

## Changes to the housing allocation scheme - fact sheet

### Introduction

The council has recently agreed changes to the way social housing is allocated. The new scheme focuses on:

- Helping those in most housing need
- Rewarding residents with a long attachment to the borough
- Rewarding residents who make a contribution to the local community
- Providing a fair and transparent system by which people are prioritised for social housing
- Supporting residents to actively pursue suitable alternative housing options.

### What has changed?

#### 1. Residency criteria

Old policy	New Policy
At present, an applicant must have lived in Havering for a continuous period of at least six years before joining the housing register.	Under the new policy, this criterion will remain however, homeless households from traveller communities, and refugees who can demonstrate they have lived continuously for five out of six years in Havering will be permitted to join the housing register.

#### 2. Income thresholds

Old Policy	New Policy
At present, an applicant cannot join the housing register if the household income is £36,000 or more because of the severe shortage of social and affordable rented properties in the borough.	<p>The threshold has been revised to reflect a two-tier assessment for applicants, split into singles and couples, and applicants with children.</p> <p>Single people and couples without children will see the income threshold remain at £36,000, which is in line with average market rents.</p> <p>Applicants with one child or more will see the threshold increased to £50,000 in line with increase in average market rents.</p> <p>It is expected that a household with earnings, savings and assets above these thresholds can afford to rent or</p>

	<p>buy property in order to resolve their housing situation.</p> <p>In addition, the amount of savings an applicant can hold before being ineligible to join the register has risen from £16,000 to £30,000.</p>
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**3. Revised priority banding system**

Old Policy	New Policy
<p>At present, there are five priority bands, some of which do not address the severity of individual needs.</p>	<p>Under the new policy, all applicants will be assessed and placed into one of five revised priority bands that recognise individual circumstances.</p> <p>The changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbered banding system (Bands 1 to 3) to replace the current banding format (ER to RP).</li> <li>• Removal of the RP band so that homeless applicants are assessed under the same criteria as other applicants.</li> <li>• Splitting the community contribution reward into three bands – 2a, 2b and 2c - in order to encourage and support households into work etc.</li> </ul>

A summary of the five new priority bands are below:

<u>Band 1</u>	For households with an urgent need to move. Examples include life threatening health or medical needs, threat of violence, critical safeguarding issues and serious housing disrepair.
<u>Band 2a</u>	For households with an identified housing need <b>plus</b> Community Contribution for working, ex-service personnel, applicants leaving care, and disabled applicants who are unable to participate in work related activities.
<u>Band 2b</u>	For households with an identified housing need <b>plus</b> Community Contribution for fostering and/or adopting, council tenants needing to downsize, council employees leaving tied accommodation, and council tenants awarded succession rights but are required to downsize.
<u>Band 2c</u>	For households with an identified housing need <b>plus</b> Community Contribution for volunteering, caring for a Havering resident, applicants required to move from specialist accommodation, and homeless households in temporary accommodation who are required to move-on.
<u>Band 3</u>	Households with an identified housing need only.

4. Choice Based Lettings

Under the new policy, we will continue to advertise properties through East London Lettings Company.

5. One offer only policy

One offer only	Refusing an offer
Under the new policy, all applicants (except for applicants under the Council's regeneration decant scheme) will receive one suitable offer of housing in order to reduce the current level of refusals and delay in letting properties at a time of high demand for housing.	<p>The consequences of refusing an offer of accommodation will depend on the housing need reason:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeless applicants who refuse a reasonable offer will have their rehousing duty discharged and temporary accommodation cancelled.</li> <li>• Applicants in very urgent need to move, who have made direct offers and refuse a reasonable offer, will have their application cancelled and</li> </ul>

	<p>eviction proceedings will commence if they live in council accommodation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All other applicants who refuse a reasonable offer (a property considered to be affordable and in lettable standard) will be removed from the housing register for 12 months.</li></ul> <p>Applicants will have a right of review if they consider the offer to be unreasonable.</p>
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**6. Frequency of bidding activity**

Under the new policy, there will be regular monitoring of bidding activity to ensure that applicants actively participate in securing alternative accommodation.

If an applicant fails to bid for suitable properties that are available for six months from the date they join the housing register, they may be suspended for a period of six months and not be able to bid during that time.

**7. Annual review of applications**

Under the new policy, your housing circumstances will be reviewed following a change of circumstances or on the anniversary of your application to ensure that your housing circumstances have not changed.

**8. Sheltered housing eligibility criteria**

Eligibility criteria has been revised under the new policy to ensure people who require medium to high levels of support have access to sheltered accommodation within the borough. Applicants interested in sheltered accommodation must be aged 55 years and over.

**What do the changes mean for me and how will I be affected?**

**1. People already on the housing register**

*Housing priority band*

All eligible applicants will be placed into one of the new five priority bands from Monday 1 August 2022.

### *Change of circumstance*

If your circumstances change, you must reapply and your application will be re-assessed based on the new allocations policy scheme.

You should let us know if you have: had a baby, started work, experienced a change in or developed a medical condition, had a change in income.

### *Other changes*

Including one offer policy, annual review of applications, bidding activity monitoring and sheltered housing criteria will be implemented from Monday 1 August 2022.

## 2. New people applying to join the housing register

All new applications will be assessed based on the new allocations scheme.

### **How to apply**

In order to apply, please visit our online application form at [www.havering.gov.uk](http://www.havering.gov.uk).

We aim to assess and inform you of the outcome of your application within 42 days.

For more information on the changes and what they may mean to you, you can read the full Housing Allocation Scheme at [www.havering.gov.uk](http://www.havering.gov.uk). You can also discuss these changes with a member of our team on 01708 434130.