check for any outstanding arrears and debts owed to the council the Housing Register applicant may have (see section 5.5.3 below).

Verification will be carried out prior to any viewing or at any time the council deems appropriate as part of its management of the Housing Register.

5.5.3 Applicants who have debts with or monies owed to the council or other landlords

Where a Housing Register applicant has debts with or monies owed to the council, housing associations or other landlords, the council may not consider them for an offer of a viewing of an available home even though they may be a priority according to the Housing Allocations Policy.

A Housing Register applicant may have housing related debts, or monies owed to the council or other landlord, for a number of reasons. These include, but are not restricted to:

- Current or former rent arrears (including arrears built up whilst living in temporary accommodation);
- Damage to a council home, including any form of temporary accommodation, previously occupied by the applicant;
- Legal costs arising from court action to do with a current or former tenancy with the council, or legal action involving the council on a housing related matter.

Where an applicant owes the council money, the council will:

- Make an offer of viewing a home to applicants with rent arrears if:
 - The amount of rent arrears is not more than six weeks rent; or
 - The applicant has kept to an arrangement to repay the arrears for a period of six months and the amount left to clear is under £1,000; or
 - The applicant has exceptional circumstances which should be taken into account. Exceptional circumstances include:
 - Either the applicant or a member of their household face life threatening circumstances which mean they need to move immediately, such as domestic violence;
 - The applicant is suffering severe financial hardship due to loss of welfare benefits or unexpected bills such as paying for a funeral.

For applicants with debts other than rent arrears, the council will apply discretion before deciding on whether to offer the applicant a viewing of a home. In the first instance it will seek to establish:

- How much the debts are;
- Whether the applicant has taken debt advice, acted on it, and entered into and begun to implement any arrangement to clear the debt;
- Whether any exceptional circumstances apply as set out for rent arrears above.

5.6 Invitation to view a home

Following satisfactory verification, the council issues an invitation to view a home to the Housing Register applicant. The invitation to view a home is made via a telephone call and/or an SMS text message and immediately followed up with an email and/or letter.

At the time of being contacted by phone and/or SMS text message, the council asks the applicant to confirm they will attend the viewing as well as confirm they are clear about the address of the home to be viewed. Where the council has left a voice message for the applicant and/or sent an SMS text message about a viewing, the council expects a response within 24 hours to confirm attendance.

Failure to confirm attendance may result in the applicant being bypassed for a viewing and having their application removed from the Housing Register.

In the follow up invitation to view email/letter, the following information about the home is supplied including the:

- Address of the home;
- Rent and service charges payable;
- Number of bedrooms and bedspaces;
- Who the landlord is;
- Floor level and whether there is a lift;
- Type of heating;
- Adaptations if relevant;
- Whether pets are allowed.

The council's invitation to view a home also states that:

- The home may not be ready to live in straightaway as it may still be occupied (as the current tenant has given notice) or repairs may still be needed. The council works in this way to reduce any delays for the applicant in getting them moved into a new home.
- The applicant will need to make a decision at the viewing about whether they will accept the home as their one offer (unless the council has agreed to make further offers).
- If they agree to accept the home viewed, the applicant will be expected to sign the tenancy agreement and if the property is vacant, receive the keys at the viewing.

The council's invitation to view an offer sets out:

- The decisions the applicant can make about the home being viewed which are:
 - Accept it as their offer;
 - Accept it as their offer but request the council to review it (homeless applicants only);
 - Refuse the offer and ask the council to review it;

- Refuse the offer and find somewhere else to live themselves.

The reasons the council automatically accepts for refusing an offer are set out in section 5.8.1 (Reasonable refusals).

Information about asking the council to review decisions is set out in section 9.2 (Decisions in this Allocations Policy that can be reviewed).

5.7 Consequences of failing to attend a viewing

If an applicant does not attend a viewing of a home, whether they confirmed they would attend or not, the council will suspend their housing application, and contact the applicant to find out why they did not attend the viewing. The council will decide whether the reasons for not attending the viewing were reasonable or not.

Examples of acceptable reasons for not attending a confirmed viewing include:

- Life-threatening health issue;
- Having an operation at the same time as the viewing;
- Breakdown of transport beyond the applicant's control, e.g. train or bus strike.

If the council accepts the reasons for not attending the viewing on this occasion then the housing application will be reinstated and the applicant can be considered for other homes and invited again to view one that matches their needs.

If the council does not accept the reasons for not attending the viewing, the council will:

- If the applicant is a homeless applicant owed the full housing duty by the council, end its duty to house the applicant. If the applicant and their household are occupying temporary accommodation which the council provided because the applicant was homeless, the licence will be terminated with reasonable notice. The applicant will then have to find their own accommodation.
- If the applicant is a Transfer or Homeseeker, the council may suspend their Housing Register application for 12 months and they may not be considered for further suitable homes during that time.

Where the applicant falls into one of the exceptions for receiving more than one offer, and has failed to attend a

viewing for a first or second offer, the non-attendance will be confirmed by letter for the record. The non-attendance letter relating to the second offer will warn of the consequences of not turning up to a third viewing which are:

- For a council or housing association tenant wishing to move to a home with fewer bedrooms, their Housing Register application will be suspended for 12 months and they will not be considered for further suitable homes during that time.
- For an applicant occupying a council-owned home which has adaptations no longer required, the council will start proceedings to regain possession of the home and will make a final offer.
- For applicants needing an adapted home, the council will make a final offer which if not viewed or refused will mean:
 - The application is suspended from the Housing Register if the applicant is a Transfer or Homeseeker; or
 - The council will discharge its duty to the household where they are Homeless Homeseeker.

5.8 Decisions to be made at viewings and consequences

At the viewing, applicants are required to confirm to the council their decision about the home they have been offered.

The consequences of refusing an offer are summarised below.

Statutory Homeless Household

When a statutory homeless household refuses an offer of permanent accommodation, officers in the team responsible for allocations consider the reasons for refusal. If the accommodation is deemed to be suitable for the household's housing need, no further offer of accommodation will be made to the household. The applicant will be informed verbally and in writing that the Council will formally discharge its housing duty under the homelessness legislation towards the applicant. If the applicant currently lives in temporary accommodation provided by the council, this will be brought to an end giving reasonable notice. The applicant will then need to find their own accommodation.

Applicants will be advised of their right to request a review of the decision to discharge duty, the timescale for the review decision and their right to still move into the property they wish to refuse as this will not prejudice the outcome of the review.

If a review is requested, the Council's Reviews Officer will carry out the review and notify the household of the timescale and the outcome of the review in writing. If the decision on review is upheld, and the property offered is deemed to be suitable, no further offers of accommodation will be made. If the decision on review is that the property offered was not suitable, a further offer of accommodation will be made.

Homeseekers and Transfer cases

Households that fall under the above categories may be suspended from the Housing Register if they are deemed to have refused a reasonable offer. They will be informed that their housing application will be suspended for 12 months and no further offer of permanent accommodation will be made for that period of time.

Officers in the team responsible for allocations will provide information to the household about how to request a review including the timescales. This information will be provided both verbally and in writing. If a review is requested by the household, the review of the offer will be carried out by Co-ordinators (or equivalent) in the team responsible for allocations. The Head of Service responsible for allocations will authorise a further offer of accommodation if the reasons for refusing the offer are deemed to be reasonable.

5.8.1 Reasonable refusals

If a registered applicant refuses a property offered to them, there are two instances when the refusal is automatically accepted. These are:

- It is clear the applicant's details have been recorded incorrectly and this has led to an invitation to view a home that will not meet the applicant's needs; or
- It is clear the details about the property have been recorded incorrectly which has led to the applicant viewing a home which does not meet their needs.

The Head of the team responsible for allocations will authorise an applicant be given the opportunity of viewing another home if either of the above criteria is agreed after investigation.

5.9 Matters which affect the allocation of homes

5.9.1 The council's annual lettings plan

Each year the council agrees an annual lettings plan. The purpose of a lettings plan is to enable the council to:

- Fulfil statutory and local priorities for housing as set out in this Housing Allocations Policy, and
- Be accountable for the way it allocates homes that become available to it for letting.

The lettings plan sets out estimates of:

- The amount of council and housing association homes the council thinks are likely to become available for letting during the coming year, and
- How many of these homes will be let to each housing group (see section 4.1 for more information on the housing groups) taking into account applicants with highest priority and/or have been waiting the longest.

In addition to the main housing groups, the lettings plan also makes provision for the council's obligations to contribute homes for letting to:

Housing Moves (the pan-London mobility scheme) – 5% of qualifying lettings per year;

- Right to Move regulations – 1% of qualifying lettings per year.

Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, the estimated lettings to each housing group may be changed during the year in the following circumstances:

1. To ensure that overall the Allocations Policy meets the needs of applicants who are owed a statutory reasonable preference (see section 3.1.2(d) for an explanation of reasonable preference);
2. Where there are local lettings policies for particular estates, blocks of flats or roads (see section 5.9.2 for more information on local lettings policies);
3. Where the council wishes to fulfil a local housing priority, or unforeseen circumstances arise during the lettings year.

The annual lettings plan is agreed by the council's Lead Member for Housing.

5.9.2 Local Lettings Policies

In partnership with housing associations the council uses local letting policies (LLPs) where new homes are built or to respond to local conditions.

The following are examples of criteria that could be used in LLPs covering an area, estate, or block located in the borough of Hounslow:

- Age restrictions;
- Giving priority to transfer applicants with a positive tenancy history, for example, they have no rent arrears and have shown exemplary behavior;
- Giving priority to working households where there is a high concentration of existing residents who are out of work;
- Restricting lettings to vulnerable households where there is already a concentration of tenants/residents with support needs.

The following conditions apply to a LLP:

- They may be developed to meet the particular needs of a local area;
- There must be a clear, evidence-based need, for example, to deal with recurring anti-social behaviour issues, high child densities and so on;
- They must be developed and approved in accordance with an agreed procedure that must have specific aims that may be reviewed periodically;
- Equality impact assessments will be done;
- They must be consulted on.

The decision to implement any LLP is approved:

- By the council's Chief Housing Officer for council-owned homes.
- For homes owned by housing associations for which the council has nomination rights, approval is between the council's Chief Housing Officer and a senior manager of the relevant housing association(s).

5.9.3 Assessing risk when letting homes

The council assesses the risk of letting a home to Housing Register applicants who, it is aware of, have been convicted of a criminal offence(s) and are considered to present a significant risk to potential neighbours and/or communities. This group includes applicants referred through the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Additional measures may be put in place, such as a support package, to assist a person who may have a background of crime or anti-social behaviour, to live independently in the community.

5.9.4 Reciprocal arrangements

In very specific circumstances the council may request or agree a reciprocal arrangement with another local authority or a housing association.

A reciprocal arrangement is when another local authority or a housing association requests their tenant is housed by Hounslow Council in return for which they will offer Hounslow Council a similar home from their stock. Tenants cannot request a reciprocal arrangement.

The council is under no obligation to accept a reciprocal request and will only agree these arrangements where:

- The council has homes available after meeting the needs of applicants on its Housing Register; and
- The requesting local authority or housing association has provided written evidence that:
 - they have explored every other avenue within their own and other housing stock to resolve the housing needs of their tenant; and
 - it is imperative the tenant is moved; and
 - the tenant does not have rent arrears; and
 - the tenant has no history of unacceptable behaviour.

Where the council agrees a reciprocal arrangement, any offer of accommodation it makes will be in accordance with the rules set out in this Allocations Policy. It is the responsibility of the referring partner to ensure their tenant complies with the council's verification and viewing rules set out in sections 5.5 and 5.6 of this policy. If the referring partner's tenant refuses an offer made by the council, they will be removed from the Housing Register.

A reciprocal agreement will be invalidated if, for example, the tenant secures an alternative home or information from the landlord is found to be inaccurate following verification of the tenant.

The home(s) reciprocated by local authorities or housing associations under any reciprocal agreement must:

- Have the same number of bedrooms as Hounslow Council provided or, if that is not possible
- Two or more homes must be given with the equivalent number of bedrooms. For example, if Hounslow Council housed the tenant of a referring partner in a 3 bedroom home, the other social landlord could supply two homes instead, one with 2 bedrooms and one 1 bedroom, or three homes each with 1 bedroom.

5.9.5 Tenancy matters affecting the allocation of homes

(a) Statutory tenancy succession

Council tenancies created before 1 April 2012

Where a tenancy was created before 1 April 2012, only one statutory succession is allowed to a family member. Family members can comprise the tenant's spouse or civil partner, co-habiting partner or other family member(s) as set out in S113 of the Housing Act 1985. Anyone other than a spouse or civil partner seeking to succeed to the tenancy needs to provide documentary evidence that they lived with the deceased tenant for at least 12 months before their death.

Where there is more than one person who could succeed to a tenancy, the spouse or civil partner takes precedence. If other potential successors cannot agree who will succeed to the tenancy, the council reserves the right to make this decision.

The council can require a person to move to a smaller home where they are succeeding to a home too large for their needs. The same applies if the person succeeding is living in a home with adaptations that are no longer required.

Council tenancies created after 1 April 2012

For tenancies created after 1 April 2012, only one statutory succession can take place and only the spouse or civil partner of a deceased tenant has the right to succeed to the tenancy.

(b) Discretionary grant of tenancy

The council will consider granting a tenancy in the following circumstances:

- Surviving relatives left in a home they occupied as their principal home with the deceased tenant for a minimum of 10 years immediately prior to the tenant's death. The council considers if it would have a duty to house under the homelessness legislation if the applicant in this situation were asked to move out. The applicant may be offered an alternative home if they are living in a home too large for their needs or it has adaptations they do not need.
- Full-time, live-in non-paid carers of the deceased tenant where:
 - Verification checks with Hounslow's Adult's or Children's services department and the Benefits Agency have confirmed the carer's status, and
 - They have lived in the deceased tenant's home as their principal home for 2 or more continuous years immediately prior to the death of the tenant, and
 - The home they are living in is too large for their needs or it has significant adaptations they do not need.

(c) The breakdown of joint tenancies

Where one joint tenant serves a notice to quit on the other, this has the effect of bringing the whole tenancy to an end. The council has no duty to house either of the joint tenants but they can apply to the council's Housing Register and will be assessed according to the rules set out in this Housing Allocations Policy.

Where the relationship of joint tenants who are a married couple, cohabiting couple or civil partnership has broken down and they wish to separate, they are advised to ask the Courts to settle who should live in the home on a sole tenancy. The council has no duty to house the member of

the couple who is not granted the sole tenancy. They can apply to the council's Housing Register.

(d) Ex-service tenants

Where a member of council staff has been required to occupy a home for the better performance of their job (a service tenant), the council has a contractual duty to house them if they are due to retire as they have reached pensionable age or for medical reasons or they have been made redundant. The council will make one offer of an alternative home that matches the size of their household according to the council's bedroom standard set out in section 4.2 of this Housing Allocations Policy. One exception to the size of home that can be offered is for school caretakers in service before 1 April 1990 who are entitled to an alternative home which has one bedroom more than they are entitled to under the bedroom standard.

Where a service tenant refuses an offer of an alternative home, they can request a review. If the council decides the offer was reasonable, the council will not make a further offer and the service tenant will be asked to move out of the home they are currently occupying.

The Council will not rehouse a service tenant who:

- Has been dismissed for misconduct, or
- Undergone a change of employment due to promotion, or
- Has been offered alternative employment where there is no longer a need to occupy the tied accommodation for better performance of duties.





6. Exceptions and Panels

6.1 Chief Housing Officer's Discretion

The council recognises there may be circumstances of housing need not covered by the Allocations Policy that are:

- Exceptional and urgent and will usually have been considered first by the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel (see section 6.2);
- In the council's financial or strategic interest, for example, to enable the effective management of council-owned permanent and temporary homes.

These circumstances are reasonably rare and require the council's discretion to resolve them. Such cases are generally placed in Band 1.

The council's Chief Housing Officer authorises the council's decisions on exceptional cases of housing need. The Chief Housing Officer may delegate the responsibility for these decisions to the head of service responsible for allocating homes.

A list of all applicants given Band 1 priority, and any subsequent allocation of a home under Chief Housing Officer's discretion is kept, monitored and reported on annually as part of monitoring the operation of this Allocations Policy.

6.2 Exceptional Needs Referral Panel

The Exceptional Needs Referral Panel (ENRP) considers urgent, complex housing cases which are outside the council's Allocations Policy. It considers the following indicative types of cases:

- Households with multiple or complex support and rehousing needs, including high public profile cases, not covered by other Panels or by the Allocations Policy;
- Cases of violence where there is a serious threat to

the life of the applicant or a member of their household if they continue to live in their current home (see Appendix B3, for example threats of domestic, hate or gang violence);

- Witness to a crime which has placed the witness at risk;
- Fostering or adoption facilitated by Hounslow's Children's Services where there is an extremely urgent need to secure permanent accommodation;
- Guardianship cases;
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) cases;
- Modern slavery cases.

The ENRP meets once per month unless there is a particularly urgent case which needs immediate consideration. The Panel is chaired by the head of service for allocations. Other panel members include senior officers invited as required from other teams in the council depending on the type of cases being assessed. Cases for consideration are selected by the Lettings Co-ordinator (or equivalent) in consultation with the Chair of the panel. Cases for consideration by the panel are presented by team leaders (or equivalent) rather than officers.

Decisions of the ENRP to award Band 1 priority to an applicant are ratified by the Chief Housing Officer.

The ENRP may also decide to award Band 2 and Band 3 priorities to applicants based on exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the panel.

6.3 Care Leavers Housing Panel

Membership of the panel comprises officers from, and is jointly chaired by, the council's Children's and Housing Departments. The Panel meets monthly.

An applicant moving on from care must be a former “Relevant Child” as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 and when considered by the Care Leavers Housing Panel, should be able to remain in their current accommodation for the next 6 – 12 months. Being accepted by the Panel for Band 2 priority does not provide an immediate housing solution in an emergency situation so other housing options may need to be considered, particularly for Care Leavers who require family size accommodation.

The Care Leavers Housing Panel will consider whether the care leaver is ready and genuinely prepared to move to independent, settled housing using the following criteria and evidence:

- The care leaver has engaged with support put in place for them; and
- They are either in employment, training or other form of education; and
- There is no significant history of serious rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, nuisance or annoyance to neighbours (or unacceptable behaviour); and
- They have the life skills required to look after themselves and manage a tenancy including budgeting skills to be able to prioritise rent payments; and
- There is appropriate support in place for a period of 12 months after a tenancy starts to ensure its sustainability.

6.4 Sheltered Housing Panel

The Sheltered Housing Panel consists of an officer from the Housing Assessment Team and the Sheltered Scheme Co-ordinator (or equivalent). The panel decides whether an applicant is suitable for a sheltered home.

Applicants are assessed for:

- Their eligibility and qualification for housing under this Allocations Policy as set out in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, and
- Their medical and mobility needs and whether these can be catered for within a sheltered scheme.

6.5 Extra Care Housing Panel

Extra Care Housing (ECH) is a specialist type of housing, with care and support services provided on-site, designed to help the following categories of people live independently for as long as possible in their own self-contained flats:

- People with an assessed social care need; and
- Aged 55 years or over and frail due to age; or
- Aged 50 years or older and have one or more of the following:
 - a learning disability,
 - a mental health issue,
 - a physical or sensory disability,
 - dementia.

People under the age of 50 may be considered for ECH based on their care and support needs and their suitability for this type of housing.

ECH helps to reduce unnecessary hospital and residential care admissions and/or assist in reducing delayed discharges from hospitals by providing suitable housing for the above client group.

The ECH Panel meets monthly, is co-ordinated by the team (in housing) responsible for supported housing referrals, and chaired by the council’s Adults’ Services. Other members of the Panel include representatives from ECH providers and the council’s Commissioning Team.

The Panel’s responsibilities are to:

- Manage referrals;
- Receive updates on ECH flats becoming available for letting;
- Minimise empty ECH flats;
- Prioritise referrals for ECH flats that are either empty or becoming available for letting ;
- Keep a balance of levels of need and care in ECH schemes.

Before a referral to the ECH Panel can be made, the team responsible for supported housing referrals establishes that the applicant satisfies the eligibility and qualification criteria set out in this Housing Allocations Policy (see sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2). Where eligibility and qualification criteria are met, an applicant’s case is presented to the Panel by their social worker. The Panel considers each applicant and can make the following decisions:

- Applicant is accepted and is referred to an ECH provider to conduct a full assessment;
- More information is required, the application is deferred to the next meeting of the panel;
- The application is rejected and alternative housing options suggested where appropriate.





7. Service Standards

7.1 What the council will do

In implementing this Allocations Policy, the council will:

- Provide free advice and information about the right to apply for housing;
- Provide free assistance to Housing Register applicants who may have difficulty when making an application;
- Make sure any information about housing options is easy to understand and get hold of;
- Enable Housing Register applicants to state their preferences about what type of home they would like to live in;
- Provide information to Housing Register applicants about what types of home are available in the borough of Hounslow, London and out of London;
- Provide information to Housing Register applicants about the likelihood of being housed and how long it might take;
- Ensure all allocation of council homes and nominations to housing associations are carried out in accordance with the rules set out in this Housing Allocations Policy;
- Make available:
 - The Housing Allocations Policy, both in full and as a summary, for download from the council's website;
 - A printed copy of the summary of the policy free of charge upon request;

- The full version of the Policy for inspection at the Civic Centre;
- A printed copy of the full version of the Policy to take away for a fee of £10 upon request.

- Comply fully with the Data Protection Act 1998¹⁰ and ensure all information Housing Register applicants provide is treated in the strictest confidence.

7.2 Equality and Diversity

The Housing Allocations Policy meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

The council:

- Treats each Housing Register applicant equally in accordance with their need and where possible their preferences for housing regardless of age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership or gender reassignment;
- Monitors the protected characteristics of applicants who apply to the Housing Register and those who are subsequently eligible and made an offer of a home;
- Analyses the data collected through periodic equality assessments to ascertain whether the rules and implementation of this Allocations Policy result in direct or indirect discrimination. Where discrimination is occurring and is not justifiable, the council will take appropriate action to prevent the discrimination.

¹⁰ The council will comply with The General Data Protection Regulation which comes into force on 25 May 2018



8. The legal duties of the council and Housing Register applicants

8.1 Confidentiality

All personal information provided to London Borough of Hounslow by Housing Register applicants, their advocates or professional advisors is treated with utmost confidentiality.

By signing the Housing Register application form (including electronic signatures where appropriate), applicants give their consent for the council to disclose information about them which is necessary for nominating them to a home that may be available for letting by a housing association.

Information about Housing Register applicants is only disclosed without an applicant's consent in the following defined circumstances:

- In accordance with s115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as part of a criminal investigation;
- Where there is a serious threat to the applicant themselves or to another party's staff or contractors if the information is not disclosed;
- Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of a proposed landlord or support organisation to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of his or her household, or a member of staff.

Medical information obtained from an applicant's GP or other healthcare staff cannot and will not be disclosed without prior consent from the professional(s) involved.

regardless of the date that information was recorded. In certain circumstances the council may refuse access in the following types of situations:

- Where disclosure may identify a third party and that party has not given their consent to disclosure;
- Where the information concerns an applicant's health and disclosure may cause serious harm to their well-being;
- Information is held for the purpose of prevention or detection of crime or in respect of some other legal proceedings.

Requests for access to records must be made in writing to the council's Housing Assessment Team.

Subject to the above exceptions and consents, applicants should be given the option to either view the records or have a copy provided to them within 40 days¹² of their request. A fee may be charged for this service.

Applicants have the right to challenge the accuracy of the information held about them and may request the erasure or correction of records which they believe to be inaccurate. Subject to the head of services responsible for housing assessments agreeing the information held is inaccurate, the record will be corrected and the applicant will be given a copy of the amended documentation. If the head of service does not agree the information is inaccurate, or refuses access to the information, the applicant has a right of review.

8.2 Access to personal information

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998¹¹, all Housing Register applicants have the right to see information held by Hounslow Council about them and their family. The right applies to all personal information

8.3 Making false statements or withholding information

It is a criminal offence for Housing Register applicants and/or anyone providing supporting information to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or withhold reasonably

¹¹ From 25 May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation is applicable to the processing of personal data

¹² Time limit in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation is applicable from 25 May 2018

requested information relevant to their application (s171 Housing Act 1996 or s2 and s3 Fraud Act 2006). This includes but is not limited to information requested:

- On the housing registration form;
- In response to correspondence at the renewal of the application;
- In change of circumstances or provision of medical information;
- Relating to any other review of the application.

An offence is committed if a third party provides false information whether or not instigated by the applicant. This applies at any stage of the application process.

Where it is suspected or alleged that a person has either provided false information or deliberately withheld information, the Housing Register application will be classified as “application is pending” while an investigation takes place. The applicant cannot be considered for offers

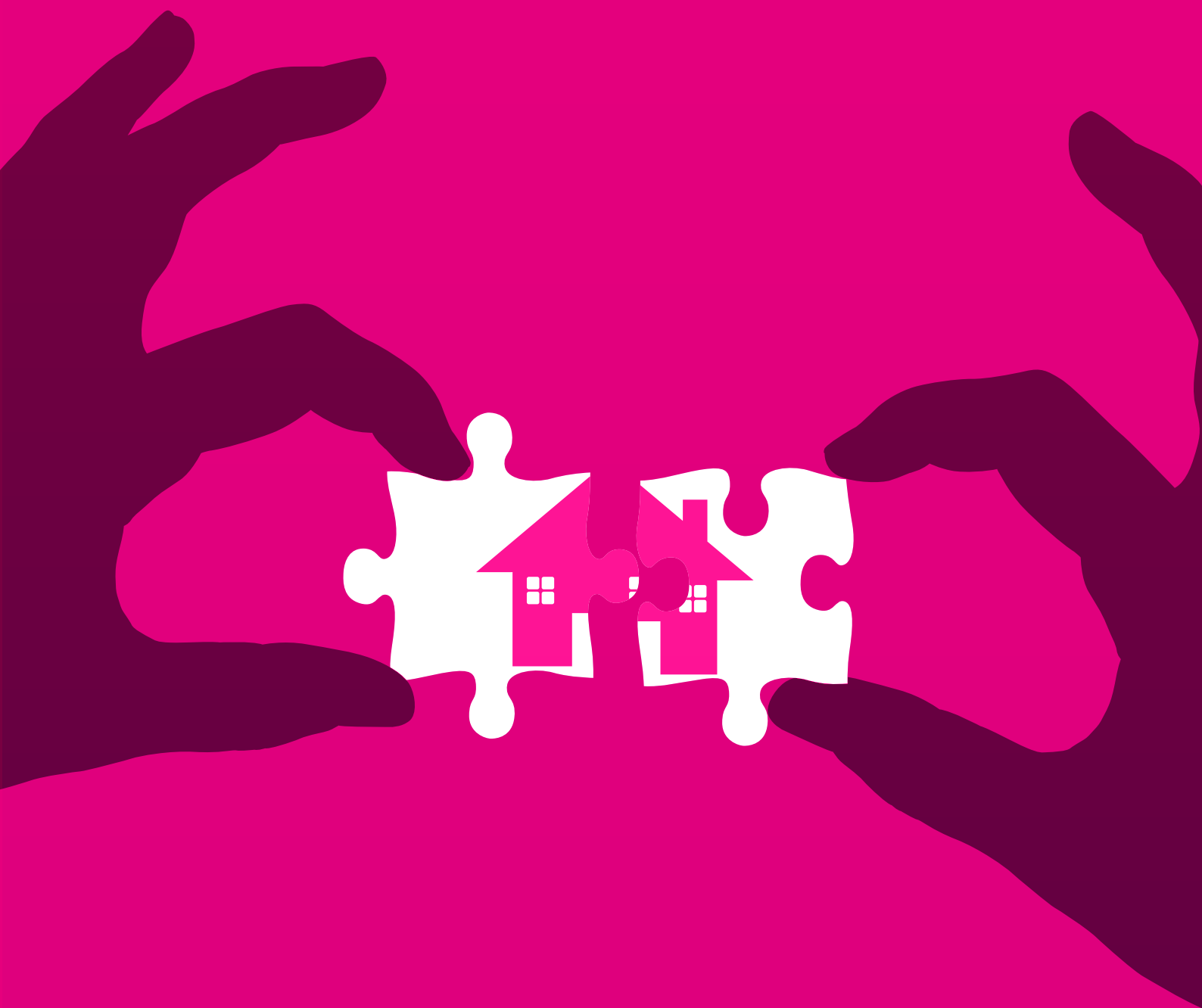
of accommodation until a satisfactory outcome of the investigation is reached.

Where the outcome of the investigation is that false information was not provided or information was not withheld, the application will be reinstated from the date of its original registration.

Where the outcome of the investigation is that false information was provided or information deliberately withheld, the applicant may be removed from the Housing Register or held ineligible to join it.

Where a council tenancy has been granted to a Housing Register applicant as a result of a false statement, by either the applicant or a person acting at their instigation, the council will seek possession of the home using Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, s.146).

If there is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed the council may take proceedings that could result in a criminal record, a fine or imprisonment.





9. Rights of information, review and complaints

The following section is about applicants' rights to information and when they can seek a review of a council decision about their Housing Register application. It also deals with the process for making a complaint.

Applicants are entitled to receive this information in writing together with how they can request an internal review of a decision made that they do not agree with.

9.1 Rights to information

S166A of the Housing Act 1996 gives housing applicants the right to know the facts of their case which the council has taken into account when considering their application to join the Housing Register or to make them an offer of a home under this Allocations Policy.

9.2 Decisions in this Allocations Policy that can be reviewed

The table below shows the type of decisions that Housing Register applicants can ask to be reviewed together with information on who will deal with the review. A review is undertaken by a senior council officer who did not take part in making the original decision.

Type of Decision	Who will deal with the review
At Housing Register application stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding the outcome of a request to review ineligibility for housing <i>See section 3.1.1 Eligibility</i> 	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether facts have not been taken into account in assessing a housing application <i>See sections 3.1.1-3.1.5 Eligibility, Disqualifying criteria, and so on</i> 	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions on medical priority for Homeless Homeseekers <i>See Appendix B1 medical assessments</i> 	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the Housing Register application should be cancelled <i>See section 3.6 Renewing Housing Register applications</i> 	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing priority for housing <i>See section 4.3.3 Moving between Bands</i> 	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level
At offer of home stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether facts have not been taken into account when Housing Register application has been verified <i>See section 5.5</i> 	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review of outcomes of refusing an offer of a home made under this Allocations Policy <p><i>See section 5.8 Decisions to made at viewings and consequences</i></p>	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Team Manager level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decisions on medical priority all types of applicant <p><i>See Appendix B1 medical assessments</i></p>	Hounslow's Housing Allocations Lettings Team: Team Manager level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review of length of flexible tenancy being granted <p><i>See Appendix C Types of tenancy granted</i></p>	Hounslow's Housing Assessment Team: Head of Team

Homeless applicants have an additional right of review under S202 of the Housing Act 1996 about the suitability of any offer of a home made under this Allocations Policy.

9.2.1 How to request a review of a decision about a Housing Register application and timescales for dealing with reviews

Applicants should request a review in writing within 21 days of being notified of a decision.

Hounslow Council will decide the review within 56 days of the applicant's request unless extended if further information is needed or a longer period is agreed with the applicant.

The council will notify the applicant in writing of the outcome of the review including the reasons if the original decision is confirmed. The council's decision about a review is final. Any challenge to that decision can only be made through judicial review proceedings.

9.3 Making a Complaint

Complaints about the way the council has implemented the Allocations Policy or its associated procedures should be made using Hounslow Council's complaints e-form on the council's website.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after going through the council's complaints system, they can then take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – London Borough of Hounslow's Housing Placement Protocol

A1 Background

This protocol formalises the procedure the Council uses when making placements in the private rented sector for the following purposes:

(a) Provision of Temporary Accommodation

The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for people who are eligible, homeless and in priority need. Where the Council agrees it owes a full housing duty under section 193 Housing Act 1996 (as amended), applicants will be offered temporary accommodation until they find their own accommodation or are offered housing by the council to discharge its homelessness duty. Where the council has not yet decided whether it owes a full duty, it may offer an applicant temporary accommodation on an interim basis ("interim accommodation").

(b) Provision of Housing Option Offers – the Direct Let Scheme

As part of the Council's homelessness prevention measures, the Council may offer suitable private rented accommodation to people through its Direct Lets scheme which will resolve their homelessness without resorting to the provision of temporary accommodation or social rented housing.

(c) Provision of a private rented home in discharge of the council's s193 duty – homeless applicants accepted on or after 9 November 2012

The Localism Act 2011 enables the council to bring its s193 duty to an end without the applicant's consent with

an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector with a minimum 12 month assured shorthold tenancy. This approach will apply to homelessness cases where the council accepted a s193 duty on or after 9 November 2012.

Where the household becomes unintentionally homeless within two years of taking the private rented tenancy then the re-application duty (s195A(1)) of the Housing Act 1996 applies.

(d) Provision of a suitable private rented home to non-homeless households on the Housing Register

The council may make offers of private rented homes to Housing Register applicants who are covered by the categories of Transfer and Homeseeker (see section 4.1 for the types of housing applicant included in these categories).

A2 Homelessness legislation, policy and procedure applicable

This section of the protocol sets out the legislation, policy and procedure the council has followed in drawing up the guidelines on offers of accommodation made to housing applicants.

- (a)** When a homeless household makes an application to the Council, the Council has a duty to carry out inquiries to satisfy itself as to what level of duty is owed to that household.
- (b)** If the Council has reason to believe that a homeless applicant may be eligible, homeless and in priority need (as defined under S189 of the Act) there is a duty under

S188 of the Act to ensure that suitable temporary accommodation is available to the household pending investigation into the application.

- (c)** Households may also be placed in temporary accommodation if the S193 duty (full homeless duty) is accepted because the applicant is eligible, homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and has local connection. Provision of temporary accommodation continues until the S193 duty ends.
- (d)** The length of time of temporary accommodation placements will depend largely on the availability of suitable long term accommodation.

A2.1 Suitability

- (a)** s206 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires that any accommodation offered under these duties must be suitable.
- (b)** s208 of the Act requires local housing authorities so far as is reasonably practicable to discharge its homelessness functions by securing accommodation within its district. If there is no suitable accommodation within the district the council will try to find suitable accommodation as close as possible to the district, but applicants must understand that sometimes such suitable accommodation will be difficult to find and that an offer may need to be made out of district.
- (c)** s210 of the Act and The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)(England) Order 2012 came into force on 9 November 2012 and requires that local authorities take into account the affordability of the accommodation to the applicant when determining whether accommodation is suitable.
- (d)** Suitability will be determined by recent case-law and may be subject to change. When determining suitability the Council will consider the affordability of accommodation, travel time and costs, and the effect of a move on the applicant's employment, education, welfare, health and child-care arrangements, wherever applicable.
- (e)** The Council will determine the suitability of accommodation by taking into consideration the applicant's personal circumstances and guidance in this protocol. If necessary, reasonable adjustments or measures will be taken to ensure suitability.
- (f)** The Council will ensure safeguarding issues are considered when placing households into temporary accommodation whether in or out of the borough. A

suitability assessment is completed prior to making an offer of temporary accommodation or private rented accommodation.

- (g)** When an offer is made, the household will be given sufficient information about the property including how to access services and the local area where the property is located. Households placed outside the local area who may need additional support to help them link into local services will be provided with assistance. Local authorities are to be notified within 14 days of when a household is placed within their area.
- (h)** When considering suitability, the council is entitled to take into account the length of time the applicant is expected to remain in the accommodation.

A3 Guidelines on offers of Interim and Temporary Accommodation offers

This section of the protocol sets out guidelines for prioritising and locating offers of temporary accommodation under s188 and/or s193 of the Act:

- (a)** The council is committed to securing suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households where it is required under s188 and/or s193 of Housing Act 1996.
- (b)** The council's aim is to provide accommodation within the borough of Hounslow wherever possible, but unfortunately this is not always achievable. Provision is based on the availability of accommodation which is also affordable for homeless applicants, particularly those who are not working and benefit dependent. Some temporary accommodation in Hounslow may not be affordable.
- (c)** The council will consider providing temporary accommodation to some homeless applicants which is located outside the borough unless the applicant fits the criteria for remaining in the borough. Outside the borough means other boroughs in London and also outside of London.
- (d)** Where a household needs to move away from a particular location for safety reasons, this will always be taken into account when deciding on suitable temporary accommodation.
- (e)** In assessing suitable temporary accommodation, the council will consider whether the applicant can afford the accommodation without being deprived of basic essentials and in doing so will take account of costs resulting from the location of the accommodation.

It should be noted that these are guidelines only and the individual circumstances of each case, including the time likely to be spent in the accommodation, will always be taken into account when determining the suitability of an offer of temporary accommodation.

A4 Suitability checklist for housing placements

(a) Before deciding any placement, the council carries out a number of checks to consider whether accommodation identified is suitable for a particular household. This part of the protocol assumes the following about the accommodation, that it:

- (i)** Is fit for occupation; and
- (ii)** Meets health and safety requirements and does not pose a risk to occupants; and
- (iii)** Is of an adequate size for the household's needs; and
- (iv)** Is managed by a competent landlord; and
- (v)** Meets relevant disability needs where applicable.

(b) In determining suitability, officers consider the following issues:

- (i)** Is there an adverse impact on health?
 - Is there a serious medical need that cannot be met in the area of placement?
 - Consider whether the applicant or any member of the household receives specialist treatment in Hounslow or London that would be difficult to access near the district where the available accommodation is located, or whether such specialist treatment is not available outside of Hounslow?
 - Does the applicant or any member of the household have a mental illness or a learning disability and have a particular need to remain in Hounslow to maintain links with health service professionals and/or reliance on existing support networks such as carers and family, and community links?
 - Consider whether the applicant will require this support in the immediate future as it may still be reasonable to place them outside the area on a short term basis.

(ii) Is there an exceptional social need?

- Is there any exceptional reason why the household has to remain in the area to enable family/friends to provide support which is essential to their well-being?
- Could alternative support be obtained near the district where the available temporary accommodation is located?
- Is the support accessible by public transport?

(iii) Can the applicant reasonably continue in existing employment?

- Are there any household members in paid employment that significantly contribute to household income and the employment is likely to be long-term?
- Would a move to the available temporary accommodation place significant risk to the applicant's existing employment contract?

(iv) Affordability

- An income and expenditure checklist should be completed to ensure the accommodation procured is affordable to the applicant.
- If necessary a travel warrant can be provided for the client to get to the accommodation for the first time.

(v) Education

- Are there any household members at a stage of education where they are sitting important examinations such as GCSEs and it would be disruptive to their education if they were to transfer to a school in the placement area?
- Are there any household members attending specialist schools or have special education needs that might not be met in the local school placement area?

A5 Group A – Households that will not be considered for housing placements out of borough

Unless the applicant and/or a professional working with the applicant have made a specific request to be placed in accommodation outside of the borough, households with

the following characteristics will be placed in interim or temporary accommodation within Hounslow:

- (a)** Households with at least one child subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- (b)** Households where Hounslow Council's Director of Children's and Adult's Services has serious concerns about one or more children and are working intensively with the household, and evidence to confirm the concerns is provided to the Housing department.
- (c)** Households with an applicant who has severe and enduring mental health problems who is receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare provided by local community health services and have an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact on their ability to engage with treatment and care plans.
- (d)** Households where at least one member has a long-standing illness or a physical, mental or sensory impairment or learning disability which has a long term¹³ and substantial¹⁴ adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities and is receiving regular (at least fortnightly) treatment at a hospital within Hounslow.
- (e)** Households where at least one member is in receipt of a significant care package provided or sponsored by the council which cannot be transferred or where they are reliant on essential family / friend care and support and the distance would be unreasonable if placed outside the borough.
- (f)** Single homeless applicants who are vulnerable, where essential or specialist support networks are dependent on the area they are accommodated in, and there is no option to transfer such services if placed out of the borough.
- (g)** Single pregnant women, in their third trimester, whose ante-natal care cannot be transferred easily.
- (h)** Households who are in employment or training in the borough and the travel costs and distance would be unreasonable for them if placed outside the borough.
- (i)** Households or single people who are homeless due to domestic violence who have dependent networks in the borough, which cannot be maintained or replicated if the household is placed outside the borough.
- (j)** In exceptional cases where households in Group A have had to be placed in temporary accommodation

out of the borough, for example, in an emergency situation when no other interim accommodation was available locally, these households will be prioritised for a move back into the borough as soon as suitable accommodation becomes available.

A6 Group B – Households who will be considered for placements both in and outside the borough

- (a)** Households who voluntarily agree to accept accommodation outside the borough.
- (b)** Households with a child/children all below year 9 at school that have no medical and/or special needs requirements or issues.
- (c)** Households with a child/children all below year 9 at school who have medical or special needs requirements or issues but the medical treatment or support received can be equally arranged or transferred to the placement borough.
- (d)** Single pregnant women who have no medical and/or special needs requirements which may place the mother or unborn baby at substantial risk or adverse effect.
- (e)** Single pregnant women who have a medical or special needs requirement or issues but the medical treatment or support received can be equally arranged or transferred to the placement borough.
- (f)** Single homeless applicants who have no medical or special needs requirements.
- (g)** Households with a child/children, pregnant women, and single homeless applicants who are fleeing domestic violence and do not fall under Group A, (i).
- (h)** Households with a child/children, pregnant women and single homeless applicants who are not working in the borough.
- (i)** Households and single people who are in work or training outside the borough providing travel costs and distance to work are reasonable.

A7 Private rented sector offers

This section deals with offers of private rented accommodation made to:

¹³ Long term means that the impairment has lasted or likely to last for at least 12 months or for the rest of the affected person's life

¹⁴ Substantial means more than minor or trivial

- Prevent homelessness (Direct Lets scheme – see section A1(b)).
 - Discharge the council’s s193 duty towards applicants accepted as homeless before 9 November 2012 (Qualifying offers – see section A1(c)).
 - Discharge the council’s s193 duty towards applicants accepted as homeless on or after 9 November 2012.
 - Suitable offers to Transfers and Homeseekers on the Housing Register.
- (a)** For accommodation to be considered for an offer of a private rented home it must be suitable as defined in The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012¹⁵ as follows:
- (i)** The accommodation provided is in a reasonable physical condition;
 - (ii)** The accommodation has a current gas safety record; electrical equipment which meets the requirements of the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994; a valid energy performance certificate and the landlord has taken reasonable fire safety precautions with the accommodation and any furnishings supplied with it;
 - (iii)** The landlord has taken reasonable precautions to prevent the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning in the accommodation;
 - (iv)** The landlord is a fit and proper person;
 - (v)** Where the accommodation is a licensable house in multiple occupation, the correct license is in place.
- (b)** All placements into the private rented sector within the borough or outside the borough will also be subject to the guidelines and criteria set out in this protocol sections A4, A5 and A6 above, for a minimum period of 12 months or as required in law¹⁶.

A8 Offer and discharge duty letters

- (a)** In order to discharge duty to an accepted homeless applicant, offers of accommodation made under Part VII of the Act will be made in writing.
- (b)** A decision to discharge duty for refusal of a suitable offer of accommodation under Part VII of the Act must be done formally in writing. It is important that relevant information on the household’s needs, personal circumstances and the suitability of accommodation offer are all considered in the decision to discharge duty.

A9 Carrying out s202 Reviews under the Act

A good review decision letter depends on a robust original decision and offer/discharge letters. The decision must be carried out by an officer who is senior to the officer who made the discharge duty decision or by a specialist review officer.

A10 Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

The council must have regard to its general duties arising under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The council has undertaken an equality analysis of the protocol and due regard has been given to ensure that the protocol does not unjustifiably discriminate against homeless applicants with protected characteristics.

The protocol will ensure that staff exercise due care and consideration when assessing all applicants for homeless placements and will make reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure that the decision about such placements takes into account, where relevant, the obligation to minimize disadvantage.

¹⁵ As amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – to be implemented April 2018.

¹⁶ Placements into the private rented sector will comply with current guidelines and criteria as updated by legislation, case law and Codes of Guidance. Specific criteria set out in this policy may therefore be subject to change.

Appendix B – Assessing health and housing needs

Appendix B explains in more detail the criteria used and evidence required to assess a number of types of housing category set out in the Bands in section 4.3.1 of this Housing Allocations Policy.

B1 Medical and Mobility Assessments

Applicants who have an illness or disability which is affected by their current housing situation, or who may be vulnerable on physical or mental health grounds and in need of settled accommodation, should complete the council's online Medical Self-Assessment Form which can be found on the council's website.

The self-assessment form and supporting documents are considered by the council who decides from the information supplied whether there may be a serious medical issue involved made worse by the applicant's housing conditions. If the council believes this to be so, it may refer the applicant's case to the Council's Housing Medical Adviser (CHMA) to recommend a level of medical priority and what type of home the applicant needs, e.g. wheelchair adapted or ground floor only with no or minimal steps.

The CHMA considers the extent to which the health of the applicant or member of their household is affected by their current housing and whether a move to an alternative home would benefit them. In making their recommendation, the CHMA takes into account all the housing circumstances including any element of overcrowding, the floor level of the home, and the need for additional bedrooms. The CHMA may ask for more information from the applicant's GP or hospital consultant before making a recommendation about the applicant's medical priority and characteristics of home needed. Their recommendation is not final.

The CHMA's recommendation on banding priority, number of bedrooms or type of home needed and other requirements, such as adaptations, is reviewed by the Housing Assessment Team. The Housing Assessment Team has the overall responsibility for considering all information available to them about an applicant and

for making decisions in line with the council's Housing Allocations Policy priorities. The Housing Assessment Team may decide not to refer cases to the CHMA, and make decisions on the award of medical priority and/or mobility level based on supporting information provided. The Housing Assessment Team has the discretion to override the CHMA's recommendations.

The council contacts applicants by email or letter to let them know the outcome of the medical assessment. If applicants disagree with the decisions on whether to award medical priority or the level of priority given, they can ask for the decision to be reviewed. Medical priority reviews must be submitted within 28 days of the date on the decision letter. Any review forms received outside this timeframe will not be considered. Applicants must explain their reasons for requesting a review of the medical priority given and provide any additional evidence to support the review request. Reviews of medical priority are carried out by either a Manager of the Housing Assessment Team or a Manager of the Housing Allocations Team.

B2 Mobility Assessments

The council's Housing Occupational Therapist (HOT) carries out adaptation and mobility needs assessments. These are for applicants or members of their household who have a physical disability which requires a specific property type and/or adaptations to meet their needs. The HOT assists in identifying suitable homes with appropriate adaptations already in place or where they can be installed.

B2.1 Identifying mobility needs

If an applicant, or someone in their household, says they have a mobility need, their application is referred to the council's Housing Occupational Therapist (HOT) for further assessment.

Applicants must complete a medical form to highlight their mobility needs and supply additional documentation to confirm their mobility needs.

The HOT may carry out a home visit if appropriate to assess the applicant's mobility needs and will provide a written report to the Housing Assessment Team advising on:

- The appropriate mobility group for the applicant, and
- The type of home and/or adaptations needed, and
- Whether the HOT should accompany the applicant to view a suitable home.

The HOT's recommendations are used to find an alternative home which can already, or could with adaptations installed, meet the mobility needs of the applicant or household members included on their application.

Applicants will receive a letter setting out the HOT's recommendations.

Each applicant with assessed disability needs will be assigned to one of three mobility groups which are defined in the table below.

Council and housing association-owned homes should be categorised according to the definitions set out in the London Accessible Housing Register (LAHR) (see Appendix F for more details). For households with mobility needs like those in one of the three groups in the table below, the council will match them to suitable homes available for letting using the LAHR housing categories.

B2.2 Offers of suitable accommodation for clients with mobility needs

Where a suitable home is identified for an applicant with mobility needs, the HOT may go and see it first to assess its suitability with or without additional adaptations. If the HOT recommends the home is suitable, the applicant will be invited to view it, together with the HOT if needed.

If an applicant disagrees with the HOT's recommendations about the suitability of an offer, they may request a review¹⁷ and provide supporting evidence to the council within 21 days of the date of the decision. The head of service responsible for allocating homes will review the HOT's recommendations and the priority awarded to the applicant. If there is additional evidence that has not been considered before, the case will be referred back to the HOT for reassessment.

An outcome of a review is that the applicant may be suspended from the Housing Register for 12 months.

B3 Households affected by domestic, hate or gang violence or crime

The council often receives requests for help from:

- Individuals experiencing the threat of or actual domestic violence from a current or past partner;

Mobility Group	London Accessible Housing Register (LAHR) category of home which is likely to be applicable
Mobility Group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Needs a home which is suitable for wheelchair use indoors and outdoors 	LAHR Category A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Home is wheelchair accessible throughout
Mobility Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suitable for people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the day 	LAHR Category B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Essential rooms in a home are wheelchair accessible
Mobility Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suitable for people only able to manage 1 or 2 steps or small flights of internal/external stairs 	LAHR Category C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lifetime homes LAHR Category D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Easy access LAHR Category E <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minimal steps

¹⁷ See Section 9.2.1 on how to seek a review of a council decision made under this Allocations Policy

- Individuals or households experiencing the threat of or actual hate crime on grounds, for example, of race, religion or sexuality;
- Individuals or households experiencing the threat of or actual violence from gang-related activity.

The council's response to these circumstances will vary according to its assessment of the severity of the situation.

B3.1 Cases involving serious threat to life

These are cases where violence has taken, or is likely to take, place and there is a serious threat to the life of the applicant or a member of their household if they continue to live in their current home. The serious threat to life has to be confirmed by detailed police disclosure setting out an analysis of the risk to life posed by the threat of violence. Detailed background reports from Adults' or Children's Services will also be required for consideration.

These cases are dealt with by the Exceptional Needs Referral Panel (see section 6.2) which considers whether to recommend that the highest priority of Band 1 be awarded.

B3.2 Cases involving threats of violence

These are cases where an applicant may have experienced violence but serious threat to life is not present. The council requires evidence of the incidents of violence, for example, police reports, reports to the council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, reports from Children's or Adults' Services, statements from witnesses if possible, and so on.

These cases are assessed by the Housing Assessment Team who may award a Band 2 priority. Alternatively, Band 3 priority may be awarded in cases where the council feels further monitoring of the situation is required.

B3.3 How the council may help after awarding a housing priority

Where the council agrees that an offer of alternative accommodation can be made, this could be a council or a housing association home. However, in cases involving applicants who do not currently have a council or housing association tenancy, a move to private rented accommodation, either within or outside the Borough of Hounslow may be the most effective solution.

- Cases involving council tenants: if a move is agreed a home will be offered which is similar in size and type as currently occupied (i.e. like for like).
- Cases involving tenants of registered providers (housing associations):
 - The council expects these landlords to lead on the investigation where their tenants are affected by violence and work with the council to resolve any potential homelessness.
 - The council normally expects registered providers to resolve such issues from within their own stock but is prepared to enter a reciprocal arrangement by exception. See section 5.9.4 (reciprocal arrangements) for more information.
- Cases involving home owners and private rented tenants:
 - These households are entitled to approach the homelessness service of any local authority for assistance.

B4 Under occupation

To make best use of homes owned by the council and housing associations in the borough, the council gives a high priority to council and housing association tenants, who live in the Hounslow borough in a home which is too large for them, and who wish to move to a home with fewer bedrooms. This is known as downsizing. These applicants are placed in Band 1 which is the council's highest priority for a move to an alternative home.

B4.1 The Trading Places scheme

The council operates the Trading Places scheme which in addition to giving a Band 1 (high) priority for a move to another home, also provides:

- A dedicated officer to oversee the move;
- Help with arranging removals;
- Help with the connection and disconnection of appliances;
- For council tenants only a cash incentive depending on how many bedrooms are being given up;
- Help with decorations at the new home.

Where a housing association tenant is moved to a smaller home through the Trading Places scheme, the housing association landlord must agree to provide the council with nomination rights to the home vacated.

B4.2 Tenants not able to apply for the Trading Places scheme

The Trading Places scheme is not open to council or housing association tenants in the following circumstances:

- They have succeeded to a council or housing association tenancy and are required by their landlord to move to a smaller home, or
- They have no right to succeed to a council or housing association tenancy currently occupied but the landlord has agreed to house them but in a smaller home.

These applicants can receive up to three offers of an alternative home. If the applicant refuses the third offer, they are suspended from the Housing Register for 12 months.

B5 Overcrowding

The council uses the bedroom standard set out in section 4.2 to decide whether Housing Register applicants are overcrowded in their current home.

The council gives applicants priority for a move to an alternative home where the bedroom standard indicates they are short of 2 bedrooms in their current home. These applicants are awarded Band 2 priority.

For applicants short of 3 or more bedrooms as defined by the council's bedroom standard, the council awards Band 1 priority.

Priority for a move to an alternative home is not given where the council finds applicants have taken action to unreasonably overcrowd or worsen their situation.

B6 Applicants living in homes affected by disrepair

This section provides information on when the council may consider the conditions to be so severe that the applicant living in either a private rented, council or registered provider (housing association) home should be awarded a high priority, Band 1. This priority is authorised by the head of service for housing assessments.

B6.1 Private sector homes

- An applicant is living in a private sector home which the

council's Private Sector Housing Team has inspected and provided a report to the Housing Assessment Team confirming that:

- It contains one or more category 1 hazards which are set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004); and
- The category 1 hazards identified cannot be resolved by the landlord within a reasonable period of time; and
- If the applicant carries on living in this home, a serious risk would be posed to their health and/or a member of their household taking account of any vulnerability they have due to disability or age.

The type of category 1 hazards that could be considered a serious risk are:

- Severe damp;
- Major structural defects including subsidence;
- Flooding;
- Collapse of roof;
- Living conditions are a statutory nuisance.

- An applicant is living in a private sector home where a Demolition Order has been made under S265 of the Housing Act 1985.
- An applicant is living in a private sector home where the council has served a Prohibition Order under S33 of the Housing Act 2004 which requires the applicant to move out.

Before providing assistance to private rented tenants, the council will establish if the applicant's landlord has insurance in place which would enable them to provide alternative accommodation to their tenant. Only as a last resort may the council offer an alternative home. The council may try to assist private tenants to secure another private rented home and this may be with the same number of bedrooms as currently occupied.

Before providing assistance to owner-occupiers, the council will establish if they have buildings insurance in place which can be used to pay for the cost of alternative accommodation. Only as a last resort may the council offer temporary accommodation for a reasonable period to enable the owner to resolve their housing situation.

B6.2 Council-owned homes

Where the applicant is a council tenant living in a home which:

- contains one or more category 1 hazards which are set out in the government's Housing Health and Safety Rating System (see examples in section B6.1), and

- the category 1 hazards identified cannot be resolved by the council within a reasonable period of time, and
- if the applicant carried on living in this home, a serious risk would be posed to their health and/or a member of their household taking account of any vulnerability they have due to disability or age, or
- is subject to a Demolition Order made under S265 of the Housing Act 1985, or
- is subject to a Prohibition Order under S33 of the Housing Act 2004 which requires the applicant to move out,

the council will provide an alternative council home. The alternative home will be on a like for like basis which means the current housing circumstances will be matched in terms of:

- The number of bedrooms the applicant currently occupies;
- The type of home. For example if the applicant currently occupies a flat in a block of flats, any alternative home offered is likely to be the same type of home.

B6.3 Registered provider-owned homes

Where the applicant is a tenant of a Registered Provider, and is affected by the criteria set out for private rented tenants above, the Registered Provider landlord is expected to find alternative suitable accommodation for the tenant and their household. The Council may agree reciprocal arrangements as set out in section 5.9.4.

B7 Council tenants who have to move from their homes permanently (permanent decants)

Applicants in this category are council tenants who are required to move because:

- Their home will be demolished;
- The lease on their home has expired, and the property has to be returned to the landlord with vacant possession;
- Their home is subject to major works, such as redevelopment, and the tenant will not be able to return;
- The sale of their home has been approved.

Council tenants who need to move in less than 6 months are placed in Band 1.

Council tenants who need to move within 6-12 months are placed in Band 2.

B8 Homeless households owed a duty to house under homelessness legislation

B8.1 Homeless applicants owed a duty to house and prevention of homelessness

Applicants in this category are those considered to be homeless under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and those at risk of homelessness who would be owed the homelessness relief duty by Hounslow, are actively engaging with the council or making their own accommodation arrangements which the council has agreed to, and their potential homelessness will only be resolved by an offer of social housing.

The council has a legal duty to secure accommodation for households who are:

- Eligible; and
- In a priority need category; and
- Unintentionally homeless.

Applicants who are owed the full housing duty by Hounslow who meet the above criteria and those whose homelessness can be prevented or relieved are placed in Band 2.

The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to end their homelessness duty by offering a suitable private rented home with a fixed term tenancy without the applicant's consent. This applies to households requesting the council's help because they became homeless after 9 November 2012.

The council's Homeless Placements Protocol (see Appendix A4 of this Housing Allocations Policy) sets out the rules the council applies when deciding the suitability of private rented homes when discharging its homelessness duty

B8.2 Homeless applicants found not to be in priority need, intentionally homeless, and homelessness prevention

These are applicants who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII Housing Act 1996 (as amended) or at risk of homelessness who either:

- do not have or are not likely to have a priority need, and/or
- have been found intentionally homeless by the council, and/or
- homelessness is likely to be prevented for at least 12 months (this must be assessed and approved by the council), or
- homelessness is relieved but there is an ongoing need for longer term accommodation.

These applicants are placed in Band 3.

B8.3 Households placed in temporary accommodation in Hounslow by other local authorities

These are applicants who have been placed in temporary accommodation in the borough of Hounslow by another local authority who has accepted a duty to house them under the homelessness legislation.

These applicants have to meet the eligibility and qualification criteria set out in this policy as for all other housing applicants and have an overriding need to stay in the Hounslow borough and the council is required to give them a reasonable preference.

These applicants are placed in Band 3.

B8.4 Rough Sleepers

These are applicants whom the council and partner agencies have verified through the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database as sleeping rough in the borough for 6 months prior to applying to the council's Housing Register. From 3 April 2018, this Band reason also includes applicants who the council assesses as being at high risk of rough sleeping and the applicant is working with relevant agencies to prevent rough sleeping occurring. They are placed in Band 3.

B9 Applicants ready to move on from supported housing schemes

This category applies to applicants living in supported housing schemes which have been commissioned by the council.

Supported housing schemes provide housing and support to people who are vulnerable in some way and work with them to enable them to live independently within a period of time.

The council will assess the applicant's ability to move on to live independently, with appropriate support made available if necessary. Applicants will not be considered for any offers of accommodation until the council has confirmed that the applicant is able to live independently within the next 6 months (approximately).

The council may offer council, housing association or private rented homes to these applicants. If an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation (including an offer of a private rented home) when they are ready to move on, the applicant may be evicted from the supported housing.

The date an applicant moves into a council commissioned supported housing scheme will be the date their priority for an independent home starts, not the date they applied to the Housing Register.

From time to time supported housing schemes are decommissioned and residents will need to move elsewhere. Where this occurs, the council will engage with residents to enable them to move to alternative suitable accommodation. This could be in the private rented sector if they are ready to live independently or if not, to another council-commissioned supported housing scheme.

B10 Young people moving on from the council's care

Applicants who are Care Leavers and Children Looked After by London Borough of Hounslow will be assessed in Band 2. They will not be considered for any offers of accommodation until they are considered by the Young Care Leavers Housing Panel as being ready to live independently within the next 6 months (approximately). See section 6.3 for more information on the Panel and the criteria used to assess whether a care leaver is ready to live independently.

The council may allocate a council or housing association property to a care leaver or offer a private rented home.

B11 Homes for Older People

There are a variety of schemes across the borough providing homes for older people. These are owned by the council and by housing associations working in the borough and comprise:

- Homes for older people aged over 50 or 55;
- Sheltered homes for people aged over 60;
- Extra-care sheltered homes for people aged over 50.

B11.1 Homes for older people aged 50 or 55

These homes are designated for Housing Register applicants aged 50 plus who can live independently. Within this group of homes, there are some properties designated for applicants who are over 55.

Where a couple is to be offered a home designated for older people, one partner must meet the age criteria, that is, be 50 or 55 or over. The other partner in the couple, if younger, should generally be aged no less than 45 or 50 respectively (this is assessed on a case by case basis).

The homes are generally in low-rise blocks of flats. Some are studio flats, some have one bedroom and a few have two bedrooms. All are self-contained. A number of the flats have adapted bathrooms and several have scope to be adapted further. These homes generally require prospective tenants to have good mobility as many are located on the first or second floor with no access to a lift.

B11.2 Sheltered homes for people aged over 60

Sheltered homes are designated for Housing Register applicants aged 60 years or over.

Where a couple is to be offered a sheltered home, one partner should be aged 60 or over. The other partner in the couple, if younger, should be aged no less than 55 years.

Sheltered housing provides self-contained accommodation for older people which enables independent living. The majority of sheltered flats are one bedroom units, with a small number of two bedroom homes. Residents have the added security of a sheltered scheme manager during office hours and an immediate response “Linkline” service to alert someone if help is required. The scheme manager regularly reviews support needs and if any additional care and support is required they will be able to signpost residents to the appropriate service.

The accommodation is located within low rise blocks of flats with no more than 4 floors, and with the exception of two schemes, all have access to a lift. Each sheltered housing scheme has a communal lounge and kitchen facility which is available to all residents. There are four core schemes located across the borough that run programmed social activities which are open to all sheltered scheme residents, and to those aged 60+ in the local community.

Residents pay rent for their flat, an enhanced management charge for the sheltered scheme manager and in addition service charges are also levied for shared costs e.g. communal electricity, Linkline, grounds maintenance.

To apply for a sheltered home, applicants complete a Sheltered Housing Assessment form obtainable from the Housing Assessment Team which is considered by the Sheltered Housing Needs Panel. See section 6.4 for more information on the panel and the information and criteria it uses to assess applicant’s suitability for sheltered schemes.

Applicants accepted for sheltered schemes are placed in Band 3.

B11.3 Extra Care homes for people aged over 50

Extra care homes are aimed at London Borough of Hounslow residents with a combination of housing, support or care needs, who need help with daily living tasks and are aged 55 years or over and frail due to age or are 50 years or older and have one or more of the following:

- A learning disability;
- A mental health issue;
- A physical or sensory disability;
- Dementia.

Applicants assessed for a move into an extra care housing scheme are placed in Band 3.

Extra care homes offer a high level of care 24 hours a day. Homes are one bedroom self-contained flats with appropriate adaptations.

The criteria for accessing extra care homes are that applicants:

1. Are eligible and qualify to join the council’s Housing Register as per sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 of the Allocations Policy
2. Have recognised support needs arising from a disability or social disadvantage (e.g. mental, physical, sensory or learning disability, and/or other deprivation/multiple deprivation issues) and need assistance in maintaining a tenancy living independently, personal care needs, etc.
3. Have been assessed as being eligible for a service by Hounslow Adults Social Care with an agreed care package and
 - (a) funding is approved, if required, or
 - (b) are able to meet the cost of their support and accommodation from their own finances (including direct payments / individual budget), or
 - (c) have a funding agreement in place with another statutory body to meet these costs.
4. Satisfy safeguarding assessments which demonstrate they can be safely accommodated in the scheme and do not pose an unmanageable danger to themselves or others, given that the council encourages positive risk taking.

Referrals are dealt with by the council’s Adults’ Services department. The Supporting Independence Service undertakes the assessment under the first criterion before the Extra Care Housing Panel considers the suitability of applicants using evidence supporting the criteria two to four set out above.

See section 6.5 for more information on the Extra Care Housing Panel.

B12 Members of the British Armed and Reserve Forces

This Policy gives Band 3 priority to members of the Armed Forces who:

- Are currently serving or have served in the last 5 years, and
- Are due to be discharged within six months of joining the Housing Register, or
- Are serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of service.

Applicants dishonourably discharged from the Armed or Reserved Forces are ineligible to apply to the council's Housing Register (unless they qualify due to other reasons set out in this policy).

B13 Bereaved spouse / civil partner of Armed Forces members

This Policy gives Band 3 priority to bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner whilst in service.

B14 Low-Income Working Households

The council recognises that households on a low income find it difficult to buy a home at market prices or through low cost home ownership options. To encourage work and raise levels of aspiration and ambition, the council will award Band 3 priority to applicants, who meet the following criteria for this priority:

- At least one adult member of the household is working for at least 18 hours per week, and
- The work is in a permanent or temporary role or as self-employment, and
- The work has been held for 9 out of the last 12 months, and
- The household's gross annual income is lower than £25,000. Income includes working and child tax credits, child benefit, universal credit, housing benefit and overtime if worked on a regular basis, and

- Are overcrowded, lacking one bedroom; and/or
- Are sharing or lacking amenities¹⁸; and
- In their current tenancy, the applicant does not have rent arrears with their current landlord, or if they do, they have kept to a repayment agreement for more than 6 months.

B15 Right to move

The council is required under statutory government guidance on "Right to Move"¹⁹ to set aside 1% of qualifying lettings for existing tenants of local authorities and housing associations who currently live outside the borough of Hounslow but to avoid hardship need to move to the borough for work-related reasons.

These applicants will have a reasonable preference on hardship grounds. This means the council is satisfied the applicant needs to move to the borough and failure to do so would cause hardship (to themselves or others). Work-related reasons means the applicant already has a job in the borough or has an offer of a job. It does not include work that is short-term (eg, lasting less than 12 months) or marginal in nature (eg, less than 16 hours per week), or ancillary to work in another district (eg, only part of their job is carried out in Hounslow). Voluntary work is excluded. Apprenticeships are included where they last more than 12 months.

In addition to satisfying itself about the hardship grounds, the council needs to be content that the job or offer of a job in the borough is genuine. The council requires the following type of evidence from the applicant:

- A contract of employment;
- Wage/salary slips covering the last 12 months, or bank statements (particularly where the applicant has a zero-hours contract);
- Tax and benefits information, eg, proof that the applicant is in receipt of working tax credit (if eligible);
- A formal offer and acceptance of employment.

The council may also contact the employer to confirm the details of the job.

Right to Move applicants are placed in Band 3.

¹⁸ This only applies to new applications received on or after 3 April 2018

¹⁹ Department of Communities and Local Government, (2015), Right to Move: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local housing authorities in England

Appendix C – Types of tenancy granted

There are a variety of tenancies that may be granted to Housing Register applicants dependent on the type of home they are being offered and what type of tenancy or licence the Housing Register applicant may currently have. The council's Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy sets out its expectations on the kind of tenancies that registered

providers (including housing associations) should grant and the types of tenancies it will grant for council-owned homes.

The types of tenancies likely to be granted by different types of landlords are set out below:

Type of landlord owning home being offered to Housing Register applicant	Type of tenancy or license the Housing Register applicant may currently have	Type of tenancy that is likely to be granted for home being offered
Housing Association (HA) home	License or no occupation agreement (e.g. living with family or friends)	<p>Starter Tenancy lasting 12 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ after this time a fixed term Affordable Rent tenancy is granted if there have been no problems with the Starter Tenancy. The fixed term is usually for 5 years
	Assured Shorthold Tenancy (private rented)	<p>Starter Tenancy lasting 12 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ after which a fixed term Affordable Rent tenancy is granted if there have been no problems with the Starter Tenancy. The fixed term is usually 5 years.
	HA Secure Tenancy	HA Secure Tenancy
	HA Assured Tenancy	HA Assured Tenancy
	Council Secure Tenancy	<p>HA Assured Tenancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some HAs grant Starter Tenancies to council tenants to begin with and may grant either an Assured Tenancy or a fixed term Affordable Rent tenancy after this.

Type of landlord owning home being offered to Housing Register applicant	Type of tenancy or license the Housing Register applicant may currently have	Type of tenancy that is likely to be granted for home being offered
Council home	License or no occupation agreement (eg, living with family or friends)	Introductory Tenancy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ lasts for 12 months after which a fixed term flexible tenancy is granted if there have been no problems with the Introductory Tenancy. The fixed term is usually 5 years
	Assured Shorthold Tenancy (private rented)	Introductory Tenancy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ lasts for 12 months after which a fixed term flexible tenancy is granted if there have been no problems with the Introductory Tenancy. The fixed term is usually 5 years
	HA Affordable Rent Tenancy (fixed term)	Council fixed term Flexible Tenancy for general needs home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the fixed term is usually for 5 years
	HA Assured Tenancy	Council Secure tenancy agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ this tenancy lasts indefinitely as long as the tenant keeps to the terms of the tenancy
	Council Secure tenancy agreement	Council Secure tenancy agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ this tenancy lasts indefinitely as long as the tenant keeps to the terms of the tenancy
	Miscellaneous situations	Council Secure tenancy agreement if the Housing Register applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ will be living in a home designated for people aged over 60 ■ were previously members of the Armed or Reserved Forces ■ fleeing domestic violence and a like for like tenancy agreement is required

Appendix D – Alternative Housing Options

D1 Homefinder UK

Homefinder UK is an online service for social housing tenants (tenants of the council or housing associations) who would like to move to another area but want to remain in or access social housing. It allows both social housing tenants and households in temporary accommodation to access available properties provided by a range of social landlords as well as mutual exchange properties across the UK provided by House Exchange.

Homefinder applicants will be able to:

- Look for homes across the UK.
- Access thousands of mutual exchange properties available through House Exchange.
- Access more opportunities to find the right sized home, in the right place and at the right rent.
- Move to take up job opportunities in other parts of the UK.
- Get support with their move.
- Benefit from Homefinder's individually tailored brokering service where Homefinder staff will help you to find the very home that you're looking for.

More information, including how to register for the service, can be found on the Homefinder website: www.homefinderuk.org

D2 Housing Moves (Pan London Mobility Scheme)

Housing Moves, is a pan-London housing mobility service for existing tenants of councils and housing associations living in London. Housing Moves aims to help these tenants move to other council or housing association homes in other parts of London. The service is run by the Greater London Authority and the majority of London boroughs and housing associations participate in it by contributing 5% of their lettings into a pool of homes which tenants can bid for using a choice based letting system.

Housing Moves gives priority to the following council or housing association tenants wanting to move:

- **Band 1:** Tenants who are under occupying their current homes
- **Band 2:** Tenants or a member of their household who are working more than 16 hours per week and have been working for more than 6 months or in training that leads to employment (such as an apprenticeship)
- **Band 3:** Tenants who are overcrowded in their current home
- **Band 4:** Tenants or a member of their household provide unpaid care or support to a family member or friend who are not part of the tenant's existing household.
- **Band 5:** All other tenants wishing to move to a different part of London

More information can be found on the Housing Moves website: www.housingmoves.org

D3 Mutual Exchange

Both "secure" London Borough of Hounslow and housing association tenants, in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, who occupy permanent self-contained accommodation, have a legal right to exchange their tenancies under Section 92 of the Housing Act 1985. "Assured" housing association tenants also have this right if it is allowed for in their tenancy agreement. There can be two, or even three-way, exchanges and each landlord involved must give written consent to the exchange.

Mutual exchanges are essentially a self-help process. Tenants are expected to find their own exchange partner either through web based exchange schemes such as Homeswapper or informally through private adverts in shop windows or through family/friends/neighbours.

The following are websites which tenants of the council and housing associations living in the borough of Hounslow can use:

- House Exchange: www.houseexchange.org.uk
NB: homeless households placed in temporary accommodation can also use this website to seek alternative accommodation
- Homeswapper: www.homeswapper.co.uk

D4 InComE Project

The InComE Project (Independence Accommodation Employment) is run through Shepherds Bush Housing Association and works in partnership with a number of local authorities and housing associations.

The InComE project helps adult members of overcrowded households who do not hold the tenancy.

The project is open to anyone living in council housing in one of a number of London local authorities of which one is Hounslow.

The project will provide applicants with a council or housing association flat for two years together with a dedicated caseworker. The aim is to provide applicants with a stepping stone into independent living.

For contact details see the InComE Facebook page: www.facebook.com/InComEProject

D5 Seaside & Country Homes

The Seaside & Country Homes scheme is open to tenants of councils and housing associations living in London where at least one member of the household is aged 60 or above.

The scheme's landlords manage approximately 3,000 bungalows and flats located:

- Along the south coast from Cornwall in the south west to Norfolk and Lincolnshire in the east.
- In the countryside from Dorset to Cambridgeshire and Shropshire.

Many have private gardens or outdoor communal areas and are in peaceful, purpose built developments. They are ideal for single people, couples or others who have retired or wish to do so.

Any members of the household who are under 60 years of age must be either the partner, joint tenant or registered carer of the lead applicant. Second applicants

aged under 60 are not able to become joint tenants of, or have succession rights to, Seaside and Country Homes properties. They are unable to consider applications from more than two people.

Applicants should have no rent arrears or history of anti-social behaviour, and should not be going through possession proceedings or being evicted.

The Seaside & Country Homes scheme is very popular, so moves cannot be guaranteed to everyone who applies. People freeing up the largest homes are given the greatest priority.

More information and how to apply can be found on these webpages: www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/renting/seaside-and-country-homes

www.hmlive.homeconnections.org.uk/housingmoves

D6 Private Rented accommodation

Information about private rented accommodation is often available and can be found:

- In local newspapers and magazines.
- In shop windows and notice boards.
- Through letting agencies and accommodation agencies.

You can find Estate Agents by looking in Yellow Pages or on the website at www.yell.com. You can also look in LOOT and other local newspapers. You can access the internet free at Council offices but if you want to access the internet at your local library and at internet cafés they may charge a small fee. You could also place an advert in a local newspaper, shop window or notice board. The advert should say what you are looking for and how much rent you could afford to pay.

D7 Intermediate housing options including shared ownership and intermediate rent homes

D7.1 Shared ownership

Shared ownership homes are homes owned by housing associations and councils which people can part buy and part rent. People buy an initial share in the value of the home, often 25%, and pay rent to the landlord on the rest of the value of the home. Over time, householders can increase the share of the home they own and reduce the

rent they pay until they completely own the home and no longer need to pay rent. Shared ownership is aimed at those who cannot afford to buy on the open market and is a cheaper route in to home ownership.

D7.2 Intermediate rent homes

Intermediate rented homes are generally owned and let by housing associations. The rents for these homes are higher than social rents²⁰ but lower than private market rents.

D7.3 Who is prioritised for shared ownership and intermediate rent homes

Hounslow Council requires that all applicants for shared ownership and intermediate rent homes live or work in the borough and in particular the following groups of people are prioritised for them:

- Existing council and housing association tenants living in

the borough who will release a much needed for home for someone else on Hounslow's Housing Register

- Serving military personnel
- Hounslow residents who will soon be in high priority housing need
- Existing shared owners in Hounslow with a need for a larger home, who would release their current shared ownership home for someone else in need of it
- First time buyers who live or work in the borough

D7.4 Finding out more about shared ownership and intermediate rent homes

For information on availability of these homes, eligibility (eg, income and residency) and how to apply for them, please refer to the First Steps website at this web address:

www.shareto-buy.com/sharedownership/in/Hounslow

²⁰ Meaning rents for homes owned by the council or assured tenancy rents for homes owned by housing associations

Appendix E – The National Witness Mobility Scheme (NWMS)

The London Borough of Hounslow participates in the government funded National Witness Mobility Scheme, which gives local authorities and other social landlords and the police service access to a nationally coordinated fast track witness relocation scheme.

Witnesses who are intending to give evidence in civil and criminal cases such as domestic violence, hate crimes, anti-social behaviour, gun crimes, sexual assault, child

abuse and other serious crimes and consider that it is unsafe to remain in their home will be assessed by their local authority and a designated police officer.

If there is a serious risk to the witness, and it is unsafe for them to pursue normal homelessness routes, they can be offered the opportunity to relocate quickly away from the unsafe area. Referrals are made to/from the NWMS office.

Appendix F – The London Accessible Housing Register

The London Accessible Housing (LAHR) enables social housing landlords to collect and store information detailing how a property has been adapted to suit the varying needs of those with disabilities. Information collected includes whether a property has level access, a stair-lift, a step in shower or is

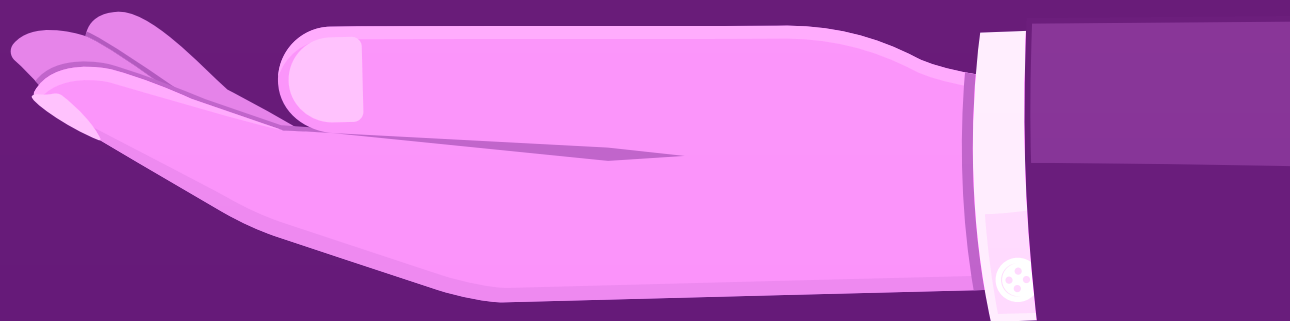
wheelchair adapted and so on. The information is used to ensure these homes are given to those who need them.

Most homes owned by Hounslow Council have been assessed and placed into one of the following categories:

LAHR Category	Description
Category A Wheelchair accessible throughout	Designed to meet the latest accessible housing design standards offering extra space and full access to all rooms and facilities. Step free entry. If above the ground floor there will be at least two lifts. If there are any internal stairs, a through-floor lift or platform will be in place as well. Kitchen and bathroom will have space for a wheelchair to turn around. Wheelchair accessible kitchen units do not need to be present.
Category B Wheelchair accessible essential rooms	Designed to older wheelchair standards or significantly adapted to provide extra space and wheelchair access to the essential facilities of the property (that is, a bedroom, bathroom, toilet, living room and kitchen). Other rooms in the house such as additional bedrooms or bathrooms may not be wheelchair accessible. Step-free entry.
Category C Lifetime Homes	Designed to meet the space standards of Lifetime Homes. Main feature includes stepfree entrances and wide doorways and corridors.
Category D Easy access	Main features include a step-free entrance with wider doorways and corridors than general needs housing (but may not be as wide as category C).
Category E Minimal steps	General needs housing with no more than four steps to enter the property.
Category F General needs housing	Does not meet the requirements for other accessible housing categories. This property will have one or more of the following: More than four steps to enter the property without a lift. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A change in floor level within one storey of the property (for example one or more steps to enter the kitchen). ■ A flight of internal stairs with little prospect of adapting with a stair lift. ■ A steep ramp or slope.

Appendix G – Glossary of terms used in this document

Term	Definition
Adaptations / homes which are adapted	Adaptations are changes to a home, usually funded by either the registered provider or the council, that make it accessible or suitable for a tenant with physical challenges or disabilities. These may be very specific to the needs of a person currently living there, but the council will always seek to re-use such facilities where possible.
Affordability	A measure that considers the income and expenditure of a household in relation to the accommodation they can reasonably afford in their local area that is suitable for the household needs.
Chief Housing Officer	As at October 2016, the council's Chief Housing Officer is the Director of Hounslow Housing.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	Risk assessment tool used to assess potential risks to health and safety in a property.
Housing Register	A list of applicants who are eligible and qualify for assistance with housing in accordance with the rules set out in this Housing Allocation Policy.
Affordable Housing	Housing (usually subsidised) made available to people who are not able to afford adequate housing locally. Affordable, subsidised, housing is usually let by local authorities and housing associations.
Affordable Rent Tenancy	A new form of residential tenancy introduced in 2011 enabling registered providers like housing associations to charge rents up to 80% of local market rents. The higher rents charged were to enable housing associations to develop more affordable homes. Apart from the rents charged, these tenancies usually have similar terms to other types of tenancies housing associations use, such as assured tenancies.
Anti-Social Behaviour	Behaviour that causes harassment, alarm or distress to other people living in the area. Examples include: noise, verbal abuse, drug dealing, and violence.
Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)	An Assured Shorthold Tenancy is the most frequent form of residential tenancy granted today. A landlord cannot take possession within the first 6 months of the start of the tenancy. A landlord does not have to give a reason for possession but must serve a valid written notice on the tenant and apply to court for a possession order.
Assured tenancy	An assured tenancy is a form of residential tenancy in England that grants a degree of security of tenure to the tenant. A tenant under an assured tenancy may not be evicted on grounds other than those set out in housing legislation
Banding	Banding is the method the council uses to award priority to applicants. This Housing Allocations Policy uses three bands which reflect the comparative urgency of applicants' need to move. Applicants in Band 1 have the highest priority and more priority than applicants in Bands 2 and 3, and so on.
Decant	A facilitated permanent or temporary move of a council or housing association tenant to allow major works/refurbishment to be carried out, or prior to demolition and redevelopment.
Direct Offer	Where the council uses the rules set out in this Housing Allocations Policy to select a suitable home for a Housing Register applicant and then makes an offer of it to them.
Housing Benefit	Means tested benefit intended to help meet housing costs for rented accommodation.





**London Borough
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