

# Housing Allocations in Southwark



**9 APRIL 14**

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**Have your say on how we allocate homes in Southwark**

**[www.southwark.gov.uk/housingallocations](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/housingallocations)**

Please Respond by 1 June 2021

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## Social Housing in Southwark

There is a massive shortage of council housing in the UK; the problem is bigger in London than anywhere else. In Southwark, we have just over 15,000 households on our housing register yet we can only house approximately less than 15% of households every year, which has been declining in recent years. House prices and rents in the private sector have risen more than incomes, therefore placing even greater demand on scarce housing.

### Why do we need the allocations scheme?

The council is required by law to have a housing allocations scheme. The allocations scheme sets out the eligibility and qualification criteria for households to be placed on the council's housing register. The scheme will set out the criteria for how households will be differentiated from other households with different needs and provide priority to specific groups.

Therefore we have to decide who gets priority and the allocations scheme is how we do this. Longer term, we are using every tool at our disposal to increase the supply of all kinds of homes across the borough, including building 11,000 new council homes for social rent. We are also aiming to ensure we are able to provide as much assistance to residents and provide access to alternative housing options.

### How does the allocations scheme work?

The council current operates a choice-based lettings system that allows residents to bid on available properties that become available each week.

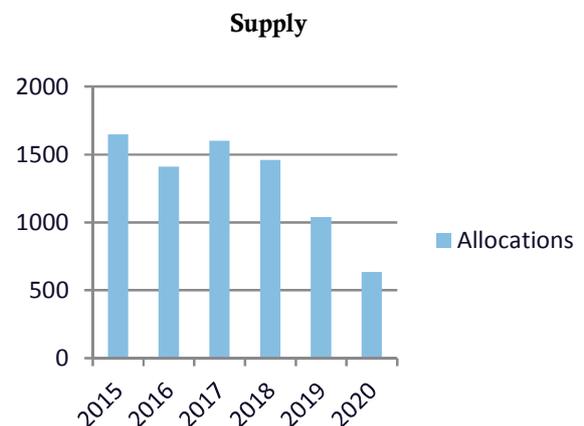
When someone applies to join the housing register, we assess their application and place them into one of 4 bands. Band 1 is the highest priority and band 4 is the lowest.

### Demand



The above represents the yearly demand on social housing through the number of housing application forms received by the council. There has been a general increase over time.

### Supply



In relation to the previous graph, the graph above shows the supply of social housing over recent years. The supply has steadily decreased over time. Many households are now remaining on our housing register for longer periods and households in the lower bands are seeing fewer successful bids.

Waiting Times for Applicants on the Housing Register in the year 2019 (Years)							
Tenancy Type	Band	Number of bedrooms required					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
Council Tenancy	1	n/a	1½	4	3½	6	n/a
	2	2	1½	2	5½	8	5
	3	2½	3	4	6	5	n/a
Housing Association	1	0	2	2½	4	2	n/a
	2	1	1	2	6½	3	½
	3	9	3	3	5	4	4

### Waiting Times

The above table shows estimated waiting times (in years) for applicants on the housing register in the year 2019 across all priority bands. This represents the data on households that have been housed. We however have a number of households who have been waiting significantly longer periods still on the housing register.

### Why do we need to change the scheme?

We last changed the scheme in 2014. At this time, we had almost double the number of homes becoming available for social renting than we do today. We want to create a simpler and more transparent housing register suitable for the situation in Southwark today. There have also been some changes to the law that we need to take into account.

### Why are we consulting?

We know that having a safe and secure home is one of the most important things in life.

We also know that we make better decisions when we listen to residents, and customers, so we genuinely want to know what you think.

We will publish the results of this consultation and explain how we plan to use your feedback by the end of June 2021.

### How did we make these changes?

There has never been more demand for affordable housing. We're proposing 10 key changes to make the scheme clearer and fairer, but we want to know what you think of the changes.

We also sought advice from local advocates, legal counsel and council departments.

Existing Scheme	Revised Scheme
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory Overcrowded households</li> <li>• Southwark Tenants living in homes affected by regeneration schemes</li> <li>• Tenants who are under-occupying their homes</li> <li>• Households affected by a regeneration scheme</li> <li>• Tenants who require an emergency move</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory overcrowded households who lack 2 or more rooms (<b>redefined</b>)</li> <li>• Southwark Tenants living in homes affected by regeneration schemes</li> <li>• Tenants under occupying their homes</li> <li>• Households affected by a regeneration scheme</li> <li>• Tenants who require an emergency move</li> <li>• <b>Current and former armed service personnel in housing need</b></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households who need to move due to severe welfare grounds</li> <li>• Households who need to move due to severe medical grounds</li> <li>• Households who permanently lack hot water/heating/a kitchen or bathroom</li> <li>• <b>Secure or assured tenants who have lived at the tenancy for 5 years or more, have no related housing debt and have not breached the terms of the tenancy agreement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Current and former armed service personnel in a housing need</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households who need to move due to severe welfare grounds</li> <li>• Households who need to move due to severe medical grounds</li> <li>• Households who permanently lack hot water/heating/a kitchen or bathroom</li> <li>• <b>Homeless households who accept an offer in the private sector to prevent their homelessness or continued stay within temporary accommodation</b></li> <li>• <b>Overcrowded households (redefined)</b></li> <li>• <b>Households nominated by social services.</b></li> <li>• <b>Applicants fleeing domestic abuse</b></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeless households the council owe a statutory duty.</li> <li>• Overcrowded households</li> <li>• Households with moderate medical needs</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeless households who the council owe a statutory duty.</li> <li>• Overcrowded households (<b>redefined</b>)</li> <li>• Households with moderate medical needs</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reduced priority due to rent arrears</b></li> <li>• People with no special needs (everyone else)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Applicants who would be in bands 1-3 but lack a local connection with Southwark.</b></li> <li>• <b>Reduced priority due to failed tenancy inspection</b></li> <li>• Applicants not assessed in bands 1-3</li> </ul>

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## 1. We want homes to go to local people

### What happens now?

You cannot be on the register unless you have a “connection” to Southwark. You have a connection if you have lived in Southwark for 5 years or worked in Southwark for at least 9 of the last 12 months, or have close relatives here.

### What are we proposing to change?

You will only have a connection if you have lived in Southwark for the last five consecutive years. Working local connection criteria will only apply to key workers whom, through their work, are completing a community contribution.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 2. We want to increase priority for Domestic Abuse households – band 3 increased to band 2

### What happens now?

Accepted homeless households as a result of domestic abuse are placed in band 3 and are on average required to remain in temporary accommodation for approximately 3 to 5 years.

### What are we proposing to change?

We will increase the priority banding to band 2, to enable domestic abuse households the ability to achieve a move within a shorter period.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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### 3. We want to make our allocations scheme fairer and easier to understand.

#### What happens now?

Existing council tenants with no housing need can benefit from the 'Good tenant' award placing households in band 2 whom have paid their rent on time and have no associated antisocial behavioral issues. Additionally some households who are working or volunteering will get additional priority within a band through our starring system.

#### What are we proposing to change?

We aim to remove the community contribution 'Good tenant' band 2 award. We aim to simplify the starring system, applying the voluntary contribution star for residents volunteering for the local tenants and residents association. All other stars will be removed.

#### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

#### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 4. We want to build stronger local communities in line with our new build developments.

### What happens now?

New build council homes are subject to a 50% allocation to the local community. The homes will be allocated once the development is completed.

### What are we proposing to change?

We aim to increase the percentage of local lettings offers of new build schemes. This will also include pre allocation 10 weeks after construction starts to enable residents to ability have an input into their new home.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 5. We want residents to feel comfortable with their engagement with the Homesearch bidding scheme.

### What happens now?

Households engaging in the bidding system are permitted to refuse only three offers of suitable accommodation. Upon the refusal of the third offer, their application will be demoted to band 4 for 12 months.

### What are we proposing to change?

We aim to remove penalties for residents refusing accommodation with the exception of homeless households residing in temporary accommodation.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 6. We want to help members of the armed forces

### What happens now?

People who are being evicted from housing provided by the armed forces because their partner has died in service currently go into band 2.

### What are we proposing to change?

These people will now go into band 1. Members of the armed forces with a serious illness or injury already go into band 1.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 7. We want to help homeless people

### What happens now?

Homeless people go into band 3 but need expensive and hard to find temporary accommodation until they are housed through the register. People may live in temporary accommodation for years in expensive and sometimes inappropriate temporary accommodation that does not lead to the customer having choice of the re-housing options open to others.

### What are we proposing to change?

We will offer homeless people the chance to rent privately, rather than live in temporary accommodation. In return we will put them in band 2, rather than band 3, which should mean they are housed through the register more quickly.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 8. We want to ensure homes go to residents who are in a housing need.

### What happens now?

We currently advertise properties through our Homesearch bidding scheme in which residents are able to bid for properties that meet their needs i.e. bedroom entitlement, adaptations and older persons dwellings.

### What are we proposing to change?

We aim to produce an Annual Lettings Plan; this will set annual targets for property types across all priority needs bands, and ensure applicants in the highest priority needs groups are re-housed as soon as possible through active support from the council. This lettings plan will also highlight the reason for the households being accommodated, the percentage of lettings to each property type and the number of properties used as temporary accommodation.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 9. We want to prioritise nominations for Adult/Children's services nominations – care leavers, foster carers and adoptions needing a larger home

### What happens now?

At present care leavers are awarded band 2 but can only bid for bedsits. Other social services nominations are placed in band 2.

### What are we proposing to change?

We are proposing to maintain this position, awarding band 2 to households who have been nominated by social services.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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## 10. We want to provide the correct level of priority for households residing in overcrowded conditions

### What happens now?

- Band 1 priority is awarded to households residing in overcrowded conditions as defined by the law.
- Band 3 priority is awarded to households residing accommodation one bedroom short of their bedroom entitlement.

### What are we proposing to change?

We are proposing to maintain two levels of overcrowding however we wish to have the following criteria:

- Band 1 – Southwark council, housing association and private tenants who are statutorily overcrowded and lack 2 or more bedrooms.
- Band 3 - Tenants whom are overcrowded but do not meet the band 1 criteria.

### Do you agree with the change?

Yes     No     Not sure

### Do you have any comments on this?

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**We also wish to understand if you would like to have further levels of priority for residents based on the level of overcrowding. Therefore can you please answer the following questions?**

Please note these questions are not part of the proposed allocations scheme, however, we are aware that overcrowding makes up approximately 30% of our housing register, therefore we wanted to obtain views on alternatives to our proposed scheme.

**A) Do you think we should only award households emergency housing band 1 priority for households who lack 3 or more rooms in their accommodation?**

Yes     No     Not sure

**B) Do you think we should award Band 2 to households who lack 2 rooms in their accommodation?**

Yes     No     Not sure

**C) Do you think we should add band 3 to household who lack 1 bedroom in their current accommodation?**

Yes     No     Not sure

**D) Do you think adult children (over 21) should not be included in the overcrowded calculation for higher levels of priority where there is no requirement medical (receiving or providing caring), to reside as part of the household?**

Yes     No     Not sure

**Do you have any comments on this?**

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The full policy proposals can be found via the link below:

<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7220>

Do you have any other comments? These can be about the scheme or housing in general.

**Thank you for taking part in this  
consultation**

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## Housing Allocations scheme - Questions and Answers

**Q. I am currently under occupying a social housing tenancy. Will I still get priority to downsize into a property that is suitable for my needs?**

A. Yes, we have classified residents under occupying accommodation as unsatisfactory. We want to enable residents to have the ability to move into a property size that is suitable for their housing needs and therefore you will retain your position in band 1.

**Q. I am not in a housing need. Will I still be able to join the housing register under the new qualifying/eligibility criteria?**

A. All residents who meet our qualification criteria will remain or be able to join our housing list. This includes residents who have resided in the borough for five years or more, keyworker residents who are in a housing need and accepted homeless households. The council also considers any other exceptional circumstances. If you do not qualify or are not eligible to join the register following the changes, you will be offered advice and assistance to pursue other rehousing options to meet your household needs.

**Q. I have been on the housing register but I do not bid every week as I am in a low priority band. Will my position on the housing register be maintained?**

A. Our system will monitor individual bidding frequency. Where a resident does not place a bid in a 12 month period, they will be removed from the housing register. We, however, will write to residents in advance of any closure and possibility of being removed from our housing register.

**Q. How am I going to get a home if I do not qualify to join the housing register?**

A. The council will provide information about all housing options available to residents who approach the authority for assistance.

**Q. Under the proposed scheme, non-dependent adult children will only be added to the application at the discretion of the rehousing manager. Will my adult children be removed from my application on the implementation of the new allocations scheme?**

A. No, the council is not attempting to split up families. All existing households registered on our system will continue to remain on our housing register; however, due to the lack of available housing stock, the council will aim to provide greater

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options for individuals within a household who do not normally need to reside together.

**Q. I have lived in Southwark for the last 3 years and I am a keyworker who works in a neighbouring borough. I do not have a housing need. Do I qualify for the housing register?**

A. No, due to the shortages of available properties, we have to ensure that priority is given to local residents who have a housing need.

**Q. I'm currently living in a studio flat with my 3 year old son. If priority bands are changing does that mean I will remain in band 3?**

A. There will be no change to clients overcrowded in a studio/bedsit flat. Under the proposed changes, households in a studio/bedsit with a child under 5 years of age will be considered overcrowded and will be able to bid for 1 bedroom properties. However, households in a one bedroom property, with one child under 5 will no longer be considered as overcrowded and no longer qualify for any overcrowding priority.

**Q. I am a single person listed on the housing register and am able to bid for a 1 bedroom property, will this remain under the new policy?**

A. Under the proposed scheme, single person households will be eligible to bid for studio/bedsit properties only.

**Q. I'm living in a multi-generational household with my partner, my parents and my adult siblings. Due to the size of the property we have no priority on the waiting list. I have been bidding in band 4 for the past five years. Under the proposed Housing Allocations policy, will there be a higher priority for local households?**

A. Under the proposed scheme, priority will not be provided for multigenerational households. However should the sub households be overcrowded, you could potentially benefit from future local lettings schemes and have priority for accommodation in the local area.

**Q. I am an accepted homeless applicant and I am currently residing in a**

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**temporary accommodation, I have been advised that I will receive a direct offer of permanent social accommodation, will I be able to refuse this offer and continue to bid?**

- A. Accepted homeless households who are residing in temporary accommodation will receive one suitable offer. Due to pressures on temporary accommodation and in line with the relevant legislation, the council is only required to make one suitable offer; therefore homeless households will not be able to refuse a suitable offer.

**Q. Will the changes mean there will be more properties available for my household to bid upon?**

- A. It is not likely there will be more properties available due to the proposed changes. In addition, the waiting times are not likely to improve due to the increasing demand. The council is doing all we can to build as many new homes as possible and have committed to building 11,000 new homes.

**Q. I am an accepted homeless resident who is currently in temporary accommodation, registered in band 3, will my priority change as a result of this?**

- A. No, if the proposed housing allocations scheme is adopted, residents listed on our housing register will remain in band 3. However if you are an accepted homeless household and have been placed in temporary accommodation as a result of domestic abuse, you will be placed in band 2.

**Q. How would an annual lettings plan be determined?**

- A. The housing allocations scheme is monitored to ensure allocations reflect those that are in a housing need and meet the requirements of legislation. A report will be drawn up and will set targets across all priority bands.

**Q. I'm an accepted homeless household in temporary accommodation, I have been bidding for 5 years in Band 3. I should be in a higher band.**

- A. Under the proposed Allocations scheme applicants who accept an offer in the private rented sector in borough or out of borough, will be awarded a higher priority on Southwark housing register in Band 2.

**Q. I am currently on the system and I have been awarded two priority stars, one for my voluntary work with the local charity and one for my employment. How**

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**will this impact my application given the newly proposed allocations scheme?**

A. Residents who are volunteering for their local tenants and residents association will be eligible for a priority star, under the proposed scheme. If you are volunteering for your local charity, this additional priority will be removed alongside any other priority stars. All other applicants will be prioritised for accommodation firstly by their assessed band, and then the length of time they've been on the housing register.

**Q. I have left the Armed Forces due to injury and Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Can I join the housing register?**

A. Yes, we want to help our ex-service personnel by ensuring that they are able to access social housing.

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