



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

**London Borough of Hillingdon**

**Social Housing Allocation Policy**

July 2024

Consultation Draft

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## SUMMARY OF HILLINGDON’S SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY (NEW SECTION)

1. This policy document sets out how we make decisions about the allocation of council homes for rent in Hillingdon and the allocation of housing association homes where the council has nomination rights. This summary section is intended to provide a reasonably short and accessible explanation of the policy including the priorities for allocations. The full policy text is set out after the summary and should be referred to in order to fully understand how the policy operates.
2. Social housing is a limited resource, so it is important that we have an open, fair and transparent scheme setting out how we allocate social housing and the procedures to be followed. This is a legal requirement for the council.
3. There are, in the region of 18,000 council or housing association homes for rent in Hillingdon, making up about 16% of housing in the borough. There are roughly 400 to 450 social housing properties available to let each year in what we refer to as general needs homes and in sheltered and extra care housing. At the end of March 2024 there were 3,896 households on the Housing Register in Hillingdon. The housing register is split into different bands depending on the level of priority awarded under the policy. Shown below is the average and the longest amount of time that those in the highest bands on the housing register currently wait before an allocation is made. As this is based only on those that secure an offer, many other households wait considerably longer in lower bands and may never secure an offer of even a viewing.

4.

	Average Wait	Longest Wait
Sheltered accommodation	19 months	3 years
Studio	33 months	33 months
1 bedroom	10 months	27 months
2 bedroom flat or maisonette	16 months	4 years
2 bedroom house	18 months	32 months
3 bedroom flat or maisonette	19 months	19 months
3 bedroom house	4 years	6 years
4 bedroom house	4 years	6 years

5. The objectives of our Social Housing Allocation Policy are to:
  - Provide a fair and transparent system by which people are prioritised for social housing
  - Help those most in housing need
  - Reward residents with a long attachment to the borough
  - Make best use of Hillingdon’s social housing stock
  - Promote the development of sustainable mixed communities

### Eligibility and qualification to join the housing register

6. To be considered for an allocation of social housing you must be eligible for and qualify for an allocation. Eligibility is about where you usually live and your

immigration status. The rules for this are set by the national government and are the same for all local authorities in England. Further details are provided in section 2.

7. Local authorities can largely set their own rules for who qualifies for social housing, but there are some groups of people that must be included. Housing legislation requires every local authority allocation scheme in England to ensure 'reasonable preference' for social housing allocations is given to certain categories of applicants. This means that they must be given a reasonable level of priority, and it covers the following groups:
  - Those who are homeless or owed certain homelessness duties
  - Insanitary or overcrowded housing or unsatisfactory housing conditions
  - A need to move on medical or welfare grounds
  - People who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others
8. Local authorities must also give 'additional preference' to applications from certain serving and ex-members of the armed forces (and reserve forces) who fall within the reasonable preference categories.
9. Guidance that the council is legally obliged to take notice of, also encourages reasonable preference to be given to people who are homeless and require urgent rehousing as a result of domestic abuse and to give reasonable preference to foster carers.
10. Hillingdon Council's own qualification rules restrict which households can join the housing register. Including restrictions helps to ensure that the council's priorities for social housing allocations are clear and that other households are not given false hope of a council home. The following types of households do not qualify to join the housing register:
  - Those that do not have a clearly demonstrated housing need.
  - Those that have sufficient financial resources.
  - Households that do not currently live in the borough
  - Households who have not been continuously living in the borough for at least 10 years
11. There are some exceptions where households in these circumstances can still qualify, including if they fall within the reasonable preference groups. In certain very specific instances, the requirement for 10 years residency could be reduced to 5 years. See section 2.2.5

## **Making an application**

12. Hillingdon residents over the age of 18 can apply to join the housing register. Applicants need to register via Locata Housing Services who operate a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Hillingdon Council and various other social housing providers. Applicants are allocated a priority band and within each band, priority is determined in date order. Vacant council and housing association homes are advertised on the [West London Locata website](#) and applicants are entitled to bid for

up to 3 properties in each week. Some properties will have restrictions limiting them to certain types of households. The council can provide help with bidding for people who are not able to do this online. Hillingdon residents are entitled to bid for properties advertised in the “Hillingdon” section of Locata and the “cross borough” section as well as properties advertised by several housing associations that operate in Hillingdon.

13. Once bidding has closed a shortlist is created for each property and will place residents in a band and then priority date order for all suitable bids. Those at the top of the list are contacted to view the property. If they accept the property they are invited to sign the tenancy. If the property is not accepted it is offered to the next household on the shortlist going down the list until it is accepted.
14. The length of time you have to wait is affected by the choices you make on your housing application. Those prepared to consider a broad range of areas and property types are likely to wait for less time. Details of properties allocated are available at [www.Locata.org](http://www.Locata.org) including the priority band and registration date of the successful bidder.
15. On some occasions a property may be sensitively allocated in the interest of nearby tenants and residents that have experienced harassment, noise nuisance or un-tenant like behaviour over an excessive period. These properties will be clearly marked on the advert and additional verification checks into any potential incoming tenant will be completed.
16. On new developments or acquisitions, the Council may agree a local lettings policy for council homes or those owned by another social housing provider. This can help ensure balanced sustainable communities, mitigate management problems and address specific council aims for the development.

### Priority Banding

17. Hillingdon Council has previously operated a scheme with just four bands A to D and with some priorities set out within Band A. At the beginning of April 2024, there were 755 households in Band A. We are increasing the number of Bands to 14 so that there is a greater spread of the Bands across the register and greater clarity regarding priorities for rehousing. Within each band a priority date order will continue to apply.

Band 1	This is the highest priority band and is only awarded to households who are being decanted from their existing home and qualify for additional priority due to having 10 years' residence in Hillingdon
Band 2	As Band 1 but without 10 years' residence
Band 3	This band is for under occupying social tenants moving to a property with fewer bedrooms and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 4	As Band 3 but without 10 years' residence
Band 5	This band is for households for which a management transfer has been agreed due to exceptional circumstances and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 6	As Band 5 but without 10 years' residence

Band 7	This band is for households with an emergency and very severe housing need other than the needs covered by Bands 1 to 6 and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence. For full detail see table at Appendix 1
Band 8	As Band 7 but without 10 years' residence
Band 9	This band is for household with an urgent need to move and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence. For full detail see table at Appendix 1
Band 10	As Band 9 but without 10 years' residence
Band 11	This band is for households with an identified need to move and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 12	As Band 11 but without 10 years' residence
Band 13	Homeless applicants without 10 years' residence who do not own a property or have savings over £30,000
Band 14	Applicants within a Reasonable Preference category who own a property or have savings over £30,000

### Offers of Accommodation

18. In certain circumstances a direct allocation may be made outside of the choice based lettings scheme. A list of these circumstances is included at section 6.
19. If there is a clear reason why the specific property would not be an appropriate match for the specific applicant, the offer will be withdrawn, and the right of the applicant will not be affected. If, however, a reasonable offer is refused, this may have important consequences including discharge of a council duty, eviction proceedings and loss of priority banding. Further detail is shown in section 7.3.
20. Joining the housing register does not guarantee an offer of accommodation. Many more people are on the register than we will be able to offer accommodation. We will also carry out checks before an offer is made to make sure that the circumstances of your household are as you have been assessed and that you have not behaved in a way that would make you unsuitable as a tenant. These include checking against eligibility and qualifying criteria; rent and council tax arrears and serious anti-social behaviour. A full list of verification checks is included at section 8.
21. To achieve the right balance of allocations to different groups and to manage the cost of homelessness the Council may set out requirements in a Lettings Plan. To achieve allocation targets the Council reserves the right to enhance access by advertising or directly allocating some properties to specific groups.
22. In cases where specific action has been taken to release homes, the resulting vacancies will be allocated to particular groups. For instance, homes recovered as a result of fraud activity may be allocated to homeless households and homes released by under occupiers allocated to overcrowded households.
23. Enquiries about applications may be made at any time to guard against misrepresentation and fraud. Checks may involve cross referencing information provided by applicants with other data that the Council holds.



## **The applicants' household and number of bedrooms**

24. The appropriate size of accommodation to offer will depend on the composition of the household. Because someone is living with you currently and is a member of your family, it does not mean that the Council will treat them as a member of your household for the purpose of this Allocation Policy. The applicants' household includes partners, children under 18, children over 18 studying for their first degree (or similar), dependent relatives and live-in carers (please refer to section 11.2 for full details).
25. The Council must be notified in writing of any change in circumstances that will or might affect your priority for housing such as changes in the household members or moves to alternative properties. Every applicant will be asked to renew their application annually. This will include a request to provide any information on changes in circumstances. If not renewed within 28 days, the application may be cancelled without further notice.
26. Applicants can ask for a review of any decision made under the terms of this policy. Requests must be made in writing within 21 days of a decision.
27. The size of accommodation for which applicants will be considered is based on the 'bedroom standard' as used by the English Housing Survey to produce estimates of overcrowding. The Secretary of State takes the view that the bedroom standard is an appropriate measure of overcrowding for allocation purposes and recommends that all housing authorities adopt this as a minimum. A separate bedroom is allocated to
- each married or cohabiting couple,
  - any other person aged 21 or over,
  - each pair of adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex,
  - and each pair of children 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.
  - This standard is then compared with the actual number of bedrooms available for the sole use of the household. Examples of this in practice are provided in section 11.2.
28. In calculating the number of bedrooms available in a property the Council will treat every habitable room as a bedroom except kitchens, bathrooms and one room for use as a living room.
29. A management transfer due to extreme circumstance will only be to the same size accommodation regardless of a housing need for a larger home.
30. Where there is a shared residency arrangement, children are only considered to need one home of adequate size.

## **Reasonable Preference Groups, Local Priorities and Additional Priorities**

31. The table provides more detail regarding the Band which applies in different

circumstances. The full banding breakdown can be found in a summary table at end of the policy.

<b><u>Reasonable Preference Groups</u></b>	Band with 10 years' residency	Band without 10 years' residency
The council will maintain the protection provided by the statutory reasonable preference criteria in order to ensure that priority for social housing goes to those in the greatest need.		
<b>Homeless households</b>		
In temporary accommodation and landlord wants property back and the Council cannot find alternative temporary accommodation	7	13
Placed in nightly paid temporary accommodation	9	13
In other forms of temporary accommodation or has no accommodation	11	13
Move on to social housing approved by Homeless Move on Panel	7	7
Households living in insanitary and unsatisfactory conditions		
Closing Order issued, i.e. property is unfit for human habitation and there is no alternative measure to render the property fit as advised by Environmental Health Officer	7	8
Where emergency re-housing is essential, for example, compulsory purchase order (CPO) is issued	7	8
Household with dependent children living in unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action.	9	10
<b>Overcrowded households</b>		
Statutorily overcrowded as defined in Part X of Housing Act 1985	9	10
Severely overcrowded – where a household is lacking 2 or more bedrooms	9	10
Other overcrowded households lacking 1 bedroom.	11	12
<b>Medical grounds</b>		
Emergency Medical: the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has a life threatening condition that is seriously affected by their housing.	7	8
Medical Hardship: the applicant's current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or a member of the applicant's household	9	10
Medical Need: the applicant's current housing conditions are having a moderate or variable adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or a member of the applicant's household	11	12
<b>Welfare grounds</b>		
Homeless persons fleeing domestic abuse with an urgent need for rehousing	9	10

Care experienced young people approved by the care experienced transition panel	7	8
Fostering and adoption	7	8
<b>Local Priorities</b>		
In addition to statutory reasonable preference groups, the council will provide housing assistance to certain groups who meet local needs and priorities		
Members of the British Armed Forces discharged within the last 5 years	7	8
Specific schemes that Hillingdon Council participates in such as the national witness mobility scheme and schemes concerned with gang violence and with domestic abuse	7	7
Under-occupation	3	4
Regeneration/essential/urgent decant	1	2
Other decant	9	10
Management Transfer	5	6
Reciprocal requests where there is an imminent personal risk	7	7
Ex-tenant discharged from an institution	9	10
Relinquishing more than one property	9	10
Service tenants where there is a contractual obligation	7	8
<b>Additional Priority</b>		
Additional priority is awarded in order to determine priorities between people in the reasonable and local preference groups.		
10 years' residency	1 3	2 4
Banding enhancement varies depending on other household circumstances	5 7 9	6 8 10
<b>Sheltered Housing</b>		
Must meet age criteria and bid for sheltered housing	11	12

### Encouraging personal responsibility

32. Homeless households that have been living in temporary accommodation longer than other households with the same bedsize need and priority banding level, will be made one direct offer of accommodation. If unreasonably refused the council will discharge its homelessness duty and withdraw any temporary accommodation. Average waiting times will be published annually on the council's website.

33. Refusal of more than 3 reasonable offers will result in 6 months suspension from bidding.

### Specialist accommodation

34. Disabled adapted properties will be advertised and allocated to a person assessed as needing that particular type of accommodation ahead of other applicants in a

higher band or with an earlier priority date. In exceptional circumstances a suitable property may be directly allocated.

35. Hillingdon Council has a number of properties restricted for those aged over 55 or over 60. Applicants can bid for these properties in the normal way if the main applicant meets the age criteria. Partners under 55 or 60 are permitted to live at the property but cannot be a joint tenant until they reach the minimum age for the accommodation.
36. If a couple apply for sheltered housing, both must generally be over 60 although some housing associations will accept applicants aged 55. They can only bid for sheltered housing unless they have other identified needs.
37. Extra care housing is allocated outside of the Locata choice based lettings scheme by a panel of representatives from Housing, Health and Social Services.
38. Traveller pitches are allocated in the same way as general needs properties.

### **Mobility within and across the Council's Boundary**

39. There are schemes that enable lettings in other local authority areas, including by mutual exchange. These operate outside of this allocation policy. Details are included in section 17.2.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (ORIGINAL POLICY START)

The Housing Allocation Scheme describes how Hillingdon Council assesses applications for housing, prioritises each application and decides which applicant will be offered (allocated) Council and Housing Association housing.

The Housing Allocation Scheme covers housing in Hillingdon owned by Hillingdon Council or by Housing Associations that have entered into a nominations agreement with Hillingdon Council. This is called *social housing*.

Hillingdon Council receives many enquiries every year from people looking to rent a home in the borough. Because Hillingdon only has a limited amount of social housing available to rent, the main purpose of this scheme is to explain who will be allocated housing and why.

### 1.1 Legal Context

The Housing Allocation Scheme sits within a legal framework which is summarised below.

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocation Scheme. A summary of the Allocation Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy.

This document is available on Hillingdon Council's website [www.hillingdon.gov.uk](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk) and paper copies will be provided on request.

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires local authorities to give reasonable preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The main groups are:

- People who are homeless as defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part 7
- People who the council has a legal duty to provide housing to (under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3))
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing, or who are otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions,
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relevant to a disability); and
- People who will suffer hardship to themselves or to others if they are unable to move to a particular locality or district.

The Act also requires local authorities to state within the policy what its position is on offering applicants a choice of housing accommodation or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them. Our policy on choice is described below in Section 4.

This Housing Allocation Scheme has been formulated with regard to the law and regulatory requirements, including:

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Localism Act 2011
- Armed Forces Act 2006
- Asylum and Immigration Act 1996
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018
- Statutory Guidance
- The London Housing Strategy
- Tenancy Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006
- Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities June 2012, last updated October 2023
- Providing social housing for local people, December 2013
- Right to Move and social housing allocations, March 2015
- Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse, November 2018
- Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces, June 2020
- The regulatory standards for registered providers of social housing in England:

## **1.2 Aims of the Allocation Policy**

The Allocation Scheme is designed to meet all legal requirements and to support and contribute towards Hillingdon Council's wider objective of putting residents first. Hillingdon Council is also committed to preventing homelessness and the Allocation Scheme focuses on supporting residents to actively pursue suitable alternatives to avoid becoming homeless.

The key objectives of this Allocation Scheme are to:

- Provide a fair and transparent system by which people are prioritised for social housing.
- Help those most in housing need.
- Reward residents with a long attachment to the borough
- Make best use of Hillingdon's social housing stock.
- Promote the development of sustainable mixed communities.

This policy has considered:

- Hillingdon Council's statutory obligation to provide Reasonable Preference to certain categories of applicants set down by law
- The general and specific statutory discretions Hillingdon Council can exercise when allocating housing in support of its Council Strategy.
- Hillingdon Council's statutory discretion to grant 'additional preference' and/or to determine priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference

The social housing allocation system will be supported by a housing options approach giving applicants realistic advice and promoting other housing options.

Hillingdon Council will register eligible applicants who qualify for the reasonable preference criteria and certain groups who meet local priority. In addition, Hillingdon Council will ensure that greater priority through 'additional preference' is given to applicants who have a long attachment to the borough, and members of the British Armed Forces.

In addition, Hillingdon Council will continue to use the private rented sector both within the borough and outside it to meet its statutory housing obligations. It will use the private rented sector, as far as possible, to discharge its homelessness duty.

Where Hillingdon Council believes that potential applicants are able to access market housing, that is, private rented or low cost or market home ownership, Hillingdon Council will provide advice as necessary.

Hillingdon Council will take into account the impact of welfare policy which places a ceiling on the amount of cash benefits a household will be able to receive. In order to allocate a home, a household's current and future ability to meet the rent and associated costs of running a home will be taken into account.

Tenancies for Hillingdon Council homes are allocated according to Hillingdon Councils Tenancy strategy. Other Registered Providers have to take account of the Councils Tenancy Strategy when setting their own policies.

### **1.3 What is not included in the allocation policy**

The following are not allocations under this scheme:

- Succeeding to a tenancy under S89 Housing Act 1985
- A mutual exchange with another tenant
- Assigning a tenancy
- Transferring a tenancy in accordance with a court order under Family Law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- An introductory tenant becoming a secure tenant
- Provision of temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power

## **2. ELIGIBILITY AND QUALIFICATION FOR HOUSING**

## 2.1 Eligibility Rules

The first assessment Hillingdon Council makes when an application is received is whether the applicant is eligible for social housing. This depends on where the applicant normally lives (“habitual residence”) and their “immigration status”.

Eligibility for social housing is assessed when an applicant first applies, and it is looked at again when they are being verified for an offer of accommodation.

A person is not eligible if they are:

- subject to immigration control (with limited exceptions)
- classed as an ineligible person from abroad
- A person not habitually resident in the United Kingdom or required to leave the UK by the Secretary of State.

Detailed information on eligibility for housing is set out in Annex 1.

## 2.2 Qualification Rules

The second assessment the council makes is whether an applicant qualifies to go on the housing register. The Localism Act 2011 has given new freedoms for local authorities to determine who can join the housing register. The Council has a number of qualification rules in addition to the provision on eligibility in respect of persons from abroad set out in 2.1.

This is because the council:

- Wants to make sure a more focused housing register is operated which better reflects local circumstances and can be understood more readily by local people
- Believes that social housing should be available to people that cannot afford to buy or rent a home privately.
- Wants to make sure housing policies benefit people that live in Hillingdon.

The following sections explain the qualification rules:

### 2.2.1 Households with no demonstrable housing need will not qualify to join the housing register.

The Council will not maintain a housing register for those households that it is unable to help access a council or housing association home. This means applicants who are considered not to have a housing need will not qualify to join the housing register.

It will help in managing unrealistic expectations by excluding people with little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation. They will be signposted and given relevant information and advice, including through the targeted housing options website at [www.locata.org.uk/hillingdon](http://www.locata.org.uk/hillingdon).



### Exception

People aged over 60 who would benefit from sheltered housing. However, they will be made an offer of sheltered accommodation after other households meeting the housing need criteria.

### **2.2.2 Household with sufficient financial resources will not qualify to join the housing register.**

People with sufficient combined household income, savings and assets will not qualify to join the housing register:

- Any household who owns or has an interest in a property.
- Any household with a gross income at or above the level required for low cost home ownership. The current income level (as of June 2024) is £90,000.00. This income will be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted to reflect the size of the household and market conditions.
- Any household with savings/assets of more than £30,000 as they will be deemed to have enough financial resources to rent in the private sector. Deliberate disposal of assets in order to become eligible for an allocation will not be tolerated.

All applicants and prospective new tenants will be required to supply evidence of their financial income and resources. Where applicants are not able to show current entitlement to income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit (and universal credit), verification of income and savings will be required, at the point of being offered accommodation and may be requested upon joining the housing register.

Where applicants have resources considered sufficient to access low cost home ownership within the thresholds set above, they will normally be offered advice or assistance as they are considered to have the income to meet their own housing requirements. Advice on home ownership and private sector renting options will be offered including the opportunities to join the Council's low cost home ownership register.

### Exceptions

- Members of the British Armed Forces who receive lump sum payments as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.
- Members of the British Armed Forces or their former partners who remain in residence following the expiry of a notice to vacate Service Families Accommodation may be charged mesne profits for trespass and accordingly accrue a mesne profit debt. In taking into account rent arrears or a housing debt in determining whether to allow qualification to join the housing register, the Council may treat the accrual of a mesne profit debt by a Member of the British Armed Forces or their former partner sympathetically.
- Persons who fall within the reasonable preference groups.
- Any household to be placed in extra care housing will not be subject to the savings/assets cap of £30,000.

Households who do not currently live in the borough and fall within the reasonable preference groups may qualify to join the housing register under hardship grounds.

Hardship grounds include:

- The need to move to take up a confirmed offer of full time employment
- To give or receive care or support from/to a resident in the borough (see section 12.5.4)

#### **2.2.4 Households who have not been continuously living in the borough for at least 10 years will not qualify to join the housing register.**

Applicants will need to demonstrate a local connection with Hillingdon. Local connection within the terms of this scheme will normally mean that an applicant has lived in Hillingdon, through their own choice, for a minimum of 10 years up to and including the date of their application, or the date on which a decision is made on their application whichever is later.

For purposes of continuous residence, children spending time away from home for education due to periods of study such as at university, and people who have moved away for up to 3 years due to the requirements of their job will be disregarded. Secure, introductory or flexible tenants of Hillingdon Council and care experienced young people housed in or outside the borough will be considered as having a local connection with Hillingdon.

People will also be considered as having a local connection with Hillingdon when they are placed in the borough of Hillingdon in temporary accommodation in accordance with sections 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any local authority under section 192(3).

Exception:

- People who have served in HM Forces in the last 5 years
- People who are aged over 60 and currently live in the borough but have done so for less than ten years. This exception applies for lettings in sheltered housing only and as a lower priority than other households who meet the 10 year residency criteria.
- People who are under-occupying their current social housing and are currently resident in the borough.
- Emergency cases where homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster if it is not possible to repair the existing home, or if any work to repair is to take such a long period of time that there will be serious disruption to family life.
- Cases nominated under the Police Witness Protection Scheme or other similar schemes that the Council has agreed to be part of.
- Statutorily homeless persons and other persons who fall within the statutory reasonable preference groups (see paragraph 12 below).
- Households who need to move to the Borough to avoid hardship. Hardship grounds include:

- The need to move to take up a confirmed offer of permanent employment
- The need to move to specialist facilities where they receive care but live outside the Borough
- The need to move to receive or give care/support (meaning higher care costs or even the use of residential care for those who cannot move)
- People who are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the borough having escaped domestic abuse in another local authority area.
- Children spending time away from home due to periods of study such as at university.
- People who have moved away for up to 3 years due to the requirements of their job.
- People to whom paragraph 2.2.5 applies.
- Social tenants who need to move to take up a job or live closer to work (Right to Move Regulations).
- People who have moved away while being held on remand.

### **2.2.5 Exception for certain Irish Traveller, Romany Gypsy or non-UK national households**

Compliant with the judgment of the Court of Appeal in R(Ward & Ors) v LB Hillingdon, Equality and Human Rights Commission intervening [2019] EWCA Civ 692, this paragraph applies to an applicant whose household is either Irish Traveller / Romany Gypsy or non-UK national with refugee status in the UK and who would qualify under this section for inclusion on the housing register, or once included be entitled under section 14.3 to additional preference, but for their inability to demonstrate at least 10 years' residence in Hillingdon. If, in the opinion of the Council, such inability is the result of their racial origin or related circumstances or lifestyle, the residence requirement will in the case of each provision be reduced from 10 years to 5 years provided the applicant can demonstrate to the Council's reasonable satisfaction that they have for the whole or substantial part of that period made a community contribution such as helping borough residents, undertaking paid, unpaid or voluntary work in the borough or being a recognised carer for an elderly or disabled adult or child, or other special reason to be decided on a case by case basis by the Council.

## **3. WHO CAN MAKE AN APPLICATION**

Hillingdon residents who are over 18 years old can apply to join the housing register through the Locata website at [www.locata.org.uk](http://www.locata.org.uk).

The council intends to ensure that all successful applicants have reasonable preference. In addition, the council has used its statutory discretion to determine groups of households who will be eligible for housing allocation.

The council will also give 'additional preference' to applicants who have a local

connection (long attachment to the borough).

The Council will not normally grant a tenancy to anyone under the age of 18 years unless another adult is prepared to act as their guarantor and agrees to cover the rent or any arrears. In exceptional circumstances, the council can grant permission to occupy a property to an applicant under-18 years by way of something known as an equitable agreement.

Capacity – For an applicant to become a tenant of the Council and enter into a tenancy agreement, they must have the mental capacity to understand the contract. If an applicant does not have the capacity to understand the contract, an application should be made to the Court of Protection for the tenancy agreement to be signed on their behalf.

#### **4. STATEMENT ON CHOICE**

The council operates a Choice Based Lettings Scheme through a central letting's agency known as 'Locata'. Council, Housing Association properties and travellers' site pitches in Hillingdon available at social and affordable rent are let through the scheme.

Households who are eligible to join the housing register are required to use the choice based lettings scheme (Locata) to obtain a new home. People who apply for housing through the council are divided into two main groups:

- **Homeseekers** are households who are not currently social housing tenants but have applied for social housing. Households living in temporary accommodation are included in this group.
- **Transfers** are existing Council and Housing Association tenants who want to move to another social housing property.

##### **4.1 Locata Housing Services - the central lettings agency**

Locata Housing Services (LHS) Ltd is a central lettings agency set up by West London local authorities and housing associations including Hillingdon Council to provide the computer program to manage the letting of available vacancies.

## 5. HOW THE CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME WORKS

### 5.1 Priority Banding

Housing need is determined by assessing the current housing circumstances of applicants. A priority 'band' is then allocated according to the urgency of the housing need. There are fourteen priority bands as follows:

Band 1	This is the highest priority band and is only awarded to households who are being decanted from their existing home and qualify for additional priority due to having 10 years' residence in Hillingdon
Band 2	As Band 1 but without 10 years' residence
Band 3	This band is for under occupying social tenants moving to a property with fewer bedrooms and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 4	As Band 3 but without 10 years' residence
Band 5	This band is for households for which a management transfer has been agreed due to exceptional circumstances and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 6	As Band 5 but without 10 years' residence
Band 7	This band is for households with an emergency and very severe housing need other than the needs covered by Bands 1 to 6 and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 8	As Band 7 but without 10 years' residence
Band 9	This band is for households with an urgent need to move and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 10	As Band 9 but without 10 years' residence
Band 11	This band is for households with an identified need to move and that qualify for additional priority due to 10 years' residence
Band 12	As Band 11 but without 10 years' residence
Band 13	Homeless applicants without 10 years' residence who do not own a property or have savings over £30,000
Band 14	Applicants within a Reasonable Preference category who own or have an interest in a property or have savings over £30,000

If following an assessment, it is determined that an applicant has no housing need, they cannot join the housing register, they will be given advice and assistance on other housing options, for example, renting from a private landlord or applying to an intermediate rent or low cost home ownership scheme which will be available on the 'Targeted housing option' website at [www.locata.org.uk/hillingdon](http://www.locata.org.uk/hillingdon).

### 5.2 Priority Dates

As the level of need within each 'band' is broadly similar, it is fairest to make an offer of social housing to the applicant that has been waiting the longest in that 'band'.

This is known as a priority date order. The priority date is awarded either on the date of the original application or on the date the council is notified of a change in circumstances.

#### Moving up a 'Band'

The priority date is the date the higher priority is awarded.

#### Moving Down a 'Band'

New priority date reverts to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that 'band' OR any earlier date when they were in a higher band. The principle is that when moving down, their priority date should be the earliest date that they were in the new lower band, or in a higher band.

If the applicant has been suitably housed for any of the time, the new band date cannot be any earlier than the date they were subsequently assessed as a priority band.

### Examples of priority date system:

<b>Example 1</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
Household applies to register in January and is adequately housed.	None
In February household is awarded band 9	February
In March household is awarded band 7	March
In April household is downgraded to band 11	February

<b>Example 2</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
Household applies to register in January and is awarded band 11	January
In February household is awarded band 7	February
In April household is downgraded to band 9	February

<b>Example 3</b>	<b>Priority</b>
In April household is awarded medical priority band 11	April
In May household is awarded urgent medical priority band 9	May
In June medical priority reduced again – band 11	April
In June household is awarded emergency medical priority – band 7	June
In August new medical assessment – band 9	May

### 5.3 Property Advertising

Vacant council and housing association properties are advertised on the West London Locata website ([www.locata.org.uk](http://www.locata.org.uk)) to people assessed as having housing need. The majority of council and housing association rented homes to which the council has nomination rights are advertised and let through this scheme. Available properties are advertised as they become ready for letting.

In choosing which property to bid for, an applicant should look at the details as some properties advertised may have restrictions such as:

- Properties subject to a sensitive let (See section 5.9)
- Properties subject to a local lettings plan (see section 5.10)
- Properties adapted for disabled applicants (See section 16.1)
- Properties designated for people over a certain age e.g. older people accommodation or sheltered housing (See sections 16.2, 16.3 & 16.4).
- Properties designated to a particular group of households, for

example, homeseekers (H) or transfers (T) only.

Where restrictions are applied, details will be given on the advert.

Circumstances in which direct offers may be made by by-passing the Locata process are set out in section 6.

#### **5.4 Bidding for a property (expressing an interest)**

Hillingdon residents are entitled to bid for properties advertised in the “Hillingdon” section of Locata and the “cross borough” section. In addition, Hillingdon residents can bid for properties advertised by several housing associations that have social rented accommodation in the borough. The housing associations always give priority to applicants who are registered with them directly, so it is advantageous for Hillingdon applicants who are interested in housing association properties to register directly with each provider as well.

Each household may bid for up to 3 properties in each week.

- If a property is designated for a specific type of household, only those who match the household type will be eligible to bid for that property
- Any bids must be placed before the deadline closes
- The applicant’s household must match the advert specification, for example, the household must not have more or less household members than the number specified on the property label
- The applicant must satisfy the age requirement on the property label where applicable
- The applicant must satisfy the mobility level specified on the property label.

#### **Help with bidding:**

The Council can help vulnerable applicants, who have no support mechanisms to bid via automatic bidding. For example, older, people with a sensory disability and people with no or low literacy or English comprehension. Such applicants can self-refer or referrals can be made on their behalf by GPs, an MP, and Councillor etc.

If households are not engaging in the process or are considered to be unreasonably refusing properties or not attending viewings, this service can be withdrawn.

Other support agencies or social workers can also bid on behalf of an applicant that they are supporting. Training can be provided to such agencies if required.

There are two types of service available:

- Automatic Bidding - The applicant specifies the area and type of property they are interested in and staff can automatically place bids on up to 3 properties matching their description every week.
- Assisted Bidding - The applicant can contact our customer contact centre each week when properties are advertised and get help with making a choice



- on the property they are interested in and/or talk through the process with them by supporting them to place their bids.

## **5.5 Short-listing**

Once bidding has closed, all households that placed a bid and are eligible for that property are placed into priority band and date order. This is called the shortlist.

If a property has been advertised with preference for a specific group of applicants, bids from these households will be prioritised above all other bands. Bids placed from households within the specific priority group will still be short listed according to their band and priority date as above. Applicants will not be short listed or offered a property if they already have a live offer on another property.

The Council will only let properties in high risk buildings to applicants who can demonstrate that they are able to self-evacuate from the building, unaided and within a reasonable time frame, on being ordered to do so by the fire and rescue services.

## **5.6 Offers of accommodation:**

The applicants at the top of the shortlist for a property are contacted by the housing provider and offered an appointment to view the property. At the viewing the applicants have a chance to look around the property and ask any questions of the landlord.

If the household offered the property accepts it, they are formally invited to sign for the tenancy. If the household offered the property refuses the property, it is offered to the next household until such time as the property is accepted. If no one on the shortlist within the priority bands accepts the property, the property is either re-advertised or directly allocated to another household.

If there are more than one successful bidders for a property, the offer is made to the applicant with the longest waiting time (known as priority date).

## **5.7 The effect of choices on waiting times:**

The length of time you have to wait before you get an offer is affected by the choices you make on your housing application. If you choose an area or a type and size of property that rarely becomes available to offer, you will face a much longer wait than an applicant who is prepared to consider a broad range of areas and types of property.

We will assist you in making an informed choice by providing information on property availability and average waiting times. This information is published on the council's website.

## **5.8 Feedback on let properties**

Details of every property let in Hillingdon are available at [www.locata.org](http://www.locata.org). The website shows the number of households that bid for each property, as well as the priority band and registration date of the successful bidder.

There is also feedback on all properties let through Locata in the Freesheet archive of the Locata Home website. The feedback enables applicants to gauge the scarcity and popularity of different areas and property types, to be able to judge how long they might have to wait to be re-housed, and therefore exercise informed choice.

### **5.9 Ringfenced lettings**

In cases where specific action has been taken to release homes, the resulting vacancies will be made available to particular client groups. For example:

- Homes recovered due to fraud activity, will be offered to accepted homeless households in temporary accommodation.
- Homes released by under-occupying households will be offered to overcrowded households in a chain of lettings.

### **5.10 Sensitive lettings**

On occasions it is in the interest of residents and tenants that an individual property is let sensitively in light of the experience of neighbouring tenants. Where a request for a sensitive let is sought, this will be considered.

Sensitive lets will only be agreed where it can be demonstrated that:

- The neighbouring tenants have experienced either harassment, noise nuisance or un-tenant like behaviour over a period of time or of an excessive nature and
- Incidents have been recorded and
- Action has been taken by the landlord or
- There is a public protection issue that must be managed.

### **5.11 Local lettings policies**

On new developments or acquisitions, the Council may agree a local lettings policy for the new or newly acquired council homes or with another Provider (mainly Registered Providers) that is building or acquiring the social housing. A local lettings policy can ensure that there is a balanced mix of social tenants and help to mitigate any potential management problems and achieve specific council aims for the development. To ensure the balance is achieved, the Council may bypass applicants who have placed bids for the property. A number of factors may be considered including:

- Mix of working and non-working households
- Child density
- Age range of the prospective tenants
- Ethnicity and community cohesion
- Vulnerability and support services
- Community facilities provided.
- Perpetration of anti-social behaviour
- Supporting and promoting neighbourliness and existing community relationships

The Council will also have local lettings policies in place in respect of the regeneration

of Avondale Estate and Hayes Town Centre Estate which will for the avoidance of doubt extend to the rehousing of residents affected by regeneration to properties outside of the areas being regenerated. Potential future regeneration schemes would also likely have local lettings arrangements.

## **6. ALLOCATION OUTSIDE CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

In certain specified cases, an allocation may be made outside of the choice based lettings scheme. These are:

- Extra care housing.
- Where a household urgently requires an adapted property.
- Where vulnerable applicants are unable to participate effectively in the bidding system, or where they have specific accommodation needs.
- Where there is a recommendation from police, social services or other professional agencies for a type of accommodation to meet an individual need.
- Where no successful bids are received for an advertised property.
- Where an applicant has been unfairly bypassed for a property.
- Where a household have succeeded to a tenancy but are under-occupying or do not need adaptations or specialised accommodation.
- Where homeless households have failed to bid successfully for available properties and the lease on their temporary accommodation has ended, they will be made one direct offer of suitable accommodation.
- Where homeless households have been in temporary accommodation for longer than the average period, they will be made one direct offer of suitable accommodation.
- Where service tenants entitled to re-housing have not bid successfully for a suitable home by the time they are required to leave their accommodation, they will be made one direct offer of suitable accommodation.
- Where a management transfer has been agreed, the tenant will be made one direct offer of suitable accommodation. The size of the accommodation will be the same as their previous tenancy, or a size that meets their needs under the terms of this policy, whichever is smaller.
- Where a reciprocal arrangement has been agreed, the incoming household will be made one direct offer of suitable accommodation.
- Where an applicant needs to move immediately, for example, tenants being decanted to enable a major repair to the property to be carried out or tenants being decanted where their area is being regenerated by the Council. One direct offer of suitable accommodation may be made
- Ex-tenant discharge from an institution. One direct offer of suitable accommodation will be made. The size of the accommodation will be the same as their previous tenancy
- Where lettings to certain groups is required in order to achieve a balance of lettings. Periodically this may be set out in a lettings plan.
- Where special allocation arrangements through local lettings plans on new developments are in place in order to achieve a balanced community.

## **7. REFUSALS FOLLOWING DIRECT OFFERS**

### **7.1 Recording the refusal**

The applicant must give their reasons for refusal in writing or sign a written statement of their reasons. The property will not usually be held vacant while the reasons for the refusal are considered – it will normally be offered and let to another applicant unless the offer is to a homeless household. In such cases, the offer may be held for a short period (usually no longer than 48 hours) while the reason for the refusal is considered. The applicant will be advised of the possible consequences and given a chance to reconsider their decision to refuse.

### **7.2 Unsuitable offers**

If there is a clear mismatch of the applicant and property details, the offer will be withdrawn, and the rights of the applicant will not be affected.

### **7.3 Consequences for refusing reasonable offer**

#### **(a) Homeless household**

If the offer is considered to be suitable, the applicant will be informed of the council's intention to discharge its homelessness duty and if they are occupying temporary accommodation provided by the council, to commence eviction proceedings. They will be advised of their right to seek a review of this decision and, if still not satisfied to pursue their disagreements through the courts.

#### **(b) Service tenants**

Following refusal of a reasonable offer, ex-service tenants will be advised that their priority for re-housing has been withdrawn and that the council considers it has fulfilled its contractual obligation to offer suitable re-housing. The applicant will be advised to make their own housing arrangements and eviction proceedings from the tied accommodation will be started.

#### **(c) Management transfer**

Following refusal of a reasonable offer, tenants will be advised that their high priority has been removed. Their housing need will be reviewed and if assistance is still required, they will be placed in the appropriate priority 'band' on the waiting list, for example, as a homeless applicant. The relevant housing manager will be informed.

#### **(d) Reciprocal arrangements**

Following refusal of a reasonable offer, applicants will be advised that their priority for re-housing has been withdrawn and that the council considers it has fulfilled its reciprocal agreement to offer suitable re-housing. The applicant will be advised to seek help from their own provider/landlord.

#### **(e) Temporary/permanent decant**

Following refusal of a reasonable offer, the relevant housing manager will be advised so that they can commence possession proceedings.

**(f) Ex-tenant discharge from an institution**

Following refusal of a reasonable offer, tenants will be advised that their priority has been removed. If they require assistance, they will be advised to reapply and their housing need will be assessed and if deemed to be in housing need, they will be placed in the appropriate priority 'band' on the waiting list for example, as a homeless applicant. The relevant housing manager will be informed.

**g) Other circumstances**

Following refusal of a reasonable offer, applicants will be advised that no further direct offers will be made and they can continue to access housing by bidding through choice based lettings.

## **8. PRE-OFFER VERIFICATION CHECKS**

Qualifying or being eligible to join the housing register does not guarantee an offer of accommodation. Verification checks will be carried out prior to an applicant receiving an offer of accommodation. Households will not be verified if they are found to fall within one of the criteria set out below. This means that they will not be made an offer of accommodation even if their bid for a property has been successful.

The circumstances are:

- a) Any applicant who is no longer eligible or qualifies for housing.
- b) Council tenants who have a current application to buy their dwelling or for a home purchase grant such as Homebuy.
- c) Any applicant who owes more than 4 weeks rent or other housing debts including temporary accommodation arrears, former tenant arrears, and council tax arrears. They will not be verified unless they have an agreement to reduce the arrears in place and have been making regular payments to reduce the outstanding amount for a minimum of six months at the time of offer.
- d) Any applicant or member of their household who has perpetrated serious anti-social behaviour where either a possession order is being sought or has been obtained, or where the antisocial behaviour is of a level which would warrant eviction. They will not be verified unless they demonstrate a change for a minimum of 12 months at the time of offer.
- e) Any applicant or member of their household who has given false or misleading information on their housing application or has withheld information that has been reasonably requested.
- f) Any applicant or tenant who has not maintained their property in accordance with the terms of their tenancy will be required to make good any damage.
- g) Any applicant or member of their household who has been convicted of housing or welfare benefits related fraud where that conviction is unspent under the Rehabilitation Offenders Act 1974. They will not be verified unless this conviction is spent.
- h) Any applicant or member of their household who has assaulted a member of staff and an injunction is being sought or has been obtained.

Information from the following sources will be checked, but are not limited

to:

- Information held by the Council e.g. housing benefit, electoral roll, council tax records.
- Information held by the Council's community safety team for any un-tenant like behaviour.
- Information held by other local authorities, landlords or registered providers.
- Land registry and credit reference checks.
- Information from neighbours, employers, Social Services and other agencies.

The council will also carry out unannounced visits to check the details provided about all household members and occupation of their current accommodation. Where necessary, the household will be asked to provide evidence to support their application. If the applicant is not available, a card requesting the applicant to make contact with the council within 24 hours will be left so that the visit can be rearranged. If the applicant fails to respond and a follow up visit is not carried out within 48 hours, the applicant will not be verified for the property they have successfully bid for and they will be removed from the shortlist for that property.

## **9. LETTINGS PLAN**

In order to strike the right balance of allocations to the different groups and manage the cost of homelessness, the Council, may set out requirements in a Lettings Plan. Where this is the case, lettings made will be monitored against this. If monitoring shows that the allocation target set out in the plan is not being achieved, the council reserves the right to enhance access by advertising or directly allocating some properties to specific groups.

It will be ensured that a reasonable proportion of allocations are provided to the people with high level of assessed housing need, and it will be ensured that one group does not dominate the scheme.

In cases where specific action has been taken to release homes, the resulting vacancies will only be ring-fenced to particular groups. For example, homes recovered as a result of fraud activity may be allocated to homeless households; homes released by under occupiers allocated to overcrowded households in a chain of lettings.

## **10. APPLYING FOR HOUSING**

### **10.1 Tackling Fraud:**

The Council recognises its duty to protect the public resources it administers. Detailed enquiries about applications will therefore be made in order to guard against misrepresentation and fraud. Such enquiries will be made in all cases where applicants appear to have sufficient priority for an offer of accommodation, and in other cases as resources allow. The enquiries will be made at any time, and it can be at the time of application or subsequently, including after any grant of tenancy. Applications will be suspended if there is evidence of misrepresentation or fraud until enquiries are completed. These checks may involve cross referencing information provided by applicants when they apply to the housing register with other data the Council holds, including information on housing and council tax benefit and the electoral roll.

### **10.2 Who can be included on the application?**

Pursuant to this Allocation Policy the Council determines the priority between applicants for the offer of tenancies of social housing from within the Council's own housing stock and of those premises owned by Housing Associations in respect of which the Council has the right to nominate tenants.

The Council must offer appropriately sized accommodation to applicants and their households. The size of accommodation that is offered to applicants depending on the composition of their eligible household is set out in Section 11 below.

This paragraph sets out who the Council will take into account in determining the size of any applicant's household. There are two basic criteria which the Council has regard to in determining whether or not someone is to be counted as a member of your household:

- (1) First to be a member of your household a person must be a member of your family (although the definition of family is a loose one); and
- (2) Second, there must be a relationship of dependency between you and the person; this could mean that you are dependent on that person, or that they are dependent on you, or that they are dependent on another eligible member of your household. For this purpose, dependency includes legal, financial and physical dependency.

For the avoidance of any doubt, just because someone is living with you currently and is a member of your family, that does not mean that the Council will treat them as a member of your household for the purposes of this Allocation Policy.

People in the following categories will be regarded by the Council as part of an applicant's household:

- An applicant's spouse or civil partner or someone with whom the applicant lives as if they are a spouse or civil partner.
- An applicant's children (or the children of another eligible member of the

applicant's household) aged less than 18 where the applicant (or the eligible member of the applicant's household who is the child's parent) is the sole legal guardian and there is no other available legal guardian who could reasonably accommodate the children.

- An applicant's children who are over 18 but are in tertiary education doing their first degree (or similar) – but not any subsequent courses and who either live with the applicant all year because the education institution they are at is local or return to live with the applicant during holidays.
- Dependent relatives of the applicant who are unable to live independently and there are no other suitable options available to accommodate them.
- Live-in carers where an applicant is confirmed to have an essential need for live-in care, for example where they need overnight support (if a live-in carer is not your relative the Council will require evidence that they have been a carer for at least 2 months).

### **10.3 Who should not be included on the application?**

The Council will not include in your household for the purposes of determining the size of accommodation that you should be offered anyone in any of the following categories even if they are currently living with you:

- Children aged 18 or over (unless they come within one of the categories of dependent adult identified in paragraph 10.2 above, i.e., a student or a carer or cared for adult)
- Other adult relatives
- Friends or visitors
- Lodgers
- Sub-tenants
- Anyone else sharing your current accommodation
- Anyone who falls within legislation prohibiting them from having recourse to public funds.

### **10.4 Change of circumstances:**

The size of accommodation that you can bid for on through Locata is determined by the size of your household. It is possible that the size of your household might change before you make a successful bid for accommodation on the Locata website. For example, you may have another child, in which case your household size will increase, or a child who is under 18 at the time of your application may have their 18th birthday, in which case (unless that child is within one of categories of dependant adult) your household will decrease. These are not the only circumstances in which your household size can change but are examples of circumstances in which your household size will change.

Each time you log on to Locata to place a bid you will be asked whether anything about your application has changed and to update your contact details. It is important that the Council and other housing providers have the most up to date information.

Once placed in a priority band, you must notify the Council in writing of any change in your circumstances that will or might affect your priority for housing, for example:



- A change of address for themselves or any other person on the application.
- Any additions to the household for the purposes of the application.
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who is no longer a member of the applicant's household.
- Any change in income or savings
- Applicants may be temporarily suspended from bidding while the council assesses the information provided by the applicant and completes further enquiries that may be necessary.

If you make a bid on the Locata website and are shortlisted for a property, the housing provider will check that your household size is appropriate for the premises; the appropriate size of accommodation for different sized households is set out in Section 11 below.

If you are offered and accept a tenancy of any premises through the Locata website and it is subsequently discovered that you made any misrepresentation about the size of your household, that may give rise to a Ground for Possession. This is the case whether you are granted a Council Tenancy or a Housing Association Tenancy.

## **10.5 What happens if I do not notify you of a change?**

If the Council find your circumstances have changed as a result of the annual review of your application, or as part of the pre-offer verification checks and you have not notified the change, your application will be suspended from bidding while we investigate how the changes affect your eligibility and housing priority.

## **10.6 Annual Review:**

In order to maintain the housing register as accurately as possible, every applicant will be sent a notification to renew their application annually on the anniversary of their registration. Included in this will be a request to provide information on any changes in circumstances.

After a renewal request has been issued, no reminders will be sent. If an application is not renewed within 28 days of the issue of the renewal letter, the application may be cancelled without further notice.

## **10.7 Cancelling an application**

We will cancel your housing applications for the following reasons:

- If you ask us to cancel the application.
- If your circumstances change and you are no longer eligible under the scheme.
- If your circumstances change and you no longer qualify under the scheme.
- If you fail to respond to an application review within the specified time limit.
- If you have refused the offers of social housing, you are entitled to under this scheme. These are set out in section 7 above.
- If you have accepted an offer of social housing under this scheme.
- If you have been found to have made a false statement on your housing application.

You will be notified in writing if the council intends to remove you from the

Housing Register and give reasons for the removal.

### **10.8 Reinstating a cancelled application:**

Sometimes applications are cancelled where the household has a valid reason for not providing the information the Council has asked for or not responding to a request. In cases where a household's application has been cancelled, as long as the applicant makes contact within 28 days from the date of the cancellation, their application will be reinstated to the housing register. Supporting evidence will be required.

If an application is cancelled but the household does not make contact within 28 days from the date of cancellation, the application will not be reinstated. If the household still wants to apply for social rented housing, they will have to make a new application which will be assessed based on the criteria in the scheme and a new banding and priority date will be given.

### **10.9 Appealing against a decision**

Applicants have the right to ask for a review of any decision made under the terms of this policy with which they do not agree.

Requests for a review must normally be made:

- In writing (a request over the phone or made verbally will need to be confirmed in writing)
- Within 21 days of the date of the decision being appealed.

## **11. ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED AND DETERMINING PRIORITY**

### **11.1 Initial assessment**

The Council will make an assessment based on the information provided in the application or received in connection with the application. You will be notified in writing about the outcome of the assessment which will include the priority band awarded and the date.

Your application will remain in this band until it is verified at the time of offer of accommodation. It is therefore in your interest to ensure that you provide the council with accurate and up to date information so that an offer of accommodation is not withdrawn at a later stage (offer stage).

### **11.2 Bedroom standard - size of accommodation**

The size of accommodation for which each applicant will be considered will depend on the composition of the applicant's household. The requirements for each size of household are set out below:

<b>SIZE OF FAMILY</b>	<b>SIZE OF PROPERTY</b>
Single person including single pregnant person	Bedsit/1 bedroom
A couple without children, including if pregnant_	1 bedroom
Two adults of the same sex and generation, for example flat sharers or two brothers	2 bedrooms
A couple and an adult son or daughter under 20 and another child of the same sex_	2 bedrooms
A couple with two children of the same sex	2 bedrooms
Two adults of opposite sex who do not live as a couple, for example brother and sister	2 bedrooms
A couple with two children of opposite sex and both under ten years old	2 bedrooms
A couple with two children of opposite sex, one of whom is over ten years old	3 bedrooms
A couple with three children	3 bedrooms
A couple with four children (all of the same sex or two of each sex)	3 bedrooms
A couple with two children of the opposite sex under 10 years and one dependent relative (for example, widowed mother	3 bedrooms
A couple with four children (three of one sex and one of the opposite sex, where the child of the opposite sex is over ten)	4 bedrooms
A couple with four children (three of one sex and one of the opposite sex, where the child of the opposite sex and one of the other children are under ten)	3 bedrooms
A couple with more than four children	4 bedrooms
A couple with three children and one dependent relative	4 bedrooms
Foster children over three years of age will be entitled to a separate bedroom in line with the fostering service national minimum standards	Any

Larger accommodation than specified above may be considered in exceptional circumstances on the recommendation of a specialist advisor, for example the Council's Medical Adviser or Occupational Therapy Service.

Overcrowded households can bid for and be let a property with one bedroom fewer than their assessed need, so long as this does not result in them being statutorily overcrowded. Any household taking advantage of this option is able to reapply for a transfer to a property with the correct number of bedrooms for their assessed need. This would be treated as a new application in terms of both banding priority and priority date.

In calculating the number of bedrooms available within properties, the Council will treat every habitable room as a bedroom except kitchens, bathrooms and one room for use as a living room. The Council will normally consider additional downstairs

rooms in houses for use as bedroom in accordance with Housing Benefit Regulations.

In the case of existing secure council tenants agreed for a management transfer due to extreme circumstances such as violent assault, harassment etc, who are able to move to alternative accommodation as the only viable resolution to their current difficulties, for fairness to other applicants on the housing register, these moves will only be to the same size of accommodation as they currently occupy regardless of their housing need at that time.

It is important that you notify the Council of any changes in the size or make-up of your household because the size and make-up of your household determines the size of the premises that you are entitled to bid for on the Locata website. If you fail to update the details and are offered a tenancy of premises that are not appropriate for the size and make-up of your household the Council may withdraw the offer of the tenancy if your failure is discovered before you have signed the tenancy and if the offer is withdrawn, you may be suspended from the Locata website for a period of time. If you fail to update the details and are offered a tenancy of premises that are not appropriate for the size and make-up of your household, and you take up the offer of the tenancy the Council or if the landlord is a housing association that Housing Association may rely on that failure as a ground for possession of the premises.

### **Shared residency of children**

Where children are subject to a shared residency arrangement, the children are only considered to need one home of adequate size.

### **Split families**

Where the family unit is not currently residing together, the assessment will be based on the part of the household that occupies accommodation that provides them with the most suitable housing providing there is a reasonable expectation that they should reside together.

Additional priority based on residency criteria will be based on that part of the household with the longest residency in the borough.

## **12. REASONABLE PREFERENCE GROUPS**

The council will maintain the protection provided by the statutory reasonable preference criteria in order to ensure that priority for social housing goes to those in the greatest need. The majority of applicants are placed on the housing register due to having a reasonable preference for housing.

### **12.1 Homeless households**

This section applies to people who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) or, in certain circumstances, are threatened with homelessness or otherwise owed a relevant Part 7 duty.

A person is threatened with homelessness for these purposes if they have applied for Part 7 assistance and are likely to become homeless within 56 days or, if occupying accommodation under an assured shorthold tenancy, have been served with a valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 expiring within 56 days.

A relevant Part 7 duty means for these purposes an accommodation duty owed to a Part 7 applicant who is eligible for assistance and either (i.) has a priority need and has become homeless intentionally, (ii.) has a priority need and has not become homeless intentionally, or (iii.) does not have a priority need, has not become homeless intentionally and Hillingdon Council has elected to secure that accommodation becomes available for their occupation.

Hillingdon Council's first priority, pursuant to its duties and powers under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, is to prevent people from becoming homeless by helping them to remain in their current accommodation or facilitate a move to alternative private rented accommodation. Where Hillingdon Council believes that potential applicants are able to access market housing i.e. private rented or low cost home ownership, the Council will provide advice and assistance as necessary.

The Localism Act 2011 has given local authorities the power to discharge duty to homeless households into the private sector and outside of local boundaries where it is not reasonably practicable to accommodate them within the borough. Therefore, the council will use suitable and affordable private rented sector accommodation to discharge its homelessness duty where it considers this to be appropriate. This will apply to homeless applicants who applied after 9 November 2012.

Where Hillingdon Council has been unable to prevent homelessness, applicants who satisfy the 10 year Qualification Rule in paragraph 2.2.4 of the Policy secured by Hillingdon Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 will be placed in one of the following bands: -

- ❖ Band 7 – In temporary accommodation secured by Hillingdon Council but the landlord wants the property back **AND** the council cannot find alternative suitable temporary accommodation. Where an applicant fails to successfully bid within 6 months, a direct offer of suitable accommodation will be made. If the property is refused the council will discharge its duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act and withdraw any temporary accommodation provided.
- Band 9 – In Bed & Breakfast (for the purpose of this policy Bed & Breakfast means nightly paid accommodation), council hostel accommodation or women's refuge.
- ❖ Band 11– In other forms of temporary accommodation or has no accommodation.

Where, in relation to persons to whom this section applies, Hillingdon Council has been unable to prevent homelessness, applicants who do not satisfy the 10 year Qualification Rule in paragraph 2.2.4 of this Policy will be placed in Band 13. However, a Single Homeless Move on Panel may award applicants in supported accommodation provided for single homeless people a Band 7 to facilitate move-on through the homelessness pathway and ensure that the needs of those who are

particularly vulnerable are met. The panel will consider each referral individually to determine whether to award priority for social housing.

Applicants threatened with homelessness for the purposes of this section, whether or not they satisfy the 10 year Qualification Rule in paragraph 2.2.4 of this Policy, will also be placed in Band 7.

## **12.2 Households living in insanitary and unsatisfactory housing conditions**

A household is living in insanitary housing if their current accommodation does not have:

- A bathroom or a kitchen.
- An inside toilet.
- Hot or cold running water.

A household is living in unsatisfactory housing if their current accommodation:

- Does not have electricity or gas.
- Does not have adequate heating.
- Is in disrepair.
- Is unfit for human habitation.
- Has a category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system that is an immediate threat to health and cannot be rectified within six months – this will be verified by a Private Sector Housing Environmental Health Officer.

There are some properties in Hillingdon with repair problems or are in need of improvement and modernisation. The council will not be able to offer alternative accommodation to everyone in this situation as most landlords have a duty to carry out repairs to their tenants' homes. Sometimes tenants are worried that asking for work to be done will make the relationship with their landlord difficult and that they may be asked to leave. The council will give advice about this and can offer help in working with the landlord.

The Council's aim is to ensure that repairs are carried out and that residents can remain in their property. Wherever possible, any repairs problems identified in applications will be dealt with by working with the person with the responsibility to make sure that repairs are carried out. In limited circumstances, a household may be rehoused due to disrepair problems.

The condition of the current accommodation will be checked by a member of the Private Sector Housing Environmental Health team and must have at least one category 1 hazard that cannot be resolved by the landlord within 6 months. Examples of where this would apply include where the current accommodation:

- Has severe damp
- Has a major structural defect including subsidence, flooding, collapsed roof
- Has been issued with a notice of statutory nuisance by an Environmental Health Officer

Has been declared unfit for human habitation and is due to be demolished under the Housing Act 2004.

Based on the circumstances, applicants will be placed in one of the following bands: -

- Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – Closing Order issued, i.e. property is unfit for human habitation and there is no alternative measure to render the property fit as advised by Environmental Health Officer **OR**
- Where emergency re-housing is essential, for example, compulsory purchase order (CPO) is issued.
- Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without– Household with dependent children living in unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action.
- Band 11 with 10 years' residency or 12 without – Other unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions that cannot be addressed by Private Sector Housing Environmental Health action.

### **12.3 Overcrowded households**

A household is living in overcrowded housing if their current accommodation is too small for the size of their family.

The number of bedrooms a household needs will be based on the bedroom standard outlined in section 11.2.

The priority awarded to a household will depend on each household's circumstances and the level of overcrowding they are experiencing.

- ❖ Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without – Statutorily overcrowded as defined in Part X of Housing Act 1985 **OR** Severe overcrowding – where a household is lacking 2 or more bedrooms.
- ❖ Band 11 with 10 years' residency or 12 without - Other overcrowded households lacking 1 bedroom.

### **12.4 Medical grounds**

If you apply for housing because your current accommodation affects a medical condition or disability, your application will be referred to the council's medical adviser or occupational therapy team depending on what you have put in your application for assessment. A medical condition or disability includes, for the avoidance of doubt, a mental ill health condition.

Medical assessment does not examine how severe an applicant's medical condition or disability is. It looks at how your current accommodation affects the health or disability of a household member. The assessment is based on whether your health or a member of your household's health would improve by moving to alternative accommodation.

Therefore, medical priority is awarded according to the extent to which the health or welfare of one or more members of the applicant's household is affected by their current housing conditions and the expected benefits of providing suitable alternative settled housing.



Applicants will complete a Medical Assessment Form to provide details of the medical condition and other supporting information. If additional information is required before a decision can be made, this will be obtained at a cost to the council.

Based on the Medical Adviser's recommendations, applicants will be placed in one of the following bands: -

- ❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – Emergency Medical: the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has a life threatening condition that is seriously affected by their housing.
- ❖ Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without – Medical Hardship: the applicant's current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or a member of the applicant's household.
- ❖ Band 11 with 10 years' residency or 12 without – Medical Need: the applicant's current housing conditions are having a moderate or variable adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or a member of the applicant's household.

## **12.5 Welfare grounds**

### **12.5.1 Persons fleeing domestic abuse**

The Council recognises the particular need for support and assistance for those escaping from domestic abuse required in order that they can re-build their lives away from abuse and harm. Priority will therefore be given to those who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and require urgent housing as a result of domestic abuse.

Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without

### **12.5.2 Care Experienced Young People**

If a young person who has been looked after by Hillingdon council is ready to move into their own accommodation, they may be considered for housing on welfare grounds. This includes those placed out of the borough. To qualify, the young person must have been a relevant child under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, which means they would have been looked after by the council for a certain period of time and have had a pathway plan drawn up.

In most cases young people leaving care will be ready to move into independent living with the support of Hillingdon's Social Care service. If the young person is ready to move-on and has developed the required life skills, such as managing a budget, cooking and cleaning, the council will support them to find suitable private rented accommodation.

For some young people whose support needs are high and accommodation in the private rented sector would have a detrimental effect on their transition to independent living, their housing application will be considered by a Panel (Care Experienced Young People's Panel) who will determine whether to award priority for social housing.

The Panel consists of senior officers from Housing and Social Care Services. The panel assesses each referral individually to ensure the needs of any particularly vulnerable or at-risk young person is addressed.

To be considered for social housing, the care experienced young person must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Young people subject to Care Orders under section S31 of the Children Act 1989 where the council has parental responsibility (Looked after children).
- Young people with moderate learning difficulties or disability or those who are subject to a statement of educational needs or a psychological assessment.
- Young people with significant mental health issues – who have had involvement with CAMHS or CMHT for a period of three months or longer and are continuing to receive treatment.
- Young people with complex needs placed in high cost placements where they no longer require that degree of support and whose application has been approved by the 'Access to Resources Panel' or the 'Asylum High Cost Placement Panel'.
- Young people with significant offending behaviour, which limits access to other types of suitable accommodation.
- Care experienced young people who are also parents and also meet one other criterion listed (e.g. they or their baby are especially vulnerable).
- Those with other mitigating circumstances.
  - ❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without
  - ❖ Care experienced young person approved by Panel

### **12.5.3 Fostering and adoption**

The council recognises the contribution that foster carers and adopting parents make towards ensuring that children in Hillingdon are cared for. Priority will be given to those applicants approved or being assessed for approval to adopt or foster and where recommendation is made by Social Services to provide accommodation because the current accommodation is not large enough or would cause overcrowding.

Tenancies offered will be in accordance with the tenure terms set out in the council's tenancy policy.

- ❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – Enabling fostering and adoption

Foster children over three years of age will be entitled to a separate bedroom in line with the fostering service national minimum standards. This is done to prevent the potential for bullying or abusive behaviours from or to other children. This also allows for some stability, privacy and space for the fostered child.

### **12.5.4 Move-on from Supported housing**

In collaboration with Social Services and other agencies, clients placed in supported housing who are ready for independent living will be considered for move-on accommodation. This includes people in institutional care, for example, group homes and other forms of supported housing to help them achieve independence.

Applicants referred for move-on to independent accommodation will be considered for the full range of provision available, including private sector accommodation to meet their housing need. Only cases with a demonstrable need for long term settled accommodation will be prioritised for social housing. The referral will explain the current living arrangements and the impact they are having on the individual's transition to independence.

- ❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – Ready for independent living (after a minimum of 6 months)

## **12.6 Hardship grounds**

There are a number of households applying to the housing register who experience serious hardship because of a combination of different factors which make the need for re-housing more urgent than when considered separately.

The decision as to the appropriate priority 'band' will depend on both the combination and degree of the various factors with a view to ensuring that the greatest priority is given to those in the greatest need.

In circumstances where this applies, a panel of officers (Hardship Panel) will undertake a review of the case to determine whether priority for re-housing is necessary.

The following priority banding will be considered

- ❖ Band 8 with 10 years' residency or 9 without – The applicant or a member of their household has multiple needs or has an urgent need to move. Examples include:
  - To give or receive care or support from/to a resident in the borough, avoiding use of residential care. It is constant care to/from a close relative as evidenced by a professional's report and supported by the Council's Medical Adviser;
  - Child protection reasons;
  - The need to move to take up a confirmed offer of permanent employment;
  - Other urgent welfare reasons.
  
- ❖ Band 10 with 10 years' residency or 11 without – Out of borough applicants with a need to move to Hillingdon for medical or support reasons.

Priority will not be given to those who need to move to a particular locality within the borough if the transport network is considered to be good.

## **13 LOCAL PRIORITIES**

In addition to statutory reasonable preference groups, the council will provide housing assistance to certain groups who meet local needs and priorities.

### **13.1 Members of the British Armed Forces**

This policy applies to people who have served in the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and British Army and have not been dishonourably discharge.

- Members of the Armed Forces and former service personnel where the application for housing is made within 5 years of discharge.
- Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical conditions or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to their service.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their service spouse or partner and the death was wholly or partially attributable to their service.

❖ Band 8 – Members of the British Armed Forces.

Members of the British Armed forces who have continuously resided in the borough for 10 years prior to signing up for the service and have not been dishonourably discharged.  
Band 7.

### **13.2 Specific schemes**

Hillingdon participates in various schemes that assist welfare agencies and others where there is imminent personal risk to the applicant or their family if they remain in the property or area.

The schemes include:

- National Witness mobility scheme (to enable those testifying in major criminal trials to be in a safe area).
- Pan-London Safe and Secure scheme (to tackle gang violence).
- West London Domestic Violence protocol (enables victims of violence to move to a safe area).

Applicants from outside the borough will be accepted under these schemes on the understanding that Hillingdon residents in similar circumstances will be eligible to benefit from the schemes.

❖ Band 7– Schemes set out above or similar as agreed by the Council.

### **13.3 Under-occupation**

A household is considered as under-occupying when the accommodation has more rooms available than the household needs.

❖ Band 3 with 10 years' residency or 4 without – Giving up 1 or more bedrooms.

### **13.4 Releasing adapted property**

The council has a small number of properties that are specifically adapted for disabled or older people. These properties are in short supply, therefore council and Housing Association tenants, who currently live in adapted accommodation but no longer need it, are given priority to move to suitable non-adapted accommodation.

❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – release adapted property.

### **13.5 Decants**

#### a) Regeneration/essential/urgent decant

Council tenants who urgently need to move because their home is required to be demolished or for essential works to be undertaken within 3 months. In these circumstances, they will be prioritised for a move to a suitable alternative home.

Council or Registered Social Landlord tenants who need to move because their home has become temporarily uninhabitable, for example, because of a fire, flood or other factors should approach their own landlord if they require temporary accommodation while repairs are carried out to their home.

#### b) Other decant

If major works of a less urgent nature are to be carried out, council tenants may be offered alternative accommodation and will have the option of returning to their original home once the works have been completed.

- ❖ Band 1 with 10 years' residency or 2 without – Decant required to progress regeneration or essential/urgent works.
- ❖ Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without – Other decant.

### **13.6 Management transfer**

A management transfer will be considered for an existing social tenant where there is demonstrable evidence to support imminent personal risk to the tenant or their family as a result of violence or harassment if they remain in the property. They will be made one suitable direct offer of accommodation. The size of the accommodation will be the same as their previous tenancy.

- ❖ Band 5 with 10 years' residency or 6 without – Management transfer emergency such as domestic violence or harassment.

### **13.7 Reciprocal request**

The council will only agree to reciprocal requests from other authorities and Registered Providers where they can demonstrate that there is an imminent personal risk to the tenant, or their family and accommodation is required in Hillingdon. And that the reciprocal property being offered will be beneficial to Hillingdon residents with high priority to move.

Reciprocal requests will not be accepted from West London Locata partners who can use the cross partner bidding arrangements.

Where a reciprocal arrangement has been agreed, the incoming household will be made one direct offer of accommodation.

- ❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – Reciprocal agreement for emergency such as domestic violence or harassment.

### **13.8 Ex-tenant discharged from an institution**

Where a council tenant enters an institution such as hospital or is imprisoned or is in a rehabilitation establishment for a period of more than 6 months and would therefore

either accumulate rent arrears or possibly lose their tenancy, they can voluntarily give up their tenancy.

Alternative accommodation can be offered upon release in order to make the best use of the council's housing stock by offering the accommodation to someone in need instead of keeping the accommodation empty for lengthy periods.

Upon release they would be made a direct allocation of a property that meets their needs. The size of the accommodation will be the same as their previous tenancy, or a size that meets their needs under the terms of this policy, whichever is smaller.

This will not apply to tenants who have been imprisoned in relation to a crime that would enable the council to seek repossession of their accommodation or where possession action has already commenced.

- ❖ Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without – By agreement to relinquish council tenancy on entering an institution.

### **13.9 Relinquishing more than one property**

Applications for transfer may be made jointly by separate tenants who wish to apply for housing together, on the condition that both tenancies will be relinquished if the council makes an acceptable offer of a transfer to a third property.

- ❖ Band 9 with 10 years' residency or 10 without – By agreement to relinquish two separate social properties in return for one property

### **13.10 Service tenants where there is a contractual obligation**

Employees of the Council who have a service tenancy associated with their employment may be re-housed in certain circumstances where the council has a contractual obligation to re-house, for example on retirement, redundancy or redeployment.

Where service tenants entitled to re-housing have not bid successfully for a suitable home by the time they are required to leave their accommodation, they will be made one suitable direct offer of accommodation.

- ❖ Band 7 with 10 years' residency or 8 without – Ex-service tenant.

## **14 ADDITIONAL PRIORITY**

Additional priority is awarded in order to determine priorities between people in the reasonable and local preference groups. Priority is awarded in the following circumstances:

### **14.1 10 years' continuous residency**

Additional priority is awarded to those who have a local connection by living in the borough continuously for a minimum period of ten years. This will support stable communities and reward households who have a long term attachment to the borough.

Local connection will normally mean that an applicant has lived in Hillingdon, through their own choice, for a minimum of 10 years up to and including the date of their

application, or the date on which a decision is made on their application whichever is later.

For purposes of continuous residence, children spending time away from home for education due to periods of study such as at university and people who have moved away up to 3 years due to the requirements of their job will be disregarded.

People will also be considered as having a local connection with Hillingdon when they are placed in the borough of Hillingdon in temporary accommodation in accordance with sections 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any local authority under section 192(3).

Band 1 where would otherwise be Band 2  
Band 3 where would otherwise be Band 4  
Band 5 where would otherwise be Band 6  
Band 7 where would otherwise be Band 8  
Band 9 where would otherwise be Band 10  
Band 11 where would otherwise be Band 12

## **15. ENCOURAGING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Some applicants do not actively participate by bidding for available properties or continuously refuse properties that they have successfully placed bids on. The following will encourage personal responsibility from the applicants when exercising their right to choose properties through the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

### **15.1 Homeless households living in temporary accommodation**

Homeless households take longer to be housed than other households in similar priority bands. In order to ensure that they actively participate in choice based lettings, one direct offer of suitable accommodation will be made to those households who have been living in temporary accommodation longer than other households with the same bedsize need. If the offer is unreasonably refused, the council will discharge its duty under Part 7 of the Homelessness Act and withdraw any temporary accommodation provided. The average waiting time by bedsize will be published annually on the Hillingdon Council website.

### **15.2 All applicants - unreasonable refusal of offers**

All applicants who successfully bid for properties but refuse more than 3 reasonable offers within a 6-month period will be suspended from bidding for a period of 6 months.

## **16. SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION**

### **16.1 Disabled Adapted Properties**

Housing which has been designed or adapted for use by tenants with a disability will be allocated to a person who has been assessed as needing that particular type of accommodation even if there are other applicants (without a disability) in higher bands or with an earlier priority date.

Each application will be awarded a mobility category, and properties will be advertised as suitable for applicants from those categories:

**DSL 1:** Applicants who are full-time wheelchair users (indoors and outdoors).

**DSL 2:** Applicants who need a property which is wheelchair accessible but who may not use a wheelchair indoors (cannot manage steps/stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the time).

**DSL3:** Applicants who have some mobility needs e.g. can only manage one or two steps/stairs.

Applicants are restricted to bid for properties that match their assessment need. In exceptional circumstances where an adapted property is urgently required, a suitable property may be directly allocated outside of the Choice Based Lettings system.

## **16.2 Older Person Dwellings**

Hillingdon has a number of properties that are designated for people aged over 55 years who can live independently. These units are advertised through the Choice Based Lettings system (Locata). Applicants can bid for these properties in the normal way as long as they meet the age criteria specified in the advert.

Older Person Dwellings are restricted either for people aged over 55 (these are usually flats) or in a few cases for people aged over 60 (these are usually bungalows).

If a couple would like to be considered for the property, the main applicant must meet the age criteria specified. Partners aged under 55 years are permitted to live at the schemes but will not be permitted to be a joint tenant until they reach the minimum age for the accommodation.

## **16.3 Sheltered Housing**

Due to the specific nature of sheltered housing, additional criteria will apply. The criteria for allocating sheltered housing will be based on the following:

- The applicant is over 60.
- Has a recommendation for sheltered housing from a social or health care agency or has requested sheltered housing.
- Sheltered housing could assist the applicant in maintaining independent living and
- The lifestyle would be compatible with general use of the scheme.

If a couple applies to a scheme, both household members must meet the age criteria. Some Registered Providers accept applications for their sheltered schemes from those aged 55 years.

Applicants suitable for sheltered housing are placed in priority 'band 11 with 10 years' residency or 12 without' unless they qualify for a higher band for other reasons. The 'band 11 or 12' will only apply to bids on sheltered properties. They can only bid on any general needs or older person's property, if they have other identified housing needs.

If the applicant's care and support needs are considered too high for sheltered accommodation, the case will be referred for consideration for Extra Care



Accommodation.

#### **16.4 Extra Care**

Extra care housing aims to provide a home for life for older people by providing appropriate housing, care and support and makes the best use of available resources. A tenant may move into a scheme with low support needs but can access further care as and when the need arises as they get older instead of residential care.

Extra care housing is allocated outside of the Locata choice based lettings scheme by a panel of representatives from Housing, Health and Social Services. All referrals to the panel must have a community care assessment which identifies any care and/or housing related support needs. Occupancy and allocation of new units is based on the level of need of existing tenants and potential tenants in order to maintain a balanced mix of support needs.

#### **16.5 Allocation of traveller pitches**

Traveller pitches are allocated in the same way as general needs properties. Households applying for pitches must complete a housing register application form and provide the required evidence of identify. Where there are medical grounds for re- housing, medical evidence must be provided for assessment.

The pitches are advertised on Locata and are allocated in accordance with this scheme.

### **17. MOBILITY WITHIN AND ACROSS THE COUNCIL'S BOUNDARY**

#### **17.1 West London Cross Borough Moves**

A small percentage of vacancies are made available to applicants living in any of the Locata partner local authority areas.

#### **17.2 Pan-London Mobility (Housing Moves)**

Hillingdon Council participates in pan-London Mobility (PLM) arrangements and contributes a small percentage of the properties that become available to be let through the scheme. The scheme facilitates moves by council and housing association tenants to other parts of London.

Homes under this scheme are allocated according to the PLM allocations scheme rules and not the rules outlined in this scheme. Full details of the PLM scheme can be found at [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk).

Existing tenants of Hillingdon Council can make transfer applications through PLM to be considered for vacancies in other London local authorities.

#### **17.3 Seaside and Country Scheme**

Hillingdon Council participates in the Seaside & Country scheme operated by the Greater London Authority (GLA) which enables social tenants in London to move out to desirable seaside and countryside towns.

#### **17.4 Mutual Exchanges**

Allocations under this scheme are not included in this policy. However, the scheme

offers an option for existing tenants to exchange with other social housing tenants and obtain alternative accommodation suitable for their needs.

Social housing tenants can also register on Homeswapper to find details of other households who they may be able to swap homes with:

<http://www.homeswapper.co.uk/>

#### **17.5 Tenancy successions and assignments**

This is not included in this policy. For details, refer to the Council's Tenancy Policy.

### **18. SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

The scheme applies with immediate effect

### **19. CHANGES TO THE SCHEME**

The council reserves the right to expand, change or alter any element of the scheme, as and when required, to meet changes in housing need, capacity, resources and legislation.

A review of the policy will be carried out periodically.

### **20. MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, STAFF MEMBERS AND THEIR RELATIONS**

In order to ensure that the council treats all applicants fairly, any applications for housing or re-housing from Members of the council, employees of the council, any members of their family or household, and any other associated persons must be disclosed. These applications are assessed in the normal way but prior to any offers of accommodation being made, the case will be reviewed and approved by the senior designated officer.

Applications where no disclosure is made will be referred to the council's Fraud Investigations Team for investigations and where appropriate, legal action will be taken.

## Appendix 1: SUMMARY TABLE OF PRIORITY BAND AND DATE

<b>Band 1 with 10 years' residence in Hillingdon and Band 2 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
<b>Case Type</b>		<b>Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.</b>	<b>band</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Home Seekers</b>			
Regeneration / essential / urgent decant		Council tenants who need to move because their home is required to be demolished or for essential works to be undertaken within 3 months.	1 or 2	Date approved.

<b>Band 3 with 10 years' residence in Hillingdon and Band 4 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
<b>Case Type</b>		<b>Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.</b>	<b>band</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Home Seekers</b>			
Under occupation		Applicant is willing to move to smaller property by giving up 1 or more bedrooms.	3 or 4	Date approved.

<b>Band 5 with 10 years' residence in Hillingdon and Band 6 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
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Case Type		Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.	band	Priority Date
Tenants	Home Seekers			
Management Transfer e.g. emergency harassment, domestic violence	Reciprocal agreement for tenants of housing associations or other local	Agreed in exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with the tenant's occupation of a dwelling and there is imminent personal risk to the tenant or their family if they remain in the dwelling.	5 or 6	Date approved.

**- Band 7 with 10 years' residence in Hillingdon and Band 8 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon**

Case Type		Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.	band	Priority Date
Tenants	Home Seekers			
	Homeless households owed a relevant part 7 duty by Hillingdon	In temporary accommodation secured by Hillingdon Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 but the Landlord wants the temporary accommodation property back <b>AND</b> the council cannot find alternative suitable temporary accommodation	7 or 8	Date approved.
Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing	Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing	1. Closing Order issued (i.e. Properties unfit for human habitation where there is no alternative measure to render the property fit) as advised by Environmental Health.	7 or 8	Date of Closing Order or equivalent
		2. Where emergency re-housing is essential e.g. Compulsory Purchase Order issued to enable site clearance for a road-widening scheme.		
Emergency medical	Emergency medical	1. Granted in exceptional circumstances, where the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has a life-threatening condition, which is seriously affected by their current housing.	7 or 8	Date approved

- 2. Granted to hospital bed-blockers i.e. applicant occupying hospital bed because they cannot return to their previous accommodation as it is unsuitable for medical reasons.

Enable fostering/ adoption	Enable fostering/ adoption	Where agreement has been reached to provide accommodation on recommendation of Social Services and the current accommodation is not suitable or would cause overcrowding.	7 or 8	Date adoption or fostering is approved
Release adapted property in order to make best use of adapted stock.		Adapted properties are in short supply. Where it is no longer required, priority is given for the tenant to move to suitable non-adapted accommodation.	7 or 8	Date approved
	Specific schemes agreed by the	Where there is imminent personal risk to the applicant or their family if they remain in the property or area:	7 or 8	Date approved
	British Armed Forces	Members of the British Armed Forces and have not been dishonourably discharged (Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and British Army)	7 or 8	Date approved
	Young People leaving care.	Agreed at Care Experienced Young People's panel that applicant needs social housing to meet their ongoing support needs.	7 or 8	Date approved by Panel.

	Move-on from single homeless supported housing	Agreed at Single Homeless move-on panel that applicant needs social housing	7 or 8	Date approved
	Move-on from other supported housing	Ready and approved for independent living (after a minimum of 6 months). Includes institutional care, supported housing or hostels and group homes	7 or 8	Date approved

	Ex-service tenants	Ex-service tenants e.g. caretakers or sheltered wardens who have to leave their home on retirement, redundancy or redeployment, where the council has a contractual obligation to rehouse.	7 or 8	Date informed of retirement, redundancy or redeployment by personnel
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<b>Band 9 with 10 years' residence in Hillingdon and Band 10 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
<b>Case Type</b>		<b>Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Home Seekers</b>			
	Homeless households owed a relevant Part 7 duty by Hillingdon Council as defined at	Homeless households accommodated in Bed & Breakfast, council hostel accommodation or women's refuge.	9 or 13	Date of homelessness acceptance.
	Those who are homeless within the meaning of Part7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).	Require urgent rehousing as a result of domestic abuse.	9 or 13	Date approved



Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing for dependent children.	Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing for dependent children.	1. Households with dependent children living in unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action.	9 or 10	Date approved
		2. People with children who are living in Colley House which was purpose-built for single people		
Statutory or severe overcrowding	Statutory or severe overcrowding	1. Statutory overcrowding as defined in Part X of Housing Act 1986	9 or 10	Date approved
		2. Where a household is lacking two or more bedrooms	9 or 10	Date approved
Medical (including mental health) hardship	Medical (including mental health) hardship	Where an applicant's or a member of the household's current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on their medical condition. It will not apply where the effect of housing conditions on health is comparatively moderate, slight or variable.	9 or 10	Date approved

Hardship grounds	Hardship grounds	Urgent need to move agreed by Hardship Panel in liaison with other welfare agencies:	9 or 10	Date approved by Panel.
		To give or receive care or support, for example: Where rehousing of a relative or friend will directly lead to the discharge of a resident from care.		
		For child protection reasons, for example: Where the household includes a child or young person for whom the council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 and rehousing is an essential element in fulfilling that duty.		
		Need to move to take up a confirmed offer of permanent employment		
		Where a household has more than one serious need and when combined, it has a major adverse effect on their current housing condition		
Other decants		If major works of a less urgent nature are to be carried out, council tenants may be offered alternative accommodation and will have the option of returning to their original home once the works have been completed.	9 or 10	Date approved
	Ex-tenant discharged from institution	Where a commitment has previously been made in order that such tenants relinquish their council tenancy on entering the institution	9 or 10	Date new housing application approved

Relinquishing more than one property		Where an agreement has been reached for two tenants to relinquish their separate tenancies in return for one property	9 or 10	Date approved
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<b>Band 11 with 10 years' residence in Hillingdon and Band 12 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
<b>Case Type</b>		<b>Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Home Seekers</b>			
	Homeless Households owed a relevant Part 7 duty by Hillingdon Council as defined at section 12.1 not included in A or B, or other homeless households or those threatened with homelessness and owed a duty under section 195(2) Housing Act	Accepted homeless who are in other forms of temporary accommodation or has no accommodation.	11 or 13	Date of homelessness acceptance or date approved.
Unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions.	Unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions.	Unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action.	11 or 12	Date approved

Overcrowding	Overcrowding	Overcrowded households lacking one bedroom.	11 or 12	Date approved
Medical (incl. Mental health) hardship	Medical (incl. Mental health) hardship	Where an applicant or member of the household's current housing conditions are having a moderate effect on their medical condition.	11 or 12	Date approved
Hardship grounds	Hardship grounds	Out of borough applicants with a need to move to Hillingdon for medical or support reasons.	11 or 12	Date approved by Panel.
Older residents approved for Sheltered housing	Older residents approved for Sheltered housing	Applicants over 60 years old that have applied only for sheltered accommodation and have no other reason warranting a higher band.	11 or 12	Date approved

<b>Band13 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
<b>Case Type</b>		<b>Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Home Seekers</b>			
	Homeless households owed a relevant Part 7 duty as defined in section 12.1	<b>In temporary accommodation secured by the Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 but the</b> Landlord wants the temporary accommodation property back and the Council cannot find alternative suitable temporary accommodation	13	Date approved

	Homeless households owed a relevant Part 7 duty as defined in section 12.1 by Hillingdon *	Homeless households accommodated in Bed & Breakfast Council hostel accommodation or woman's refuge	13	Date of homelessness acceptance
	Homeless not included in either of the above categories	Accepted homeless who are in other forms of temporary accommodation, or has no accommodation, including those owed a prevention or relief duty.	13	Date of application

<b>Band14 without 10 years' residence in Hillingdon</b>				
<b>Case Type</b>		<b>Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Priority Date</b>
	Homeseeker	Within a reasonable preference group and own or have an interest in a property and have savings over £30,000	14	Date of application

## ANNEX 1

### **People ineligible for an allocation of accommodation by the Council**

The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) England Regulations 2006 set out the eligibility criteria for allocation of housing accommodation.

#### ***Persons from abroad***

*A person may not be allocated accommodation under Part 6 if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation under s.160ZA of the 1996 Act. There are two categories for the purposes of s.160ZA:*

- (i) a person subject to immigration control - such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (s.160ZA(2)), and*
- (ii) a person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control - regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (s.160ZA(4)).*

#### ***Persons subject to immigration control***

*The term ‘person subject to immigration control’ is defined in s.13(2) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 as a person who under the Immigration Act 1971 requires leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom (whether or not such leave has been given).*

*The provisions of section 7(1) of the Immigration Act 1988 and the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 have been saved for the purpose of housing legislation to protect the rights of EEA citizens, and their family members, who have citizens’ rights pursuant to the Withdrawal Agreement.*

*This will ensure that EEA citizens, and their family members, who*

- 1) have acquired limited leave to enter and remain in the UK (also known as pre-settled status) by virtue of Appendix EU of the Immigration Rules (“the EU Settlement Scheme”); or*
- 2) were frontier working in the UK prior to 31 December 2020.*

*will continue to be treated as ‘persons not subject to immigration control’ in the instances where they would previously have been, so that their eligibility for the allocation of social housing can be judged on the basis of Regulation 4 of the Eligibility Regulations as was the case prior to 31 December 2020.*

(Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England, June 2012 last updated October 2023)

