



Housing Allocations Policy

Summary



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

Effective from 3 April 2018



Policy Summary

This is a summary of the London Borough of Hounslow's revised Housing Allocations Policy. The full policy is available on the council website at www.hounslow.gov.uk.

There is an extremely limited supply of homes owned by the council and housing associations in Hounslow. Approximately 2 people in 10 on the council's Housing Register are offered council or housing association homes each year. This means that many people who need somewhere to live, have to find homes in the private rented sector. Applying to join the Housing Register does not give any guarantee of being offered a council or housing association home.

Direct offer system of allocating homes (people do not bid for properties)

The council uses a single direct offer system to allocate available homes. This means if you are on the Housing Register and have enough priority to receive an offer of a council or housing association home, you will receive **one** direct offer only. The offer will be based on your assessed housing needs.

Applying to join the Housing Register

You must be 18 or over to join the Housing Register. There is certain criteria you must meet, regarding your right to live in the UK (referred to as eligibility criteria). You must also qualify to join the Housing Register and the qualification criteria is based on your residence in Hounslow, your income, savings and assets, and your behaviour in your current and previous properties.

Eligibility criteria

You must have a right to live in the UK and be entitled to claim public funds. Examples of people who are eligible are British Citizens, EEA nationals (generally those who are working), and those with leave to remain. People applying to join the Housing Register have to provide documents to confirm their identity and their immigration status.

Qualification criteria

■ Residence in Hounslow

You must currently live in Hounslow and must have lived in Hounslow continuously for the last 5 years or for 5 years out of the last 7 years.

Please refer to the full policy for details of limited exceptions to the above residence criteria.

■ Income, savings and assets

– We will assess the total income you and those included on your application have. If your total income is more than £50,000 per year, you will not qualify to join the Housing Register. However, we can still give you advice about other housing options that may be available to you.

- If you have savings of more than £50,000, you will not qualify to join the Housing Register.
- If you own a property (either by yourself or jointly with someone else), or have an interest in a property, in the UK or abroad, you will not qualify to join the Housing Register.

Please refer to the full policy for limited exceptions to the above, for example, if you or those included on your application are elderly or disabled.

■ **Behaviour and previous tenancy conduct**

You may not qualify to join the Housing Register if your behaviour is or has been unacceptable in your current or previous accommodation. Examples of behaviour that the council considers to be unacceptable are persistent failure to pay your rent, serious anti-social behaviour, illegal or immoral use of a property and obtaining a tenancy by deception or fraud.

How to apply to join the Housing Register

To apply to join the Housing Register you firstly need to complete a pre-qualification questionnaire which is available on the council's website. Following successful completion of the questionnaire, you will be given a link to the main application which you must complete within 14 days. You will also be asked to complete an online medical assessment form if you (or those included on your application) indicate that you have a medical condition or disability.

If you do not meet the general qualification criteria, but you think you meet one of the exceptions set out in the policy, you need to contact us. This is because you can only complete the main application online if you meet all the general qualification criteria.

Assessing and prioritising housing applications

The assessment of your application is based on the information you provide so please make sure you complete all sections of the application, including medical details if applicable, as fully and accurately as possible.

It is a criminal offence for Housing Register applicants, and/or anyone providing supporting information, to knowingly or recklessly make false statements. It is also an offence for applicants to withhold information that is relevant to their application. Criminal proceedings taken against applicants who provide false statements or withhold relevant information, can result in a criminal record, a fine or imprisonment. The council will seek possession of any home obtained as a result of fraud.

The following details are included in the assessment of your application:

- **The type of applicant** you are which is separated into 3 groups:
 - Homeseekers – people applying for a council or housing association home who do not fall into the 2 groups below;
 - Council tenants of London Borough of Hounslow wanting to transfer;
 - Homeless households who have applied to the council as homeless and the full housing duty has been accepted.
- **The size of home** you need: the Government's bedroom standard is used to decide how many bedrooms you need;
- **The type of property** you need: for example, due to a medical condition or disability;
- Whether you fall into any of the **reasonable preference categories** or the local priorities of the council. Reasonable preference categories include people who live in overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing, people who do not have a home at all and people who need to move for medical or welfare reasons. Further details about reasonable preference are in the full policy. The local priorities of the council include council tenants in Hounslow moving to smaller homes or giving up properties that have adaptations that are no longer needed, applicants who are working but on a low income and applicants who engage with the council to prevent their homelessness.

Bands

Applications are prioritised using 3 bands:

- **Band 1: High priority** – for example, people with an urgent need to move due to overriding medical reasons, and those moving to a smaller home which frees up a larger home for another applicant.
- **Band 2: Medium priority** – for example, people who are overcrowded because they lack 2 bedrooms, and people with severe medical problems.
- **Band 3: Low priority** – for example, people who are employed on a low income who also lack 1 bedroom, and people who need to move due to less severe medical problems than those in Bands 1 and 2.

How the council allocates homes available for letting

The council considers a number of factors before it decides who a home can be allocated to. These factors include:

- **The type of property:** whether it is a house, flat or bungalow;
- **The size of the property:** how many living rooms, bedrooms and the size of the bedrooms (for example whether a bedroom is suitable for one person or two people);
- **Whether any age restrictions apply:** for example, some properties, such as Sheltered Housing, are restricted to those age 60 or over;
- **The floor level and whether there is lift access:** to make sure that applicants with mobility needs are given priority for properties to meet their needs;
- **Whether there are any adaptations in the home:** priority is given to applicants who need the type of adaptations that are in the home;
- **The weekly rent charged:** to make sure that the accommodation offered is affordable;
- **The location of the property:** to make sure that applicants are not offered a home in an area that may put them at risk (this would be determined as part of the housing assessment).

Each property will be matched to one applicant or a number of applicants based on the above factors. In most cases, a number of applicants will match each property. Applicants are placed in a priority order based on:

- The Band they are in (Band 1, 2 then 3);
- The priority date within the Band.

You may match a property but will not be offered it due to the following reasons:

- Your circumstances, and the circumstances of those included on your application, cannot be verified, for example, you do not produce up to date identification, address or income documents;
- Your circumstances, or the circumstances of anyone included on your application, have changed;
- You owe money to the council;
- You do not turn up to view the property.

Refusal of a direct offer

The system of allocating homes is based on a system of one direct offer which matches your assessed housing needs. This means that council and housing association properties available for letting can be quickly matched to applicants with the highest need.

If you are offered a property, you are actively encouraged to accept it. Occasionally an offer may be withdrawn, or a refusal automatically considered to be reasonable, if the details of the property offered are incorrect or your circumstances have been recorded incorrectly.

If you refuse an offer you may be suspended from the Housing Register for 12 months and no offers will be made during this time. If you have a homeless application with us which has been accepted, we may end our housing duty to you. This could result in your eviction from any temporary accommodation we have arranged for you.

You can ask the council to review decisions made about whether an offer is reasonable, along with other decisions made in accordance with the Allocations Policy. Please refer to the full policy for further details.

Change of circumstances and renewal of applications

You must tell us about any changes in your circumstances. Failure to keep us up to date with any change of circumstances could mean that you will be removed from the Housing Register. A change of circumstances form is available on the council's website.

If your circumstances have changed and you have not told us (for example, you have moved address or changed your telephone number), your Housing Register application may be cancelled.

Applicants on the Housing Register are periodically contacted and asked to renew their application. Failure to renew a Housing Register application, when requested to do so, is likely to result in the application being cancelled.





**London Borough
of Hounslow**

Housing Service

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