

Housing Allocations Policy Review

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People at the Heart of Everything We Do

Agenda

5:30pm	Welcome and introductions, housekeeping
5:35m	Presentation
5:45pm	Discussion 1: overview and general direction
6:10pm	Regroup and response
6:20pm	Discussion 2: specific proposals
6:45pm	Regroup and response
6:55pm	Thanks and next steps
7:00pm	Close

Newham's Housing Crisis

- Newham has the longest Housing Register of any London Borough.
- It also has the highest number of homeless households in temporary accommodation in London
- Approximately 1 in 4 households are overcrowded
- Newham has the lowest average earnings in London with 27% earning less than minimum wage in 2017
- Around one in three residents live in the private rented sector (compared with one in four across London) where the rising cost of rent far outstrips wage rises

Borough	Waiting list
Newham	27,635
Lambeth	25,198
Tower Hamlets	19,826
Greenwich	15,386
Islington	14,567

The case for change

- Given the scale of the housing crisis in Newham, the Council should be making the best use of its limited stock
- The allocations policy is the way that Council decides which households get Council properties, and is therefore an important tool in tackling the housing crisis, alongside building more social-rented homes for our residents
- Currently, the policy de facto **prioritises those in employment** (more detail on this on the next slide)
- It is also relatively open in terms of who can join, compared with other London boroughs

The current system

- There are three main groups on the Housing Register:
 1. Enhanced bidding or direct offers: this group includes emergency cases (for example in the case of domestic abuse), decants, and transfers (for under-occupation and adapted properties)
 2. Priority homeseeker: this group includes anyone with one or more reasonable preference (housing need). Within this group, people currently in employment get an advantage
 3. Homeseeker: this group includes anyone on the Housing Register with no reasonable preference
- Within each of these bands there is a hierarchy of priority categories, and within each category people are ordered by time on the Housing Register
- Each year we allocate around 600 properties. Around 1 in 3 go to households in the enhanced bidding/direct offer group, and the remaining 2 in 3 go to priority homeseekers (most of whom are currently in employment)

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Type of bidding	Priority	Description
Enhanced bidding or direct offers	1	Members of the Armed Forces. Where more than one applicant meets the criteria the tie breaker is waiting time on the Housing Register.
	2	Additional Preference Group (emergency re-housing & multiple needs). Bids are ranked within this group according to the date the emergency or multiple needs was awarded, then by waiting time on the Housing Register.
	3	Urgent decants Bids are ranked within this group firstly according to the relative urgency of the scheme and secondly according to the length of time decant status has been awarded.
	4	Under-occupation transfers & transfers from adapted properties. Bids are ranked within this group firstly by the number of bedrooms the tenant is occupying and secondly according to the date of application on the Register.
	5	Less urgent decants. Bids are ranked within this group firstly according to the relative urgency of the scheme and secondly according to the length of time on the Register
Priority homeseeker	6	Those in the Priority Home-seeker or Transfer groups who are in employment according to waiting time on the Housing Register
	7	Applicants in the Priority Home-seeker or Transfer groups not employed, ranked according to their waiting time of the Housing Register.
	8	Those applicants in the Priority Home-seeker or Transfer groups with reduced priority (ie they have significant assets, owe the council money etc).
Homeseeker	9	Those applicants in the Home-seeker group according to waiting time on the Register
	10	Those applicants in the Home-seeker group with reduced priority.

Proposals

- We are proposing **four main changes** to do this:
 1. Adjusting the eligibility of access to the waiting list
 2. Restricting the accrual of waiting time for those with no housing need
 3. Removing the bidding advantage to those households in employment
 4. Create a new category awarding additional priority to those most in need

1. Adjusting the eligibility of access to the waiting list

- It's relatively open compared with our peers, and that's part of the reason why it's so long.
- We will be bringing eligibility up to three years – the same as our neighbouring boroughs. Tightening the list slightly should make it more manageable and benefit long-term residents without penalising large numbers of applicants.
- We've also considered the people who would be exceptions to this rule (eg GRT, people placed in TA outside the borough, DV survivors)

2. Restricting the accrual of waiting time for those with no housing need

- We recognise that waiting time is important to people's sense of fairness, but we're adjusting so that it's those who have been in need (have one or more reasonable preference) for the longest time who are prioritised.
- Those who don't have a need can stay on the list; they'll just be marked as 'inactive' and won't accrue waiting time.

3. Removing the bidding advantage to those households in employment

- This was something introduced during a time when unemployment in Newham was high, and is no longer appropriate given the scale of the housing crisis
- The shortage of supply and the poor living conditions of too many residents means we are shifting focus to those most in need
- We also shouldn't be penalising those who don't have jobs during Covid and the forthcoming recession

4. Create a new category awarding additional priority to those most in need

- This new category will give an advantage to priority homeseekers experiencing severe overcrowding plus one other type of reasonable preference (housing need)
- This is to ensure that within the priority homeseeker category (which is large) there is an additional boost given to those with the highest need.
- We identified overcrowding as a key risk for health and wellbeing (particularly for children) and making it severe overcrowding (by two or more bedrooms) captures the group with the most acute need.
- By adding a requirement for an additional need, you also capture a sense of multiple needs.

Type of bidding	Priority	Description in proposed new policy
Enhanced bidding or direct offers	1	Members of the Armed Forces. Where more than one applicant meets the criteria the tie breaker is waiting time on the Housing Register.
	2	Additional Preference Group (emergency re-housing and multiple needs). Bids are ranked within this group according to the date the emergency or multiple needs was awarded, then by waiting time on the Housing Register since notifying of a reasonable preference.
	3	Urgent decants Bids are ranked within this group firstly according to the relative urgency of the scheme and secondly according to the length of time decant status has been awarded.
	4	Under-occupation transfers & transfers from adapted properties. Bids are ranked within this group firstly by the number of bedrooms the tenant is occupying and secondly according to the date of application on the Register since notifying of a reasonable preference
	5	Less urgent decants. Bids are ranked within this group firstly according to the relative urgency of the scheme and secondly according to the length of time on the Register since notifying of a reasonable preference
Priority homeseeker	6	New category: priority homeseekers experiencing overcrowding plus one other reasonable preference ordered according to waiting time on the Housing Register since notifying of a reasonable preference
	7	Applicants in the Priority Home-seeker or Transfer ranked according to their waiting time on the Housing Register since notifying of a reasonable preference
	8	Those applicants in the Priority Home-seeker or Transfer groups with reduced priority (ie they have significant assets, owe the council money etc).
Homeseeker	9	Inactive applications: Home-seekers with no reasonable preference whose waiting time is not accumulated
	10	N/A

Who will benefit from the changes?

- Households which are severely overcrowded with one additional need
- Households which have been in housing need for a long time
- Households which are in housing need but may not currently be in employment – they will be brought in line with those with a housing need who are in employment

Discussion Questions 1

- Do any of the four proposals need clarifying?
- Overall, do the proposals seem fair to you?
- Do you agree with the overall focus on those in the highest need?

Discussion Questions 2

- Are there any of the four proposals that you particularly like/dislike?
- Were there any changes you expected to see that we didn't include?
- Will any groups be particularly advantaged/disadvantaged by the changes?

Further information and next steps

- We are holding a consultation running **12th October to 4th January 2021**
- To ensure independence, the consultation is being run by an external research agency
- You can find more information on the consultation webpage at <https://www.newham.gov.uk/allocationsconsultation>
- The page includes a survey which can be sent out, and any longer comments or questions should be addressed to newhamconsultation@mysavanta.com
- Another cabinet paper setting out final proposals for changes will be brought back to cabinet for approval in early 2021