

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES**CABINET****DATE:** Thursday, 21st July 2016**REPORT OF:** CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH**TITLE OF DECISION** HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME:**WARDS:** (All Wards);**KEY DECISION?: YES****IF YES, IN FORWARD PLAN?: YES**

For general release

1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

1.1 To:

- a) approve in principle the adoption of a revised policy for the allocation of social housing,
- b) that that policy be consulted upon and
- c) be returned to Cabinet in September 2016 for further consideration and final approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the new housing allocations policy in Appendix 1 be agreed in principle and for consultation upon it (as required by statute), with the outcome of that consultation and any amendments to Appendix 1 brought back to Cabinet in September 2016.

3. DetailBackground

- 3.1 The Housing Act 1996 (the Act) requires that all local authorities exercising a housing function must publish a housing allocations scheme setting out how properties becoming available to the council for nomination will be allocated, in order to meet housing need and/or any local relevant priorities.

- 3.2 When framing an allocation scheme, s166(A)(3) of the Act requires that the Council ensures that the operative scheme must result in reasonable preference being according to those entitled to it. Reasonable preference has been described in case law as a 'reasonable head start' towards an actual offer of housing and a scheme must differentiate between those entitled to it and those who are not, prioritising the former over the latter. The Act also allows for 'additional preference' to be provided to those entitled to reasonable preference, as opposed to those who are not.
- 3.3 The groups entitled to reasonable preference are:
- those homeless and/or those owed one or other duty under homelessness provisions;
 - those occupying insanitary/overcrowded/unsatisfactory housing;
 - those needing to move on medical or welfare grounds; and
 - those needing to move to a particular locality of a district to avoid hardship.
- 3.4 The council's current housing allocations scheme was approved by the Cabinet in February 2012. As explained in more detail below, it is now timely to review and update the allocations policy. Firstly, recent guidance provided by the Courts necessitates amendments to the allocation scheme. Second the shared staffing arrangement (SSA) with the London Borough of Wandsworth will come into effect later on the 1st of October providing an opportunity to create a common policy based on best practice from both Councils.
- 3.5 For context, the combined volume of allocations and nominations, separately made under the allocations schemes across the two boroughs by the single team in the SSA will, in a typical year, result in somewhere between 1200 and 1400 offers of rehousing, of which nominations made by Richmond-upon-Thames would be circa 25 per cent. Generally speaking, there is already considerable overlap between the current schemes in each borough, which both work well. A common scheme will enable the service to run in the most efficient way.
- 3.6 The draft scheme set out in Appendix 1 has been formulated by officers to create a blend of the best of both schemes and the following paragraphs set out both the mechanics of the proposed scheme, as well as the most significant changes to the detail within the scheme.

4. Main Changes to the Allocations Policy

- 4.1 In headline terms, the changes detailed in the following paragraphs are principally concerned with the administration of, and the administrative procedures within, the scheme and, in terms of policy considerations, such changes as there are much less significant, as much of the current scheme has been carried forward and included in Appendix 1.

A move to allocations planning

- 4.2 The principle, conceptual foundation of the proposed scheme at Appendix 1 is that the council moves to a process known as 'resources forecasting' allied to 'allocations planning'. In essence, this involves drawing up an annual forecast of the supply of properties from all sources (by bed-size and by type) expected to become available in a financial year for nomination. This is accompanied by, and reflected in, an annual 'allocations plan', approved by the Cabinet each year, which determines where those properties (if they become available) should be directed across the cohort of eligible, qualifying applicants accepted by the council for consideration for nomination.
- 4.3 The key benefit of moving to this approach is that the council, on an annual basis, has the opportunity to consider the competing and relative priorities for the distribution of properties becoming available for letting and to set the framework by which officers allocate properties in that financial year. This allows members to have a close degree of scrutiny of the outcomes delivered under the allocations scheme and provides officers with a clear framework as the year unfolds.
- 4.4 In the current scheme, and very broadly speaking, there is a single queue made up of housing applicants in a variety of housing circumstances e.g. it includes people who have a home/tenancy available to them which is in one way or another deficient, as well as homeless households accepted by the authority under the terms of homelessness legislation. That single queue is prioritised in the current scheme by way of a points ladder and therefore it is the points scheme which is the key determinant of relative priority, within the scheme.
- 4.5 Moving to resources forecasting and allocations planning places the allocations plan as the key determinant of priorities for rehousing/nomination in the given year.
- 4.6 To underpin that approach, the scheme proposed at Appendix 1 brings in a number of housing access queues reflecting either a) the type of

housing required e.g. sheltered accommodation for the over 55s or adapted accommodation for those with physical disabilities or b) the principle reasonable preference group applying to the household e.g. whether they have been accepted as statutorily homeless. The queues as set out in Appendix 1 are:

Name of Housing Access Queue	Description of Applicant
General Needs Queue	Living in insecure housing, in the private rented sector, in Housing Association accommodation. May be overcrowded or at risk of future homelessness.
Homeless Queue	Households accepted by the Council as being owed the main homelessness duty under s192(3) of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
Council's interest queue	Social Housing Tenants wishing to downsize (where the Council receives the resulting, additional vacancy for nomination), or other urgent cases.
Older persons Housing queue	Applicants seeking sheltered or extra care housing.
Physical Disability queue	Applicants needing wheelchair standard or other adapted accommodation.
Supported Housing Queue	Applicants being resettled/rehoused from supported housing, including under quota arrangements.
Social Care queue	Applicants referred by either the Director of Adult Social Services or by Achieving for Children, for nomination in further of social welfare objectives. These include meeting care needs, furthering fostering and adoption opportunities and the safeguarding of vulnerable people or families.

- 4.7 Under the amended scheme, the allocations plan would identify both the proportion and the forecast quantum of properties to be allocated to each individual queue allowing members to determine whether that relative distribution is a) delivering reasonable preference as required under the statute b) takes account of any particular policy imperatives and c) is equitable and reasonable in any event.

- 4.8 The other main change in respect of scheme mechanics between the current and the proposed scheme is the inclusion of bandings, to sit above the points ladder(s). This works by awarding points to certain queues across various domains which are then added together, with the total determining which of bands A-D (A being the highest band) the application is placed into. The main driver of priority order within a band is 'time waiting', meaning that the queue moves forward more predictably, with minimal prospects of a newer application receiving a nomination ahead of an older application in the same band.
- 4.9 Operationally, when a property becomes available for nomination, officers refer to the allocations plan to determine which queue the property should be offered to and then move sequentially down through the bands to identify the oldest application for which the property is suitable.

Other main changes – qualification criteria.

- 4.10 Firstly, the qualification criteria approved in the current scheme date from 2012, following the return of wider discretion via the Localism Act 2011 to councils to set such criteria. However, it is now necessary to amend them to reflect subsequent case law which has made clear that excluding applicant households who fall within the reasonable preference categories from consideration entirely, by way of rules around qualification (for example by using a minimum period of (past) residence in the district) is unlawful, with exceptionality being insufficient to remedy such unlawfulness.
- 4.11 The more recent case law concerned LB Hammersmith and Fulham's decision to not regard accepted homeless households as qualifying persons under their scheme, providing the household was in 'suitable' temporary accommodation and, more recently still, LB Ealing's decision to refuse an applicant otherwise falling within the reasonable preference categories as not being a qualifying person because they did not have the minimum period of previous residence in Ealing. The Court of Appeal and the High Court respectively ruled that the scheme in each borough was unlawful.
- 4.12 The draft scheme at Appendix 1 has been amended to ensure that the qualifying person rules, generally speaking, do not apply to those entitled to reasonable preference. As such, the qualification rules will in future relate mainly to those who are not entitled to reasonable preference and that would continue to prevent a significant number of applicants being able to join the queues. The amended rules around qualification also

relate to a limited number of scenarios encompassing persons entitled to reasonable preference but on a strict case by case assessment basis.

- 4.13 A further, albeit modest, change in terms of the number of households concerned is that, as a general rule, the minimum age for entry onto the housing queues will rise from 16 to 18 years. In the current scheme, applicants can apply from the age of 16 years, notwithstanding the fact that persons under 18 years cannot be held legally responsible for compliance with any tenancy conditions, including the payment of housing charges. In practice, this change is likely to affect very few (if any) applicants, and again, exceptions can be made through the use of the discretion mentioned above.
- 4.14 It should be noted that the recent case law is very likely to cause, over time, rises in the number of households admitted to, and remaining upon, the housing queues. This will be monitored and reported as necessary going forward.
- 4.15 Lastly, within the bandings, it is proposed that differential priority be awarded between those applicant households with significant previous residence in the borough, set at a minimum period of three continuous years, compared to those who do not, by placing such applications in Band D. This will ensure that allocations are directed towards applicants with stronger connections to the borough, although, and again case by case, exceptions may be made by senior officers and the capacity to do so is included within the scheme at clause 1.1.0
- 4.16 Elsewhere in Appendix 1 the other significant change is the proposed move to a simpler and less nuanced points scheme. In the current scheme, points are awarded in multiple domains and frequently within a single domain at multiple levels. Whilst this does result in a very nuanced scheme it has proved not simple to explain to housing applicants or efficient for officers to operate when assessing applications.
- 4.17 The points scheme proposed in Appendix 1 is therefore more focused and this will assist in providing a transparent scheme to housing applicants and in the more accurate assessment of relative priority between competing applications.
- 4.18 Further, within the points scheme, points awarded for sharing facilities such as WCs, kitchens and living rooms have been combined into a single points award, for greater simplicity and transparency. Points for

'community contributions' such as volunteering for third sector agencies are retained as are working points.

- 4.19 Also within the points scheme, it is proposed that differential priority be awarded between those applicant households with significant previous residence in the borough, set at a minimum period of three continuous years, compared to those who do not by placing such applications in Band D.
- 4.20 This will ensure that nominations are directed towards applicants with firmer connections to the borough, although and again case by case, exceptions may be made by senior officers and the capacity to do so is included within the scheme at 1.1.0 within Appendix 1.

5. Finance and efficiency implications

- 5.1 Aside from any necessary IT changes to implement the revised scheme and any costs incurred in obtaining technical and legal advice on the final proposed, post consultation scheme, the main costs are officer time. There are no new proposed staffing savings arising from the introduction of the revised scheme, as they have been delivered in advance as part of SSA considerations.

6. Procurement Implications

None.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 As part of preparation of this report and the draft scheme, Counsel's advice has been obtained, which is to the effect that the scheme, as drafted, does (subject to any subsequent challenge) meet the legal requirements of the Act and complies with the most recent guidance given in case-law, as mentioned above.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1 Under the Housing Act 1996 at Section 167 it is a statutory requirement for the local authority to consult on major changes to the Allocations Scheme, which this clearly will be, with all registered housing providers (housing associations) to whom the council has nomination rights.
- 8.2 Applicable guidance also recommends that consultation is carried out with other interested parties. It is recommended therefore that Appendix 1 be approved in principal and that consultation be undertaken through the usual mechanisms for a period of 6 weeks with a further report setting out the results of that consultation with any applicable

amendment to the policy coming to the September 2016 cycle for further consideration and approval. At that time, an EINA will be provided.

- 8.3 Once the final policy is approved it will be necessary to set an implementation date and officers will include recommendations in the September 2016 report as to when and how the revised scheme may be implemented.

9. WIDER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS / CONSIDERATIONS
The draft Allocation Scheme attached to this reporting is a critical to the lawful discharge of the Council’s statutory housing functions, as they relate to the letting of social housing available through nomination rights to Registered Provider/Housing Associations Homes.
9.2 RISK CONSIDERATIONS
As detailed above, any allocation scheme is at risk of legal challenge, whether in respect of its formulation or outcomes delivered by it. These risks have been mitigated insofar as the draft scheme takes account of the most recent guidance from the High(er) Courts and by seeking counsel’s advice.
9.3 EQUALITY IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS
A full EINA will follow when the draft scheme is brought back, amended as necessary following consultation, to the September cycle for final decision.
9.4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS
None identified.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

11. APPENDICES

Draft Allocations Policy 2016 – Appendix 1

12. CONTACTS

Dave Worth – Designate Assistant Director Housing Services
020 8871 6837 – www.Dworth@wandsworth.gov.uk

Brian Castle – Joint Assistant Director Services and Housing
020 8891 7482 – www.B.Castle@richmond.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND

UPON THAMES

HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

<u>Part I. Introduction and overview</u>	4
<u>Introduction</u>	4
<u>Overview of the Scheme</u>	5
<u>Equal Opportunities and Monitoring</u>	7
<u>Confidentiality</u>	7
<u>Access to information under the Data Protection Act 1998</u>	7
<u>Rights to information about assessment under the scheme</u>	8
<u>Changes to the allocation scheme</u>	8
<u>Complaints</u>	8
<u>Local Lettings Plan and Private Registered Providers</u>	9
<u>Pan London Mobility Scheme</u>	9
<u>Part II. Eligibility and Qualifying Criteria</u>	10
<u>Who may apply and eligibility for allocation</u>	10
<u>Who is eligible for social housing in England</u>	10
<u>Criteria for being a qualifying person</u>	10
<u>Who is not a qualifying person</u>	11
<u>Persons who do not qualify on grounds of home ownership or savings</u> ...	11
<u>Persons who do not qualify on grounds of refusing a suitable and reasonable offer</u>	11
<u>Persons who do not qualify on grounds of being an applicant with no recognised housing need</u>	12
<u>Persons who do not qualify on grounds of behaviour</u>	12
<u>Persons who do not qualify on grounds of not making a transfer application to their landlord</u>	12
<u>Discretion to waive qualifying criteria</u>	13
<u>PART III. Making an Application, Assessment and Offers of Accommodation</u>	13
<u>Persons who can be included on an application</u>	13
<u>Making an application</u>	13
<u>Proof of identity and supporting information</u>	14
<u>Misleading information</u>	14
<u>Members of the council, staff members and their relations</u>	14
<u>Change of address and/or circumstances</u>	14

<u>Assessing medical needs</u>	15
<u>Opportunity to express preference for accommodation or area</u>	15
<u>Awarding additional preference – priority rehousing status</u>	15
<u>Size of accommodation and bedrooms required</u>	16
<u>The banding system and points scheme</u>	18
<u>Offers of accommodation</u>	20
<u>Arrangements to view and tenancy agreements</u>	21
<u>Tenancy agreements</u>	21
<u>Refusal of a suitable offer</u>	21
<u>Right to request reviews</u>	22
<u>Part IV. The access queues</u>	23
<u>Homeless queue</u>	23
<u>General needs queue</u>	23
<u>Older persons housing queue (sheltered and extra care housing)</u>	25
<u>Physical disability queue</u>	27
<u>Supported queue</u>	27
<u>Social care queue</u>	28
<u>Council’s interest queue</u>	29

Part I. Introduction and overview

Introduction

- 1.0.0. This document is the housing allocation scheme used by the council with effect from XX MONTH 201X. Housing authorities are required by section 166A(1) of the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. For the purposes of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, a housing authority allocates accommodation when it selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by that authority or nominates a person to be an tenant of accommodation held by a private registered provider of social housing (PRP) or a registered social landlord (also known as housing associations). Nominations to PRPs are made using the same priorities as for allocations to council dwellings. However, the council does respect the integrity of the lettings policy of the PRPs concerned. The scheme only covers allocations made by the council exercising its housing authority functions. It does not apply to the granting of family intervention tenancies.
- 1.0.1. The scheme provides details of how applications for housing may be made, the supporting information required to allow the council to assess such applications and how the council gives reasonable preference to applicants with certain indicators of housing need. Also in these sections are details of how the council determines priorities when allocating properties.
- 1.0.2 The scheme also provides details of:
- the points schemes and banding system adopted by the council to assess competing applications within the various access queues;
 - when and how applicants dissatisfied with decisions taken under the scheme may seek a review;
 - the procedures used to administer the scheme; and
 - which officers are responsible for decisions under the scheme.
- 1.0.3. This scheme does not set out details of the types and lengths of tenancies that will be offered to applicants who are allocated properties. The type and length of tenancy an applicant will be offered if they are allocated a property will be determined by the tenancy policy of the landlord. For PRPs, applicants must be offered tenancies in accordance with their tenancy policies. The council does not own any social housing stock.
- 1.0.4. In adopting this scheme the Council has had regard to statutory guidance issued by Government and in particular to:
- the code of guidance on social housing allocations published by the CLG (Communities and Local Government Department) on 29 June 2012,
 - the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces)(England) Regulations 2012;

- the Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces)(England) Regulations 2012;
- the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move)(England) 2015; and
- changes to the Scheme as agreed by the Council (the council's committee papers can be viewed on the council's website at www.richmond.gov.uk)

The scheme remains in force unless and until amended by decision of the council.

- 1.0.5. This document contains the council's allocation scheme and is available for inspection at the Town Hall concourse and the Housing and Regeneration Department's reception. The scheme is available on the council's website at www.richmond.gov.uk. Copies of the scheme are also obtainable, free of charge, from the housing services section (020 8871 6812).

Overview of the Scheme

- 1.1.0. Under the scheme, applicants apply to the council for accommodation by completing an on line form. Advice on completing the form is available from the Housing Advice & Information team (see Annex A for contact details). Practical assistance with making an application, for example with interpretation, translation or through a home visit may be provided where appropriate.

The scheme has been framed to give reasonable preference to those groups identified within the Housing Act 1996 S.166A(3). At the time of adopting this scheme those groups were defined as follows:

- (a) people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7);
- (b) people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority 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);
- (c) people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (d) people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability); and
- (e) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

- 1.1.1. The scheme has also been framed to give additional preference to people within those groups with urgent housing needs, who qualify for 'priority rehousing status'. With limited exceptions, the scheme is not framed to give priority for allocation to persons who do not fall within the 'reasonable preference' categories.

- 1.1.2. Applications from households attracting a reasonable preference, and who have been resident within the borough for a continuous minimum period of three years, immediately preceding their application, are given 'additional preference' above those who have not. This is achieved by placing applications that do not have such a residential connection into either Band D for the relevant access queue, or the lowest available band, as applicable until such time as they achieve continuous residence of three years. The onus is on the applicant to contact the department when they achieve that period of continuous residence and upon being contacted, their application will be reassessed. This rule of allocation will be waived for cases awarded priority rehousing status and will not apply to applications placed onto the homeless queue.
- 1.1.3. Each application is considered to establish whether the applicant is:
- eligible for allocation of accommodation;
 - a qualifying person under this scheme; generally speaking qualification criteria apply only to those persons who do not fall within the reasonable preference categories;
 - entitled to any reasonable and/or additional preference; and
 - in need of housing (based on the points and band applicable to their circumstances).
- 1.1.4. Each application made by an eligible and qualifying person is placed within one of the council's 'access queues'. These queues reflect either the type of accommodation required, such as sheltered accommodation, or the principal 'reasonable preference' group, which applies to the circumstances of the application, such as homeless applicants. Access queues may have specific 'criteria for allocation' and/or 'rules of allocation' and these are set out in the scheme under separate headings. Across all access queues, cases justifying 'priority rehousing' status can be identified and accommodation may be allocated to such applicants ahead of others with less urgent needs.
- 1.1.5. Each year the council considers the forecast supply of accommodation available for allocation and receives recommendations for an indicative distribution of this supply across the various access queues taking into account demand and other relevant factors arising from national, regional or locally set priorities. This process is known as the resources and commitments forecast which forms the 'allocations plan' by the council on an annual basis. The allocations plan is drawn up to ensure that the balance of allocations made under the scheme will be such to secure a reasonable preference is provided for each of the categories of persons set out in the Housing Act 1996 S.166A(3).
- 1.1.6. The allocations plan also serves as the basis for determining the allocations across the various queues during the year. Within the access queues, properties will be allocated to the applicant in the highest band who has been

registered in that band for the longest period (subject to suitability considerations). To ensure that the scheme provides flexibility to meet urgent or unforeseen housing needs, officers acting under delegated authority have the discretion to vary the spread of allocations between the access queues, allowing the council to use the resources available as efficiently as possible. Activity under the scheme is reported to every meeting of the council Overview and Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for housing.

Equal Opportunities and Monitoring

1.2.0. The council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities in the delivery of all its services and:

The council will seek to ensure that its allocation policies are operated in a manner which is fair to all sections of the community regardless of colour, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, marital status, sexual orientation, age, gender or disability. All applicants for housing or rehousing will be asked to provide details of ethnic origin. However, this will not be a requirement for acceptance of an application. Records of ethnic origin will be kept and monitored on a regular and systematic basis to ensure properties are being offered and allocated fairly in accordance with stated objectives.

Allocation policies and any changes to them will be reviewed regularly to ensure they do not operate in ways that discriminate against or disadvantage any particular group with protected characteristics.

Confidentiality

1.3.0. Employees of the council will treat all information provided by applicants in accordance with the council's confidentiality procedures and within any inter-agency protocols that apply to particularly sensitive information known to the council.

Access to information under the Data Protection Act 1998

1.4.0. All applicants for housing have the right to see information held about them by the council, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The right applies to all personal information regardless of the date that information was recorded.

1.4.1 With regard to housing application records, applicants have a right of access to information held about themselves and members of their family held for the purposes of that application. This right of access extends only to 'personal' information, namely, factual information and expressions of opinion which relate to a living individual. In certain circumstances the council may refuse access. This arises where, for example, the information:

- may identify a third party and that party has not consented to the disclosure;
- concerns an individual's health and disclosure may cause serious harm to the well-being of the applicant; or

- is held for the purpose of prevention or detection of crime or in respect of some other legal proceedings.
- 1.4.2 Requests for access to records must be made in writing. Standard forms are available from main service points. These should be completed and returned, along with proof of identity, for action. Subject to the above exceptions and consents, applicants must be informed if any information is held and given the option to either view the records or have a copy provided within 40 days of the application. A fee may be charged for this service.
- 1.4.3 Applicants have the right to challenge the accuracy of the information held about them and may request the erasure or correction of records which they believe to be inaccurate. If the Director of Housing and Regeneration or nominated officers agree that the information is inaccurate, the record will be corrected and the applicant will be given a copy of the corrected documentation. If the Director of Housing and Regeneration or nominated officer does not agree the information is inaccurate, or refuses access to the information, the applicant has a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner. This information will be provided free of charge. Requests for information should be made to the housing options and assessment section, using the contact details in annex A.

Rights to information about assessment under the scheme

- 1.5.0 In accordance with the Housing Act 1996 S166A(9) all applicants have the right to request information to enable them to assess: how their application is likely to be treated under the scheme including whether they fall within one or more of the groups entitled to reasonable preference and whether accommodation is likely to be allocated to them and, if so, how long this is likely to take. Furthermore, applicants can request that the council inform them about any decision about the facts of their application which is likely to be taken into account when considering whether to allocate accommodation.

Changes to the allocation scheme

- 1.6.0 The council will periodically review the policies and procedures set out in this document and where appropriate make changes to them. Before making an alteration to the allocation scheme, which reflects a major policy change, consultation will take place with every registered provider of social housing with whom the council has nomination arrangements. Consultation will also take place with other appropriate consultative bodies.

Complaints

- 1.7.0 All applicants have the right to be treated fairly. Where an applicant is not satisfied with the administration of an application, or with its outcome, he/she has the right to seek redress.

- 1.7.1 The council is committed to dealing with all complaints as courteously and as swiftly as possible in accordance with the council's complaints procedure. These documents describe how and where to complain, who will deal with a complaint and the expected response times. These are available from council's website.

Local Lettings Plan and Private Registered Providers

- 1.8.0 The council works in partnership with PRPs to help build sustainable communities through a local lettings plan. For example, by allocating new properties to a mixture of applicants, including, those entirely in receipt of benefits, in work and/or providing a community contribution. Local lettings plans will be devised for individual schemes and each will have its own separate agreement. The council typically allocates a proportion of properties with the rest being allocated directly by the PRP according to their own policies. The Housing Services (Allocations and Provision) will decide whether the council should participate in local lettings plans.
- 1.8.1 Each Registered Social Landlord has its own policy with regards to pets. Guide dogs or hearing dogs are generally exempt.

Pan London Mobility Scheme

- 1.9.0 The council participates in the housingmoves Pan-London Mobility (PLM) scheme. Accordingly up to five per cent of the properties that become available to the council for re-letting or nomination each year, subject to local priorities, will be made available through the scheme to tenants from other boroughs. The scheme also allows existing social tenants to move to other London local authority areas.
- 1.9.1 The decision as to which vacancies will be put forward to the operators of the scheme for applicants from other boroughs will be made by any of the following officers: Head of Housing Services (Allocations and Provision, Allocations Manager, Deputy Allocations Manager or Voids Coordinator or more senior officer as applicable. The decision as to which of the PLM applicants will be let the property will be made by the same officer(s) in accordance with the PLM scheme's eligibility and prioritisation criteria. The council closely monitors the volume of moves both into and out of the borough, under the scheme, within a policy objective of ensuring they achieve balance, or very near balance, at any given point in time.

For more information on the housingmoves scheme see:

www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing/housing-need/mobility/pan-london-mobility.

Part II. Eligibility and Qualifying Criteria
Who may apply and eligibility for allocation

2.0.0. Any person may apply to the council for allocation of housing. However, housing will only be allocated to applicants who are registered on the council's housing queues for social housing. To be registered an applicant must be:

- eligible for social housing in England (that is, not ineligible due to their immigration status); and
- a qualifying person for social housing in the borough (as determined by the following provisions of the allocation scheme).

Who is eligible for social housing in England

2.1.0. All applicants will be eligible unless they are persons prescribed within the Housing Act 1996 S.160ZA(1) or by regulations made by the Secretary of State. This generally applies to persons from abroad without settled immigration status in the UK, apart from a limited number of exceptions.

2.1.1. Where a duty is owed to an applicant who is found to be homeless only by reliance on a household member who is a "restricted person" within the meaning of S184 of the Housing Act 1996, the applicant will not be given any preference under the scheme for an allocation of accommodation. The council will, so far as practicable, bring the duty to secure accommodation to an end by ensuring that an offer of accommodation, in the private sector for a period of at least 12 months, is made to the applicant. A restricted person is defined as someone who requires leave to enter or remain in the UK and does not have it, or a person who does have the required leave but that leave was granted on the condition that the person may not have recourse to public funds.

Criteria for being a qualifying person

2.2.0. This section sets out the criteria that must be met for applicants to qualify for consideration for social housing in the borough i.e. to be admitted onto, and/or remain upon one or other of the access queues. These criteria apply to all applications from persons who do not fall within one or other of the reasonable preference categories.

2.2.1. To be a qualifying person for an allocation of social housing in the borough and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues for social housing, an applicant, or one of joint applicants, must, upon assessment, and in the council's opinion, be entitled to reasonable preference as defined with the Act and :

- a) Be eligible for an allocation of housing accommodation (as determined by law, that is not ineligible due to immigration status) and;

- b) Be 18 years old or over unless they are applying under the Homeless Queue, the Social Care Queue or the Supported Queue. However, applicants will not usually be offered a tenancy until they are at least 18 years old.

Who is not a qualifying person

2.3.0. Applicants who upon assessment, and in the council's opinion, do not fall within one of the reasonable preference categories { see 1.1.0] will not be qualifying persons. Further, and again upon assessment, persons who do fall within the reasonable preference categories may be removed from the scheme at any time on the grounds that the applicant is no longer eligible or becomes a person who does not qualify under the following criteria.

Persons who do not qualify on grounds of home ownership or savings

2.4.0. Applicants will not qualify for social housing in the borough and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues if:

- a) they own or jointly own accommodation (including shared ownership accommodation) in the UK or elsewhere, or have a legal right to occupy accommodation in the UK or elsewhere (other than as a tenant or licensee) unless they satisfy the council that it would not be possible and reasonable for them to:
 - I. occupy the accommodation; or
 - II. sell or let the accommodation in order to obtain suitable accommodation; or

- b) the council is satisfied that they have savings that it would be possible and reasonable for them to use in order to obtain suitable accommodation.

Enquiries will be made, where required to ensure that household savings have not been deliberately reduced to below the threshold for the purposes of securing accommodation.

Persons who do not qualify on grounds of refusing a suitable and reasonable offer

2.5.0. Applicants will not qualify for social housing in the borough and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues if they have refused any offer of suitable accommodation within the last two years, made or arranged by the council, and there has been no material change in their circumstances so as to make the earlier offer clearly unsuitable in the light of the applicant's changed circumstances.

Persons who do not qualify on grounds of being an applicant with no recognised housing need

2.6.0. Applicants will not qualify for social housing and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues if the council is satisfied, once the application has been assessed, that they are suitably housed, that is, they have no recognised housing need under the Housing Allocation Scheme.

Persons who do not qualify on grounds of behaviour

2.7.0. Applicants will not qualify for social housing in the borough and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues if any of the following circumstances apply:

- a) The council is satisfied that they have, within the preceding 10 years, obtained or attempted to obtain housing or other housing related services/welfare benefits /public funds, from any public body in the UK, by making a false or misleading statement or withholding information, or encouraging someone else to do so on their behalf;
- b) The council is satisfied that they became intentionally homeless (as defined in the Housing Act 1996 S191) from their last home subject to an individual assessment;
- c) The council is satisfied that the applicant is unlikely to satisfactorily manage the tenancy and /or pay their rent because, for example:
 - I. they have been evicted due to anti-social behaviour (including domestic violence and abuse and noise nuisance) or rent arrears;
 - II. they have been served, within the last year, with a notice for breach of their tenancy conditions;
 - III. another person who shared a property occupied by them left because of the applicant's violence/abuse or threats of violence/abuse against them or a person associated with them;
 - IV. they or a member of their household have a history of anti-social behaviour (including domestic violence/abuse and noise nuisance);
 - V. they have a record of failure to pay rent;
 - VI. they have outstanding debt liabilities to the council and are not making satisfactory arrangements to repay those debts.

Persons who do not qualify on grounds of not making a transfer application to their landlord

2.8.0. Applicants will not qualify for social housing in the borough and be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues if they are a tenant of a registered provider of social housing and have not made a transfer application to their landlord unless the application to the council is for sheltered housing or extra care housing or their landlord does not maintain a housing waiting list.

Discretion to waive qualifying criteria

2.9.0. In exceptional circumstances, the qualifying criteria can be waived at the discretion of the responsible manager, deputy manager or more senior officer in the Housing and Regeneration Department. (Please note: where applications for housing are made through the *housingmoves* Pan-London Mobility scheme, the council will apply the qualification criteria set out in this section only to the extent that they are compatible with the *housingmoves* policy framework). Where an assessing officer considers that exceptional circumstances may apply, they will refer the application to the Housing Information and Advice Team Manager or more senior officer to decide whether the criteria in this section should be waived. Furthermore:

- a) Where applications for housing are made through the *housingmoves* Pan-London Mobility scheme, the council will apply the disqualification criteria set out in this section but only where this is consistent with the *housingmoves* policy framework.

PART III. Making an Application, Assessment and Offers of Accommodation **Persons who can be included on an application**

3.0.0. Where two or more persons apply jointly for housing, both of them must be eligible for allocation and at least one of them must be a qualifying person.

3.0.1. Normally, persons included on an application form must be members of the applicant's immediate family who usually reside, or could be reasonably expected to reside, with the applicant. Any other person or persons will only be accepted as part of the applicant's household in circumstances in which it is reasonable for that person or persons to reside with the applicant. This will normally exclude lodgers or anyone subletting from the applicant. An adult applicant may not appear on more than one application for allocation of housing simultaneously.

Making an application

3.1.0. Applications for the allocation of accommodation by the council must be made to the Housing and Regeneration Department by accessing the on line form at www.XXXXXX.gov.uk. Persons needing advice or practical assistance with making an application should contact the housing options and assessment section as detailed in annex A.

3.1.1. Applications for housing will be assessed under this Scheme according to the information the applicant has provided and established from enquiries. When we have received sufficient information and supporting evidence to enable us to assess the application, the applicant will be notified in writing which queue and band they have been placed in.

Proof of identity and supporting information

3.2.0. In addition to the relevant application form (which must be fully completed) all applicants must provide recent, passport-sized photographs (or an alternative type of photographic ID acceptable to the council) of all members of the household, with the person's full name (and, if they are aged 16 years or over, their signature) on the back, proof of identity in a form acceptable to the council for all members of the household (originals must be provided), all documents as detailed in the application form and any other documents reasonably required by the council. Failure to do so will mean that the application cannot be assessed and will be returned to the applicant for completion and/or production of documents not provided.

Misleading information

3.3.0. Any applicant seeking to obtain accommodation by making a false statement, by withholding relevant information or by failing to inform the council of any material change in circumstances commits a criminal offence and is liable to have her or his application cancelled. A prosecution may be pursued and/or the application refused on the basis the applicant is not a qualifying person. Such applications from members, employees, contractors or agents of the council are likely to result in action under the appropriate code.

Members of the council, staff members and their relations

3.4.0. In order to ensure that the council is seen to be treating all applicants fairly, any application for the allocation of housing from members of the council, employees of the council or associated persons (as defined in S178 of the Housing Act 1996) must be disclosed on the application form.

3.4.1. Such applications will be assessed in the normal way but the acceptance of the application must be approved by the Head of Housing Services (Assessment and Adaptation). Any accommodation allocated to the applicant under the scheme must be recommended by the Head of Housing Services (Allocations and Provision) and be approved by the Assistant Director (Housing Services).

Change of address and/or circumstances

3.5.0. Applicants must notify the housing options and assessment section if there are any changes in their circumstances as this may affect their chances of being offered housing. For example, applicants must notify the housing options and assessment section if:

- they move;
- they need to add someone to or remove someone from their application;
- their income changes; or

- they, or anybody included in their application, has medical conditions or disabilities which have changed since they were last assessed.

3.5.1. In order that applications can be assessed in the light of changed circumstances or to check that information held is correct and up to date, applicants may be required to complete a fresh application form. Where an applicant has been made an offer of accommodation and the change of circumstances affects the size/type of accommodation they require, the offer may be withdrawn. This will also be applied where the applicant's change of circumstances means that they no longer meet the criteria for the access queue for which they were assessed when they received their offer of accommodation.

3.5.2. Applicants may be contacted to confirm the information provided in relation to their application and to discuss any further relevant information which may need to be taken into account prior to an offer of accommodation being made. Any information obtained at this stage may be used to reassess the application.

Assessing medical needs

3.6.0. Applicants who indicate in their application that they consider their (or a member of their households) health or disability is seriously aggravated by their current housing conditions should provide as much information as possible on their medical needs to ensure a correct assessment. Applications involving a health related issue will be assessed by the council with advice from either the applicant's doctor or the council's medical advisor as appropriate. The criteria for awarding medical points within the scheme will be applied. Where further information is required, officers of the council may make further enquiries into the issue, subject to the applicant's consent. Applicants will then be advised of the medical priority awarded in accordance with the scheme.

Opportunity to express preference for accommodation or area

3.7.0. The council's policy is not to offer a choice of housing accommodation or area. The council's policy is to offer all applicants the opportunity to express their preferences about accommodation to be allocated to them. Such preferences may cover such issues as property type or location. The council will aim to meet an applicant's preferences wherever possible. However, such preferences may be overridden by the supply of appropriate accommodation and will not preclude applicants being considered for allocation of accommodation which does not meet their preferences but which the council considers is appropriate to their needs.

Awarding additional preference – priority rehousing status

3.8.0. Under the scheme, additional preference may be given to any case within any access queue, which meets the criteria for priority rehousing status, as set out

below. Priority rehousing status will usually be awarded to cases involving multiple needs and/or where there is a serious and credible risk to the applicant's safety in their current accommodation including those who do not satisfy the residency criteria. Priority rehousing status applies to cases which fall within one of the statutory 'reasonable preference' groups in which circumstances indicate an urgent housing need where:

- a) adequate priority is not provided within the access queue into which the application is placed, and there is an urgent need to allocate accommodation to the applicant, justifying acceleration of the applicant ahead of others across all access queues, or
- b) any applicant who is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- c) any applicant who formerly served in the regular forces, or
- d) any applicant who has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their spouse or civil partner who served in the regular forces where death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- e) any applicant who is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service.

3.8.1. The award of priority rehousing status is at the discretion of the Manager or Deputy of the relevant team or more senior officer. It is assessed on a case by case basis. In addition the Assistant Director (Housing Services) has the discretion to deal with any case of an exceptional nature if, in their opinion, the applicant urgently requires allocation but does not qualify for immediate consideration under the rules or the rules do not adequately cover her or his circumstances. Applicants awarded priority rehousing status and exceptional urgent cases will be placed in band A in accordance with the banding system.

Size of accommodation and bedrooms required

3.9.0. With the exception of approved cases within the council's interest queue, the following will apply in assessing the number of bedrooms required by an applicant:

- I. Single person households (other than lone pregnant women and applicants aged 60 or over) will be assessed as requiring self-contained studio flat accommodation.
- II. Lone pregnant women and couples who are expecting their first child and

- III. persons aged 60 or over will be assessed as requiring self-contained one bedroom accommodation.
- IV. A single person with regular, established and demonstrable staying/visiting contact/access to their children following relationship breakdown, where it would be unreasonable to allocate a self-contained studio flat, will be assessed as requiring self-contained one bedroom accommodation.
- V. No account is taken of rooms for living or sleeping which are less than 50 sq.ft.
- VI. The number of bedrooms needed by a household assumes the availability of one living room. Any living accommodation in excess of this is counted as a bedroom.
- VII. If a person has sole use of a room which is used for both living and sleeping it is counted as a bedroom.
- VIII. Where the applicant has child(ren) who is/are the subject of a shared residence order, the housing options and assessment team leader or more senior officer will determine the appropriate accommodation size to be offered on a case by case basis. Their determination will take into account household composition and the period the child(ren) spend living with the applicant.

3.9.1. The size of accommodation offered depends upon the size and composition of the applicant's household. With the exception of the council's interest queue, this will apply across all access queues, as follows:

- Single person households may be offered either a studio flat or one bedroom accommodation.

Thereafter one bedroom is required for:

- a couple
- each unpartnered adult aged 21 years or more
- each pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex
- each pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex
- where none of the above applies, a person aged 10-20 years will be paired with a child aged under 10 years of the same sex
- any remaining unpaired person will be allocated a separate bedroom.

3.9.2. These criteria may not be applied where the Assistant Director (Housing Services) , having considered the recommendations of the Head of Housing Services (Allocations and Provision) and/or the Allocation and Nominations Manager, is satisfied that there would be a serious risk to the health and safety of the child(ren) if they were to share a bedroom. Each application will be considered on its own merits, having regard to medical and or other

relevant professional reports.

Notes:

- a) Other applicants requiring separate bedrooms for medical purposes (as recommended by the council’s medical advisor) will be allocated separate bedrooms.
- b) Where additional persons or family members are married or co-habiting they will be considered as a couple and assessed as requiring one bedroom more than the recorded needs of the main household.
- c) A bathroom or shower room is defined as a separate room. A WC may be a room on its own or incorporated within a bathroom. Single person households living in bedsit or studio accommodation are considered to be adequately housed unless they lack or share facilities.
- d) Households requiring family-sized accommodation may be offered more than one unit of accommodation if the properties are so located as to enable the family to live together in practical terms.

The banding system and points scheme

3.10.0 All applications will be assessed under the scheme according to the information provided by the applicant and established from enquiries. Points are awarded to applicants on the general needs and older persons housing queues as detailed in the table overleaf. This is referred to throughout the scheme as the ‘main’ points scheme. All eligible and qualifying applicants are placed within one of four bands, with band A being the highest band and band D being the lowest, as set out in the table below.

Band	Description of housing circumstances falling within band
A	Accepted homeless families with or expecting a child in bed and breakfast (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)
	All assessed qualifying cases with 300 points or more
	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Under-occupying social housing tenants where two or more bedrooms would be released upon transfer
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
	Cases needing adapted housing due to physical disability where there is an urgent need to relocate
Order of Offers	Time waiting - offers made to cases in date order from date of entry into this band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within annual Allocations Plan
B	All accepted homelessness cases in temporary accommodation provided by the council or in referring accommodation (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)

	All other assessed qualifying cases with 150-299 points	
	Cases accepted onto the supported and/or social care housing queues	
	Under-occupying social housing tenants affected by the social sector size criteria where one bedroom would be released upon transfer	
	Under-occupying social housing tenants on the older persons queue where one bedroom would be released upon transfer	
	All other cases needing adapted housing due to physical disability	
	All Assessed , qualifying households accepted under the Armed Forces Scheme and ready to be made an offer of accommodation	
	Qualifying households where an offer of accommodation would prevent a statutory homeless duty	
Order of Offers	Time waiting - offers made to cases in date order from date of entry into this band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within annual Allocations Plan	
C	All other assessed qualifying cases with between 50 and 149 points	
	All other under-occupying social housing tenants	
	Other cases on the physical disability queue who are already in adapted housing	
Order of Offers	Time waiting - offers made to cases in date order from date of entry into this band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within annual Allocations Plan	
D	All other assessed qualifying cases including those with 1 to 49 points All assessed qualifying cases who have not resided continuously within the Borough for a minimum period of 3 years immediately preceding their application.	
Order of Offers	Time waiting - offers made to cases in date order from date of entry into this band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within annual Allocations Plan	
Points		
Overcrowding	For one bedroom lacking	50
	For two bedrooms lacking	150
	For three or more bedrooms lacking	200
Statutory Overcrowding	Additional overcrowding points for households statutorily overcrowded	20
Unsanitary	Lacking a living room, kitchen, bathroom/WC	30
Sharing	Sharing a living room, kitchen or bathroom/internal WC with persons outside of your household.	15
Unsatisfactory Housing	Two or more children having to share bedroom with a parent or parents	25
	Exception to the above points: single persons assessed as requiring a self-contained studio flat	
Medical Need	Diagnosed ill health or disability, but not of significance to current or future housing needs	0

	Diagnosed ill health or disability, with minor relevance to current or future housing needs	25
	Diagnosed ill health or disability, with moderate relevance to current or future housing needs	75
	Diagnosed ill health or disability, with major relevance to current or future housing needs	150
	The above points award will be made in respect of the person in the household whose ill health has the greatest relevance to current or future housing needs. Five additional points may be added for each additional person within the household affected by diagnosed ill health or disability which is relevant to current or future housing needs	
Community Contribution	Awarded to households receiving points under any of the domain within this points scheme and where at least one member is making a significant contribution to the community. This could include volunteering a not for profit organisation for a minimum of 18 hours a month or organising activities for young people such as a youth club or recognised activity, such as scouts/guides. It would have to be for a minimum period two years prior to the time an offer was made. These points will not be awarded if working points apply.	25
Tenure	Households who are homeless, including rough sleepers, within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) excluding cases accepted within the 'Homeless Queue'	25
Hardship	Households with an established need to move to a particular locality within the borough where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)	10
Back Boiler	Additional points for overcrowded households who use the living room for sleeping purposes and a back boiler is located in this living room	25
Working Households	Households awarded points under any of the criteria above with at least one household member who is 16 years old or over and working 24 hours or more per week in paid employment	50

Offers of accommodation

3.10.0. All applicants will normally receive only one suitable and reasonable offer of accommodation which the council considers suitable to meet their assessed needs. An exception to the one offer rule may be applied to decants and under-occupiers who may be considered for multiple offers.

3.10.1. An offer of accommodation which is made following a nomination to a PRP, a property in the private rented sector for homeless households or other agency counts. Applicants are notified in writing that they have been nominated for an

offer. Applicants are advised that the council have fully considered their needs and believe it to be a final, suitable offer.

- 3.10.2. If a nomination is made to a PRP, the applicant will receive the offer letter from the PRP, following a nomination to the landlord from the council.

Arrangements to view and tenancy agreements

- 3.12.1. All applicants will be given an opportunity to view the property prior to the acceptance of a tenancy.
- 3.12.2. Applicants will be advised that if they fail to view the property or sign the tenancy, this will be classed as a refusal and the application may be cancelled.
- 3.12.3. Applicants will not normally be in competition with others when viewing properties, but in certain circumstances more than one applicant may be invited to view the property. In these cases the offer will be made to the accepting applicant with the highest priority.
- 3.12.4. Following a refusal of an offer of accommodation Senior officers within the Allocation and Nomination team have discretion to extend the period for response to an offer where this is appropriate.

Tenancy agreements

- 3.13.0 Tenancies agreements will be offering in accordance with the tenancy policy of the housing provider to whom the nomination is made by the Council. Tenancy Agreements between partners are normally joint. Consideration will be given by the housing provider to other individual requests for a joint tenancy or requests not to create a joint tenancy.

Refusal of a suitable offer

- 3.14.0. Where a homeless applicant refuses a suitable offer the council will consider whether any legal duty owed to the applicant has been discharged. Generally, where an applicant in any queue other than the Homeless Queue (to whom the specific criteria under Part VII of the Housing Act apply) refuses a suitable offer, the application will be cancelled. Furthermore, for a period of two years following an applicant's refusal of suitable accommodation the applicant will not qualify to be (or remain) registered on the council's housing queues, unless there has been a material change in their circumstances so as to make the earlier offer clearly unreasonable in the light of their changed circumstances. The implications of refusing an offer of accommodation will be notified to applicants in their registration and nomination letters.
- 3.14.1. Except in cases where the applicant is homeless, if an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation, decisions regarding suitability and whether the

application should be cancelled will be taken by the Deputy Housing Information and Advice Manager, Deputy Housing Casework and Reviews Manager, Deputy Temporary Accommodation Manager, Deputy Allocations Manager or a more senior officer.

- 3.14.2. Homeless applicants who are considering refusing an offer of accommodation made to them in discharge of the council's statutory obligations will be advised to contact the Allocations and Nominations team. Officers will then make an initial assessment of whether the offer is suitable for the applicant's assessed need, advise the applicants of the review process and the consequences of refusing an offer if any review is rejected.
- 3.14.3. An offer of accommodation made following a nomination to a PRP will count as an offer of accommodation.
- 3.14.4. Under-occupiers and decants refusing an offer may be exempt from having their application cancelled and their applications may remain active.

Right to request reviews

- 3.15.0. The Housing Act 1996 gives applicants the right to request the council to review certain decisions made under the scheme. Under S166A(9)(c) of the Housing Act 1996 applicants have the right to request a review of the following and to be informed of the decision on the review and the grounds for it:
 - a) any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be or has been taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to them; and
 - b) any decision made under S160ZA(9) of the Housing Act 1996 that they are either;
 - c) ineligible for an allocation by virtue of S160ZA(2) or S160ZA(4) of the Housing Act 1996; or
 - d) not a qualifying person.
- 3.15.1. Applicants will be notified in writing of any decision taken under S160ZA(9), the grounds for the decision, and the administrative arrangements for exercising their right to request a review.
- 3.15.2. Applicants placed on the homeless queue have an additional right to request a review of the suitability of accommodation offered to them under the Housing Act S202. Allocations and Nominations team will notify this right to the applicant within the homeless queue at the time of allocation. Applicants who are homeless and who have a priority need only by reliance on a household member who is a "restricted person", have the right to request a review of the suitability of accommodation offered as a 'private sector offer'.

3.15.3. Generally, requests for a review must be made within 21 days of the person being informed, in writing, of the council's decision. Requests received after this period may proceed at the discretion of the reviewing officer or a more senior officer as appropriate. The applicant will be notified of the outcome of a review in writing, including any reasons if the original decision is confirmed.

Part IV. The access queues

Homeless queue

3.16.0. Homeless applicants will be assessed under the allocation scheme when the council accepts it has a duty (under the Housing Act 1996 S193 (2)). Each homeless person owed this duty will be interviewed by their allocated case officer to discuss future housing options, needs, prospects and preferences. Applicants owed this duty will then be placed in the homeless queue, unless matched to a private rented sector offer. Accepted homeless cases for which the homelessness application was made on or after 9 November 2012, will be considered for an offer in the private sector. Accepted applications within this queue will be placed into one of two bands, A (highest) or B, as follows and priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual Allocations Plan.

Band	
A	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
	All accepted homeless families with or expecting a child in bed and breakfast (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)
B	All other accepted homeless cases in temporary accommodation provided by the council or referring accommodation (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)

General needs queue

3.17.0. The general needs queue will include qualifying applicants who are:

- a) homeless but not owed the principal homelessness duty under the Housing Act 1996 S.193(2);
- b) not applying for specialised adapted or supported accommodation;
- c) displaced persons; e.g. households who have lost their accommodation due to demolition, a closing order or through compulsory purchase;
- d) HM Forces applicants not threatened with homelessness or accepted as being owed the duty referred to in (a) above or awarded priority rehousing

status. Each year, a small number of offers for applicants who are serving or who have served in HM Armed Forces at any time in the five years preceding their application for housing will be provided within the general needs queue, as long as they have a local connection with Richmond. At the discretion of the Housing Information and Advice Manager or more senior officer, applications made via organisations from which the council has agreed to accept referrals may be considered regardless of whether the applicants have a local connection to the borough or when they left the armed forces. The forecast number of properties to be made available will be determined as part of the approval of the Allocations Plan. Applicants will be prioritised at the discretion of the rehousing procurement and adaptations manager, with reference to (a) their assessed housing need and (b) the strength of any local connection (as defined within Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) with the borough;

3.17.1. Under-occupying social tenants who transfer to smaller accommodation may receive a discretionary payment of £2,500 per bedroom released by the move is offered, plus assistance with removal expenses, where the council receives the released property to nominate an applicant from the housing register.

3.17.2. Applications within the general needs queue will be assessed according to the main points scheme and then will be placed into one of four bands (A (highest) B, C, D). Priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual Allocations Plan.

Band	
A	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
	All assessed qualifying cases with 300 points or more
	Under-occupying social housing tenants where two or more bedrooms would be released upon transfer*
B	Under-occupying social housing tenants affected by the social sector size criteria where one bedroom would be released upon transfer*
	All assessed , qualifying households accepted under the Armed Forces scheme and ready to be made an offer of accommodation
	Qualifying households where an offer of accommodation would prevent a statutory homeless duty
	Cases moving under agreed housing mobility schemes including housingmoves
	All other assessed qualifying cases with 150 to 299 points
C	All other under-occupying social housing tenants*
	All other assessed qualifying cases with 50 to 149 points
D	All other assessed qualifying cases including those with 1 to 49 points
	All assessed qualifying cases who have not resided continuously within the Borough for a minimum period of 3 years. immediately preceding their application.

* This would apply to under-occupying housing association tenants

Older persons housing queue (sheltered and extra care housing)

3.18.0. The council maintains a separate queue for older people seeking sheltered or extra care housing.

Sheltered Housing

3.19.0. Any eligible and qualifying person aged 55 years or over, can apply for sheltered housing. The main points scheme is used to determine priorities for allocation of sheltered accommodation. Partners, carers or other person(s) reasonably expected to reside with the applicant(s) may be included in the application.

3.19.1. If the applicant meets the age criteria, the Housing Advice and Information team will determine if they are suitable for sheltered housing. Examples of factors that may be taken into consideration in deciding whether an applicant should be registered on the older persons queue are:

- whether appropriate and satisfactory risk and support plans are in place
- whether the applicant would be able to live in a sheltered scheme without any risk to existing residents or staff and not affect the balanced community and well-being within any scheme.

3.19.2. Applicants not accepted onto the older persons queue may be assessed for the appropriate access queue and will be notified of the decision together with other housing options. Applications for sheltered housing will be placed into one of four bands (A (highest), B, C and D). Priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual allocations plan.

Extra Care Housing

3.20.0. Any eligible and qualifying person aged 55 years or over, can apply for extra care housing, which is self-contained accommodation similar to sheltered housing but with an extra element of on-site care provided to meet a residents assessed, eligible care needs. The main points scheme is used to determine priorities for allocation of extra care accommodation. Partners, carers or other person(s) reasonably expected to reside with the applicant(s) may be included in the application.

3.20.1. Applicants must be referred for extra care housing by a Social Worker, Occupational Therapist or other health care professional who is providing support. The applicant must be eligible and verified for social housing in their respective borough and have a minimum of 10 hours of care needs per week. The case will be presented to the extra care panel for consideration of the applicants suitability for this type of social housing. If a case is approved by the panel the applicant will be placed onto the extra care waiting list. If a case is not approved the health care professional has the opportunity to present further information for the panel to consider. When a vacant property becomes available priority will be given to the applicant with the highest number of care hours on the approved waiting list, unless there is an

applicant who is bed-blocking in hospital who has also been approved for extra care. Refusals of an extra care property will be assessed by the panel on a case by case basis.

3.20.2. If the applicant meets the age criteria, the Housing Advice and Information team will determine if they are suitable for sheltered housing. Examples of factors that may be taken into consideration in deciding whether an applicant should be registered on the older persons queue are:

- whether appropriate and satisfactory risk and support plans are in place
- whether the applicant would be able to live in a sheltered scheme without any risk to existing residents or staff and not affect the balanced community and well-being within any scheme.

3.20.3. Applicants not accepted onto the older persons queue may be assessed for the appropriate access queue and will be notified of the decision together with other housing options. Applications for sheltered housing will be placed into one of four bands (A (highest), B, C and D). Priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual Allocations Plan.

Band	
A	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
	All assessed qualifying cases with 300 points or more
	Under-occupying social housing tenants where two or more bedrooms would be released upon transfer
B	Under-occupying social housing tenants on the older persons queue where one bedroom would be released upon transfer
	Qualifying households where an offer of accommodation would prevent a statutory homeless duty
	Cases moving under agreed housing mobility schemes including housingmoves
	All accepted homelessness cases in temporary accommodation provided by the council or in referring accommodation (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)
	All other assessed qualifying cases with 15-299 points
	Qualifying households where an offer of accommodation would prevent a statutory homeless duty
C	All other assessed qualifying cases with between 50 and 149 points
D	All other assessed qualifying cases including those with 1 to 49 points All assessed qualifying cases who have not resided continuously within the Borough for a minimum period of 3 years. immediately preceding their application.

Physical disability queue

- 3.21. The council maintains a separate queue for people seeking specially designed or adapted property (mainly for wheelchair users) suitable for persons with physical disabilities. The physical disability queue is open to all applicants who are eligible and a qualifying person for allocation and who, due to their disability, require specifically designed or adapted accommodation.
- 3.21.2. All applications are subject to an assessment by, and recommendation from, the council's occupational therapy service (OT) or the children's occupational therapy service. Following receipt of an OT assessment, the applicant will be notified of the outcome.
- 3.21.3. Applications within the physical disability queue will be placed into one of three bands (A (highest) B, or C). Priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual Allocations Plan.

Band	
A	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
	Cases needing adapted housing due to physical disability where there is an urgent need to relocate
	Accepted homeless families with or expecting a child in bed and breakfast (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)
	Under-occupying social housing tenants where two or more bedrooms would be released upon transfer
B	All other cases needing adapted housing due to physical disability
	All other accepted homeless cases in temporary accommodation provided by the council (unless matched to a private rented sector offer)
	Under-occupying social tenants affected by the social sector size criteria where one bedroom would be released upon transfer
C	All other under-occupying social housing tenants
	Other cases on the physical disability queue who are already in adapted housing

Supported queue

- 3.22.0. The council maintains a separate queue to provide general needs housing to assist care management processes for those households consisting of, or including someone with a particular need for housing on welfare grounds. Applicants within this queue will include persons nominated by social services under inter-department co-operative working arrangements, persons suffering mental ill health and persons with learning disabilities who require specific support. Applicants within this queue also include persons living in supported or other housing where the Council provide a 'move-on & resettlement'

rehousing quota each year to partner, third sector agencies.

- 3.22.1. Households with a mental health illness or disability for whom the council has accepted a duty under the Housing Act 1996 S.193 (2), subject to an individual assessment, may be added to this queue.
- 3.22.2. The supported queue is open to applicants who are eligible and a qualifying person for allocation where the council accepts that they require housing with support provided and where they have been nominated to the Housing and Regeneration department by either social services or other approved partner support agency.
- 3.22.3. Referrals will be made in line with inter-agency agreements agreed from time to time.

Applications

- 3.23.3. Nominations must be made by the relevant nominating agency on the prescribed form and forwarded to the Housing Information and Advice team manager. The Housing Information and Advice team manager or more senior officer may require further information from the nominating agency before approval where inadequate information has been provided.
- 3.23.4. The council will notify the nominating agency of the outcome in writing following receipt of all necessary information.
- 3.23.5. The nominating agency will be advised of an offer of accommodation at the same time as the nominee.
- 3.23.6. Applications within the supported queue will be placed into one of two bands (A (highest) or B). Priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual Allocations Plan.

Band	
A	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
B	All other cases accepted onto the supported queue

Social care queue

- 3.24.0. The purpose of the social care queue is to provide housing for families with children or other persons nominated by social services and/or Achieving for Children (AFC) under joint protocol arrangements within the council.
- 3.24.1. By way of example, nominations may be made in the following situations:

- children leaving the council’s care who have no viable home base but have achieved the necessary stage of readiness and preparation to live independently;
- cases whose applications for rehousing are supported by social services in furtherance of the council’s fostering policies;
- parent(s) with a child/children who is/are the subject/s of a child protection plan, where social services considers their present housing to represent a significant risk;
- a family with a child that needs to move due to requiring specifically designed and/or adapted accommodation arising from learning disabilities and/or difficulties.

3.24.2. All applicants must be eligible and qualifying persons for allocation of accommodation. The final decision on admission to the queue is made by the Housing Information and Advice team leader or more senior officer. The Housing and Regeneration department will notify the relevant service in writing of the outcome following receipt of all necessary information.

3.24.3. Applications within the social care queue will be placed into one of two bands (A (highest) or B). Priority between applicants in the same band will be determined by time waiting. Offers will be made in date order from date of entry into the band, subject to suitability considerations and targets within the annual Allocations Plan.

Band	
A	Cases awarded priority rehousing status
	Urgent cases approved by senior management
B	All other cases accepted onto the social care queue

Council’s interest queue

3.25.0. For employees of the council occupying tied accommodation for the better performance of their duties and who are affected by retirement or redundancy, a nomination for an offer of accommodation will be made by the employing director to the Director of Housing and Regeneration or authorised senior officer. The applicant will be asked to complete an application form and to provide any information reasonably required by the Housing and Regeneration department to verify her or his circumstances and to decide whether she/he is eligible and a qualifying person for assistance and what accommodation would be suitable for her/him.

Annex A

How to contact the Housing and Regeneration department and ombudsman

Senior staff within housing services are detailed below..

Head of Housing Services (Assessment and Adaptation)

Responsible for the assessment of housing applications, including assessment of whether applicants are eligible for and qualify for social housing in Richmond.

XXXXXXXX (020) XXXXXX General enquiries and housing queues

- Homeless
- General needs
- Under-occupation
- Social care
- Supported
- Physical disability
- Older persons housing

Telephone: XXXXX

Email: housingapplications@XXXXXXXXX.gov.uk

Allocations and Nominations Team

Head of Housing Services (Allocations and Provision)

XXXXXXXX Allocations and Nominations Manager

XXXXXXXX Temporary Accommodation Manager

XXXXXXXX You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman, for complaints relating to matters within the Council's control, at:

Local Government Ombudsman, P.O.Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman, for matters within the control of Housing Associations to who to Council has nomination rights, at:

Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk