



The Common Housing Register Partnership

Partner landlords



Lettings Policy

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Introduction

1. Many people in Tower Hamlets apply for social housing. Tower Hamlets Council and its Registered Social Landlord partners have jointly created a Common Housing List to register everyone who applies for housing and is eligible to go onto the List. All available housing is offered to people on the Housing List.
 2. Although the Council and its partners work to provide as many homes as possible, there are many more people on the Housing List than there are homes available. Many who apply will have little or no chance of being offered a home. Even those who do have a chance may have a long wait.
 3. People have many important reasons for wanting to move, such as being overcrowded, not having a secure place of their own, wanting to be nearer family, a friend, nearer to work or wanting to move to another area.
 4. Some people must be rehoused because their homes are being demolished as part of plans to regenerate the Borough and to improve the quality of life for all residents. Others live in homes that are larger than they need. By moving to smaller homes their larger home can be offered to a family on the Housing List.
 5. Some people need housing because where they live is unsuitable. This may be because it is too small, is bad for someone with serious health or disability problems or needs such major repairs that they cannot live there whilst the repairs are being done. Others are threatened with homelessness.
 6. All these competing demands have to be considered and difficult decisions made about who should be offered the limited number of homes available each year. As required by law, the Council and its Common Housing Register partners have developed this lettings policy in order to decide how to give priority for housing. This was after consultation with applicants on the Housing List, Tower Hamlets residents and other stakeholder organisations and partners.
 7. An important aim of the lettings policy is to make it clear how decisions are made so that people who are not offered a home can understand how priority for housing is decided and have trust and confidence in how decisions are made.
 8. How applicants are assessed; the priority they are given and how it is decided who will be offered a home is set out below. The document is in two parts.
Part I - shows how priority is decided and how homes are allocated
Part II - sets out the full policy in detail
- ## Equalities statement
9. We are committed to delivering quality services to all, responding positively to the needs and expectations of all users of the service. We are committed to eliminating discrimination on any grounds including race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, religion or belief. This is derived from our respect for every individual. This policy applies equally to everyone who applies to or is on the housing list.

Part 1 – Lettings Policy

How priority for housing is decided

10. The Council and its Common Housing Register partners have agreed to have four bands in the lettings policy. Everyone eligible to be on the Housing List will be put in one of the four bands depending upon the information given at the time of application or following any change of circumstances.

11. How the bands are made up depends upon several factors. First of all the law says that the lettings policy must give “reasonable preference” to people who are overcrowded, homeless or need to move on medical, welfare or hardship grounds. The law also says that people can be given “additional preference”, because of serious medical, emergency or social and welfare problems.

The Four Bands

Band 1	Group A		Preference method:
High Priority Band	Emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urgent housing need combined with serious welfare/medical/safety/ emergency factors 	Emergencies first then:
	Medical/ Disability Ground floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed for ground floor property for medical/disability reasons or wheelchair accessible (Category A & B) & awarded medical priority 	Date Order
	Priority Decants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHR Tenants whose home is due to be demolished in less than one year or tenants who need a 4 bed or a wheelchair accessible property 	
	Under Occupiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Housing Tenants who want to move to a smaller property. Those giving up the most bedrooms are considered first. 	
	Group B		
	Priority Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious health problem that is severely affected by housing circumstances 	Date Order
	Priority Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urgent need to move on social/safety/welfare grounds 	
	Decants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHR Tenants whose home is to be demolished in more than one year 	
	Priority Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups given priority in the community's interest or because of their circumstances 	
Band 2			
Priority Band	Applicants who are overcrowded Homeless applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcrowded tenants of CHR partner landlords Housing applicants who are overcrowded Homeless households 	Date Order
Band 3			
General Band	Applicants who are not overcrowded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants of CHR partner landlords who are not overcrowded Housing applicants who are not overcrowded 	Date Order
Band 4			
Reserve Band	Applicants who do not qualify of Bands 1,2 or 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who do not have a local connection Property Owners & Leaseholders Tenants of social housing landlords who are not CHR partners 	Date Order

Note: Usually only applicants with a local connection are eligible for Bands 1,2 & 3.

12. Applicants who must be given reasonable preference or additional preference are usually placed in bands 1 or 2 and have a much greater chance of being offered a home than applicants in Bands 3 or 4.
13. However, under this policy, each year, a small number of homes will also be made available to applicants in Band 3 in order to meet local Tower Hamlets needs. The law allows for this as long as the amount of property set aside for this purpose does not dominate the scheme.

How do you decide which band my application will be in?

14. This will depend upon your circumstances at the time of your application or after notifying us of any change in your circumstances after you have been put on the Housing List. For example, you may be placed in a lower priority band, but can be considered for a higher priority band after an investigation or assessment of any circumstances that may qualify you for additional priority. Appendix 1 sets out how these decisions are made.

I am on the Housing List. What happens next?

15. Applicants on the Housing List can apply through the Choice Based Lettings system for homes that are provided by the Council and the Common Housing Register partner landlords.

What is Choice Based Lettings?

16. This is a method of letting homes by advertising them weekly so that applicants can “bid” for them. Most of the homes provided by the Council and the Common Housing Register partners are let through this method. This way everyone can see the homes that are available each week and decide whether they want to apply for them.

17. Although most homes are let in this way, some homes may be offered directly to an applicant, for example, to meet the need of a high priority applicant; or to meet a legal obligation; or for effective management of housing stock – (see paragraph 90 on Direct Offers).
18. Sometimes homes will be advertised for certain groups only because the amount of homes let to them has fallen behind the target – (see paragraphs 21 – 24) or because they are specially adapted and will be reserved for applicants who have a particular need for this type of home.

There are four steps to Choice Based Lettings:

Step One: Available homes are advertised weekly

Step Two: Applicants can “bid” for as many homes as they wish each week

Step Three: A short list is drawn up in priority order for each advertised home from those who have bid for it

Step Four: A home is usually offered to the highest priority bidder first. If refused it is offered to the next priority bidder and so on until it is accepted.

How do you decide between bids?

19. Applicants on the Housing List are placed in one of the four bands. Each applicant will be given a preference date. How this is decided will depend upon the band and may change if an applicant moves from one band to another. See Appendix 2 for how “preference dates” are decided.
20. When more than one applicant in the same band bids for a home it will usually be offered to the applicant with the earliest preference date in the band. However, targets are also set for the

number of lets to be achieved each year for some groups and this explained further below.

Why are targets set each year?

21. The Council and its Housing Association partners agree targets for allocating the homes available each year in order to make sure that the housing plans set by the Council and its partners are achieved and essential obligations are met. For example, a target may be set for the amount of lettings to reduce overcrowding or to manage homelessness. Another example is a target is set for the homes needed for tenants who have to move because of demolition and regeneration schemes.

How are targets decided?

22. The targets are set taking into account: the levels of housing need in the borough; the Council's housing strategy; the Council's statutory and contractual obligations and other financial considerations; the responsibilities of the Council and its Common Housing Register partners as landlords; making the best use of the social housing stock in the borough; and to ensure some homes are made available to applicants in the lower priority bands.
23. Applicants on the Housing List and Tenants of Common Housing Register partner landlords who are not overcrowded but want to move will be placed in Band 3. Each year a target will be set for the small number of lets to be made available to them.
24. Each year a "Lettings Plan" will be drawn up in consultation with Common Housing Register partners and agreed by the Council's Cabinet. The Lettings Plan is produced each year to reflect the Council's strategic housing and financial priorities. It will set annual targets to be achieved in the coming year and how

they will be monitored and reported on. The Lettings Plan will be available on the Homeseekers website and the Council's website.

Local Lettings Plans

25. From time to time the Council and its Common Housing Register partners may adopt local lettings plans. The purpose is to encourage residents to develop lasting connections with the area; to help sustain a community; to reduce overcrowding and tackle other housing needs in the local area - (see paragraph 73 - 76).

Choice based lettings scheme and targets

26. Under choice based lettings, applicants bid for homes advertised each week. The highest priority eligible bidder for any one home is usually offered it first and then the next and so on until the home is accepted. The overall pattern of lettings depends on which applicants have bid for homes advertised and been successful. This will have an impact on the targets set down in the Lettings Plan each year so the pattern of lettings during the year will be closely monitored. If any group is not getting the amount of homes planned for this will be overcome by advertising some homes exclusively for the group that is falling behind until things are back on track. Applicants in such groups will still be considered in preference date order.

Choice Based Lettings:

Application to Housing List	Step One	Step Two	Step Three	Step Four
Applications are assessed and placed in one of 4 bands	Homes are Advertised weekly	Applicants bid for homes	Shortlisting for each home from bidders:- Band 1 Emergencies first Then: Group A: earliest date Then: Group B: earliest date Then: Band 2: earliest date Then: Band 3: earliest date Then: Band 4: earliest date	Homes offered to highest priority bidder first; then next highest; and so on; until the home is let

Part II – Lettings Policy in detail

Making an application to the housing list

How do I join the housing list?

27. Everyone who wants to join the housing list has to fill in an application form. This is to make sure that we have the information needed to decide your priority for housing and to make sure everyone is assessed in the same way.
28. If you need it, we can help you to fill in these forms. Lettings, Housing and One Stop Shop staff, advice centres, local Housing Association offices and lots of other groups around the Borough will be happy to advise you about your application. Normally, anyone can join the housing list unless they are:
- under 18 (unless exceptional circumstances apply)
 - a person that the Government says cannot be on the list (at the moment this means certain groups of people who are subject to immigration control);
 - considered unsuitable to be a tenant.
29. Every application will be considered on its own merits and we will consider all circumstances before making a final decision on eligibility for the housing list.

What happens if you decide I am not eligible to be on the housing list?

30. If we decide that you are not eligible for the housing list, we will tell you why. You can ask us to review the decision. How this is done is set out in Appendix 3. Every application is treated individually and we will take into account any exceptional or mitigating factors you ask to be considered.

How do you decide who is unsuitable to be a tenant?

31. We will normally only decide to exclude your application from the housing list if the following three tests apply to you or a member of your household:-
- you are, or have been, guilty of unacceptable behaviour; AND
 - the unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to have entitled a landlord to have obtained a possession order, AND
 - at the time of the application, you are still unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of the behaviour.

Unacceptable Behaviour

32. We will consider whether anyone in your household is guilty of behaviour as defined in grounds 1-7 of s.84 of the Housing Act 1985. These are:
- rent arrears or breach of tenancy conditions;
 - nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and/or illegal or immoral use of the property and/or domestic violence;
 - deterioration in the condition of the property;
 - the tenant or someone prompted by the tenant obtained the tenancy by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement to the landlord;
 - a premium was paid in connection with a mutual exchange;
 - the property is part of a building mainly used for non-housing purposes which was let to the tenant as an employee of the landlord and the tenant is guilty of conduct that means it would not be appropriate for him or her to continue to occupy.

Behaviour serious enough to have justified a possession order

33. We will then decide whether, had the person who is guilty of the unacceptable behaviour been a local authority or Housing Association tenant, whether there are sufficient grounds for a Court to be able to grant a possession order.

If still considered as unsuitable when the application is made

34. We will not normally consider incidents that happened more than two years ago except where the person has been guilty of very serious acts of anti-social behaviour including racial, domestic or other acts of harassment or violence. At this stage, we will consider any and all evidence from the applicant that would go towards them establishing that they are suitable to be a tenant.

What happens when I make an application to go on the Housing List?

35. When your application to go on the housing list is received your details will be registered on a computer. We have a duty to protect public funds. The information you give on your form will be stored on a computer and may be shared with other public agencies (such as the Department for Work and Pensions); Council departments (such as Housing Benefits and Council Tax) or any other appropriate agency, solely to detect and prevent fraud. We will share the information you give us with Registered Social Landlords and other housing authorities for the purposes of housing nominations.

Obligation to be truthful

36. Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess your application, or to provide false information that leads to your gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action (including legal action) against anyone who gains a

tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may mean you lose your home. A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine. Legal proceedings may begin if :

- a) any false information is given, or information withheld, on an application form to appear on the housing register
- b) any false information is given, or information withheld, in response to subsequent review letters or other update mechanisms
- c) any false information is given, or information withheld, by applicants during a review.

37. We will check if you, or anyone in your household, are already registered on the housing list. You can only be on one active application at any one time.

When someone else at your address wants to join the list

38. If you are a tenant of one of the partner landlords and someone living with you applies for separate housing, we will ask you to undertake that if you move you will make sure no one is left in the property. Normally, until you give this written guarantee of vacant possession you will not be able to bid for available homes and we will not actively consider your application.

Joint tenants who want to be re-housed separately

39. If you are a joint tenant of the Council or a Registered Social Landlord you will usually only be considered for re-housing with all other joint tenants. This is unless there are exceptional reasons why you cannot, such as if your safety is threatened. If you do not wish to be re-housed with your joint tenant(s) then you should seek independent advice on your rights and obligations. If we agree that you can register for re-housing

without your joint tenant(s) then we will normally need a written guarantee from you that:

- you will remain a joint tenant until such time as you accept an offer of re-housing;
- when you accept and sign for a new tenancy, you will assign your interest in your existing tenancy to those remaining joint tenant(s). As you will not be releasing a vacant home for letting, you will not be given preference for available homes advertised with a preference for 'tenants'.

Proof Required

40. We will ask **all** applicants to provide independent documentary proof of the following:

- identity;
- relationship to and between all those named on the application;
- immigration status;
- the property you currently live in;
- if you have a local connection with the Local Authority area.

41. For every person on the application we must normally see at least two of the following forms of proof of identity, and proof of where they currently live:

- full birth certificate;
- medical card;
- marriage certificate;
- driving licence;
- National Insurance card;
- passport;
- proof of benefits

42. We will then assess what priority your application has and tell you:

- which Band your application is in;
- your preference date;
- the size of property you can bid for.

Who can be on my application?

43. Only those in your immediate family, or others if previously agreed, will be registered as part of your household for the purposes of the Housing List. Immediate family means the main applicant, their spouse or partner, their children (except as below) and anyone with whom they have to live because of extenuating circumstances. If you are the main applicant, immediate family does not include your or your partner's parents; grandparents; aunts or uncles; grandchildren; nieces or nephews; cousins; children over 18 living with a partner (whether married or not); children over 18 who have their own children; friends; lodgers; brothers or sisters.

44. If you have to live with someone that we do not usually define as immediate family because you have to provide or receive care or support you can ask us to review the decision not to include these people on your application. If there is a health need for you to live together the Health Advisors can recommend whether or not they should be included.

45. If there is a justifiable and genuine social need for you to live together the Housing Management Panel will make the decision. If you share custody of children with someone else, we will decide who is the main provider of care by looking at who is paid child benefit or tax credits and who the children stay with for the most nights each week. If you are not the main care provider your children will not normally be considered as part of your household for the purposes of the Housing List.

What happens if I owe rent?

46. It is very important that you pay your rent. If you do not then you risk losing your home. If you are having difficulties then you should speak with your

landlord who will be able to provide you with advice and support. If you owe no more than four weeks of your weekly charge (that is the amount you have to pay after any Housing Benefit has been deducted), then your housing application will not be affected. You will be asked to sign an undertaking that you will pay any arrears before you move.

47. If you owe no more than 10 weeks of your weekly charge and you have been keeping to an agreement to pay off the arrears for at least 8 weeks then your housing application will not be affected. You will be asked to sign an undertaking that you will continue to pay the arrears if you move. If you owe more than 10 weeks of your weekly charge then you will normally not be considered for any homes you may apply for.
48. Each case will be considered on its individual merits by Common Housing Register partner landlords, the Council's homeless or lettings service. Discretion can be used by a manager to override arrears if it is felt that unreasonable hardship would otherwise occur.
49. If the Housing Management Panel makes this decision then you will be asked to make an agreement to pay your arrears and sign an undertaking that you will continue to keep to the agreement if you move.

When your application is accepted

50. You can then look at the properties advertised each week and apply for those you are interested in and are suitable for your household size.
51. To find out how to do this go to paragraph 68 onwards on Choice Based Lettings.

Homeless People

52. The Council must consider the following when deciding what assistance to give if you are applying as homeless

Whether you are eligible for assistance?

53. This generally means someone who is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area, and is not subject to immigration control as decided by the Secretary of State although some people who are subject to immigration control will qualify.

Whether you are homeless or threatened with homelessness?

54. This generally means that one of the following may apply to you:
 - you have nowhere to stay tonight;
 - you have been asked to leave a home that you have no legal right to stay in;
 - you face possible eviction or repossession;
 - you have somewhere to live but you cannot get into it;
 - you have somewhere to live but there is someone there who may be or has been violent towards you;
 - you have somewhere to live but other people who you normally live with cannot live there; or
 - you have somewhere to live but it is so unsuitable that the Council thinks it would be unreasonable for you to live there.

Whether you are in priority need for accommodation?

55. This generally means that one or more of the following applies to you:
 - you have dependent children who live with you;
 - you, or a member of your household, is pregnant;
 - you are vulnerable because of age; mental or physical illness; disability;

risk of violence at home and/or institutional background;

- you are 16 or 17 years old;
- you are under 21 years old and have been 'looked after' by the Local Authority
- you have been made homeless because of a fire, flood or other disaster even when none of the above applies

Whether you are intentionally homeless?

56. This is a very complicated area of law but in simple terms means whether you have brought about your own homelessness

Whether you have a local connection with Tower Hamlets?

This means that:

- you have lived in the Borough for at least six of the last 12 months; or
- you have lived in the Borough for at least three of the last five years; or
- you have permanent employment in the Borough; or
- you have a close relative (mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter) who has lived in the Borough for at least the last five years.

57. If such a connection exists then this Council will be responsible for re-housing you. If you do not have a connection with Tower Hamlets but you do have a connection with another Council then your application may be referred to that other Council. If you have no connection anywhere then responsibility will fall on the Council that you approach. Even if the Council does not agree to provide a home, it will give advice and assistance on what options may be available for you to find alternative accommodation if you are homeless.

What do I do if I think I am Homeless?

58. You can seek advice and assistance or make a homeless application by contacting the Council's Homeless and Housing Advice Service. The contact details are at the back of this document.

What happens to my application if I am accepted as homeless?

59. If the Council accepts it has a homeless duty to you under these criteria your application will be placed in Band 2 on the Housing List or Band 1 Group B if you are accepted as single homeless and in priority need because of your vulnerability. Your preference date will be the date you made a homeless application.
60. If the Council has accepted a homeless duty to you and a Health Advisor recommends you must have ground floor or wheelchair accessible category A or B, you will be placed in Band 1 Group A. If a Health Advisor recommends you should be awarded priority medical status, you will be placed in Band 1 Group B.
61. If you are already on the Housing List, your existing preference date will no longer apply. You will be given a new homeless preference date which will be the date you applied as homeless. Your position in the queue will change and you will not keep the time you have previously spent in the band.
62. You will then be able to bid for available homes for the next 24 months. This time limit is because it costs the Council a substantial amount of money to provide temporary accommodation. If you have not moved in to a permanent home accommodation within 24 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

63. You will be made one offer of a suitable and reasonable home to ensure that the Council properly discharges any duty to you. We cannot tell you how long this may take after the 24 month time limit is up. You will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in. You will be asked to explain why you cannot live in a particular area or in a specific type of home. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe. If you are made an offer of suitable accommodation and refuse unreasonably, the Council may discharge its statutory duty to you and you will be asked to leave any temporary accommodation provided by the council. If you then secure your own accommodation and wish to be considered on the Housing List, you must make a fresh application. You will be assessed on your new circumstances and be given a new preference date.
64. Officers in the Homeless Service will deal with your homeless application to the housing list and any questions you have about your application should be referred to them.

What happens if I am declared intentionally homeless?

65. Having investigated your homeless application, the Homeless Service may decide that you caused your own homelessness by your own actions, or failing to take action to prevent this. In these circumstances you will be considered intentionally homeless. You will be given reasonable notice to leave your temporary accommodation and be expected to try to find your own accommodation. The Council will give you assistance in doing this and will if appropriate try to find you housing with a private sector landlord through the

rent deposit scheme. It will not be considered appropriate to give such assistance if you are considered unsuitable to be a tenant.

66. If you are considered intentionally homeless, you can still apply to go on the Housing List. Your application will be assessed based upon your circumstances. Where the reasons for your intentional homeless indicate you may be unsuitable to be a tenant or are guilty of unacceptable behaviour under the provisions set out in this policy in paragraph 30 - 34 you may not be accepted onto the Housing List.
67. If you are eligible to go on the Housing List you will be assessed on your change of circumstances when you leave the temporary accommodation provided by the Council. The band you are placed in will depend on the nature of your new circumstances. You must therefore keep the Council informed in this regard.

Choice Based Lettings: The Four Steps In detail

Step One - Advertising Homes

How will I know about homes to be let?

68. Usually, every home that becomes available to let will be advertised weekly. Information will be available on the Homeseekers and Council's websites; in East End Life: Council's One Stop Shops, local housing and local Housing Association offices. You will also be sent detailed information about how to apply or "bid" and a summary of this lettings policy.
69. For applicants who find it difficult to get information about homes that are advertised you will be contacted by telephone or by post.
70. Where possible, the advert will have a photograph of the block and include information about:
- who the landlord is;
 - the rent;
 - the sort of property it is: floor level, type and how many bedrooms;
 - the area it is in;
 - the size of household that can apply;
 - if there are special facilities for households with particular needs who will be given preference for it
 - whether there are any special features or where certain conditions apply such as limited to applicants who qualify under a local lettings plan

All available homes will be advertised except:

71. those homes that will be offered directly to some applicants as set out in paragraph 90 for example: in exceptional circumstances; or where a court has made an order; or where homes are required for special exercises

such as chain lettings; or in schemes designed to match new build developments with specific category A or B wheelchair accessible cases.

Advertising and targets

72. If a group of applicants are not getting the proportion of homes planned for the year this will be overcome by advertising certain properties exclusively to the group falling behind until the target set for the year is back on track. In these circumstances applicants in the group will still be considered in preference date order.

Local Lettings Schemes

73. From time to time the Council and its Common Housing Register partners may adopt local lettings schemes. These schemes are designed to encourage residents to develop lasting connections with the area; to help sustain a community; to reduce overcrowding and tackle other housing needs in the local area.

How these schemes would work

74. Homes available for letting at broadly the same time will be identified as suitable for local lettings. Usually these will be new build, housing association homes. The qualifying criteria will be defined for each local lettings scheme including consideration only being given to applicants who meet the criteria set down for each scheme. The criteria may vary between schemes but will be made clear at the start.
75. A local lettings scheme must be agreed by the Common Housing Register Forum. Homes will be advertised through the choice based lettings

scheme as only suitable for applicants who qualify for the scheme. Bidding will be restricted to applicants who meet the criteria for the scheme. Applicants will then be short listed in the normal way and homes offered in priority order.

76. If it is not possible to let all the available properties earmarked for a local lettings scheme, the remaining properties will be re- advertised and the policy criteria to qualify will not be applied. Properties suitable for applicants with high priority needs, for example with special needs adaptations, may be excluded from the scheme.

Step Two - Applying for advertised homes

- You can place as many bids as you wish on homes that are suitable for your size of household as set out in the table below.
- You should not bid for homes that you are unlikely to accept if they are offered to you

Bids can be made as follows: -

- On line on the Homeseekers website
- By telephone
- By Coupon (in East End Life)

Auto Bidding

77. If you are vulnerable and unable to register your own bid you can register your choices with us then we can bid on your behalf. These auto bids will act as if you have told us about an interest in an advertised home and you should be very sure about the choice you make before telling us about them so that the auto bidding system can bid for the type of home you are willing to accept.

What size home can I apply for?

78. You can only apply for a size of home suitable for the number of people in your household. How this works is set out in the table below.

Household size	Bedroom need	Bed spaces
Household 1 or 2 adults	Studio or 1 bedroom	1 or 2 bed space
Household with one child	2 bedrooms	3 or 4 bed spaces
Household with two children – same sex	2 bedrooms	4 bed spaces
Household with 2 children – opposite sex	3 bedrooms	4 or 5 bed spaces
Household with 3 children	3 bedrooms	5 or 6 bed spaces
Household with 4 children same sex or two of each sex	3 or 4 bedroom	5 or 6 bed spaces
Household with 4 children – 3 same sex 1 opposite sex	4 bedroom	6 or 7 bed spaces
Household with 5 children	4 bedroom	7 or 8 bed spaces
Household with 6 children – same or opposite sex	4 or 5 bedroom	8 or 9 bed spaces
Household with 6,7 or more children	5 bedrooms or more	9 or 10 or more bed spaces

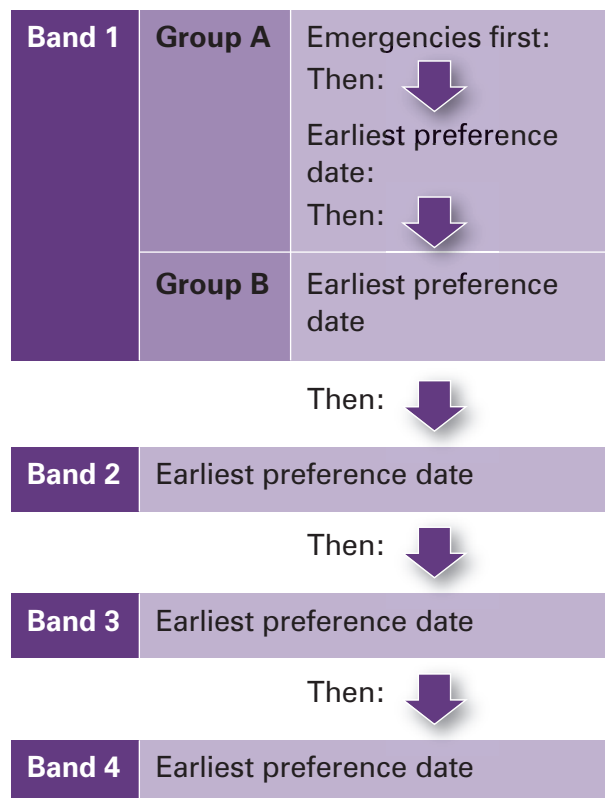
Can I apply for a smaller home than I need?

- 79. Yes, you can apply for a home that has one bed space less than your household needs.
- 80. A single parent will be classed as needing two bed spaces
- 81. In the list above, two same sex siblings when part of the same household can share a bedroom regardless of age. If a sibling sharing in this way makes an individual application to live independently and not as part of the household, they will be classed as overcrowded for the purpose of the individual application.
- 82. A Health Advisor may recommend a size of property for you that is different to that set out above.

Step Three - Short listing

- 83. A shortlist will be drawn up from those who have bid for a home. Applicants who have bid for a home are selected by comparing the size of the home with the number of people on their application. Bids will only be accepted from applicants whose household size meets the size of property bid for as set out in the table on page 14 or one bedspace short as set out in paragraph 79.
- 84. The shortlist will be drawn up with applicants in the highest priority band first then the next priority band and so on. If more than one applicant has bid for a home within a band, they will be short listed in order of length of time in the band. Preference will normally be given to the applicant who has waited the longest.

85. Short listing Priority Order



Step Four – Making offers of a home

- 86. Homes will be usually offered to highest priority applicant on the short list first. If more than one applicant in the band applies for a home, it will usually be offered to the one who has waited the longest in the band, that is the applicant with the earliest preference date. Normally a number of applicants will be invited to view a property so that if the applicant with the earliest preference date does not accept the property it can be offered to another applicant without delay.
- 87. If a home has been advertised for a particular group in order to meet annual targets it will be offered to the applicant in that group with the earliest preference date first.

88. If an offer is refused it will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist and so on until the home is accepted.
89. You should not bid for homes that you would not be willing to accept if they were offered to you.

Direct Offer Policy

90. The Council and its Common Housing Register partners will as far as possible let the majority of property through the choice based lettings scheme. However, the Council and its partners can offer a home directly to some applicants in exceptional circumstances without advertising the home through the scheme. Reasons for this can be: to meet the need of a high priority applicant; or to meet a legal obligation; or for effective management of the Council's or partners housing stock; in relation to public protection cases; as part of overcrowding reduction initiatives; or for split households.
91. Direct Offers can also be made on Sheltered Housing vacancies where the property has been advertised once and has not been let.

How will I know if I will be offered a home that I have applied for?

92. We receive a lot of bids for advertised homes every week. We will only contact the applicant who has been successful with the details of when they can view the property. To make sure that properties are let as soon as possible, you may be asked to view a home where the repairs are not yet completed.
93. When you view the property you will be told what repairs are to be done to it, whether any allowances are payable to help you move or decorate, and when you would be expected to move in. If you view a property on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday your tenancy will

usually start on the following Monday. If you view the property on Thursday or Friday, your tenancy will usually start on the second Monday after the viewing.

What happens if I don't accept an offer of a home or not turn up to view it?

94. If you are an applicant where the Council has accepted a homeless duty to then different rules apply. It is very important that you speak to someone in the Homeless Team before you refuse an offer made to you.
95. If you refuse a home that is offered to you your application will usually remain active and you will still be able to apply for available homes.
96. If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are very good reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.
97. If you are offered a home as an emergency case on medical grounds and refuse the offer unreasonably your priority will be withdrawn and you will be placed in Band 1 Group B as a priority medical case.
98. If your application is in priority social category Group A or B, or a priority target group in Band 1 Group B and you refuse an offer unreasonably your priority will be withdrawn. If you are in Band 1 Group B as a priority medical case and you refuse an offer, your case may be reviewed and consideration given to withdrawing your priority.
99. You can ask us to review the decisions to withdraw any priority award. We will consider every review on its merits. However, for the review to succeed there should be justifiable and genuine reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer.

We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past) when making a decision about the reasonableness of any offer you refuse. (See Appendix 3 on right to a review)

Information about homes that have been let

100. We will publish information about homes that have been let and as far as possible give information about the length of time you may have to wait. This will be provided to help applicants make informed choices when bidding.
101. We cannot publicise information about specific applicants and properties as that information is confidential, but the information given will show the type of home it was and the length of time a household had been waiting.
102. Normally, all applicants will be in a date order queue in their band. Those who have waited the longest in the band (and apply for homes advertised) will be offered housing in order of their preference date. As people ahead of you in a band are rehoused then the queue in front of you will gradually get shorter and your chances of being offered a home you apply for will improve.
103. We know it is difficult to wait for a suitable home to become available and that many applicants on the Housing List can be under a lot of pressure. It is only natural that people will speculate about the reasons when they see someone else get a home where they may not seem to be in as urgent need as they are.
104. Please remember that someone may be rehoused before you because : -
- their application was in a higher band than yours;
 - they had been waiting longer than you in a band
 - they bid for a property you did not bid for
 - they were eligible for a home that you were not eligible for
 - they were overcrowded and you are not
 - their household has been given priority on health grounds
 - they had to move because of an emergency;
 - they have had to move because their home is being demolished, refurbished or repaired;

Other Re-housing Opportunities

105. If you are already a tenant of a landlord who is a member of the Common Housing Register partnership there are other re-housing opportunities you may wish to consider.

106. These schemes will vary over time, but opportunities that may be available are: -

- move to a smaller property with assistance and a cash incentive
- exchange your tenancy with another tenant
- participate in a chain lettings moves
- Cash Incentive Scheme – apply for a grant to help buy your own home
- Shared ownership where you could part buy part rent a home
- Move to the private rented sector as part of the Council’s Overcrowding reduction strategy.
- Register on another Council’s Housing List
- Move out of the borough if your landlord has housing elsewhere

Re-housing opportunities in detail:

Under occupation or downsizing

107. There is a shortage of family-sized accommodation in Tower Hamlets.

Therefore a high priority is given to those tenants who move to smaller accommodation giving up at least one bedroom.

108. You can apply for a home one bed larger than you need and you will be given priority to move as long as you give up at least 1 bedroom. If you live in a home with 3 bedrooms and you are assessed as needing 1 bedroom you will get priority if you apply for a home with 1 or 2 bedrooms.

109. The greater the number of bedrooms you give up, the higher your priority to move. If you are a Council tenant and you give up at least 1 bedroom, the Council will be able to help you with moving expenses providing you move to a social tenancy and inform your landlord immediately when an offer is made to you. You could move in or outside the borough and register directly with other social housing providers. If you are a tenant of a partner landlord you will need to check with them to see if they take part in this scheme.

110. Work out how much your spare rooms could be worth

		My home has this number of bedrooms					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
I want this number of bedrooms	Studio	£500	£1,000	£1,500	£3,000	£3,500	£4,000
	1		£500	£1,000	£2,500	£3,000	£3,500
	2			£ 500	£2,000	£2,500	£3,000
	3				£1,500	£2,000	£2,500
	4					£1,500	£2,000
	5						£1,500

Bedroom needs of family I am swapping with							
Bedroom needs in the home I am moving to		1	2	3	4	5	6
	Studio	£500	£1,000	£1,500	£3,000	£3,500	£4,000
	1		£500	£1,000	£2,500	£3,000	£3,500
	2			£ 500	£2,000	£2,500	£3,000
	3				£1,500	£2,000	£2,500
	4					£1,500	£2,000
	5						£1,500

111. If you live on the ground floor in a home with 2 or more bedrooms and move to a 1 bedroom or studio home above the ground floor we will give you an extra £500.

Mutual Exchange Scheme

112. If you apply to the housing list for a move, when you move, it does not have to be to a vacant home. It could be a home that is currently being lived in by someone else who also wants to move. This is what happens when someone sells his or her home using an estate agent.

113. A mutual exchange is when two or more tenants swap homes once they have the permission of all landlords involved. Given the shortage of available homes in this area for many tenants this is their best prospect for moving.

114. All Council and RSL tenants who ask to move may be registered for the mutual exchange scheme. Your landlord will work with you to try to find a partner to swap homes with you. If you are put in touch with a partner, neither of you are under an obligation to agree, nor will it affect your housing application if you refuse to swap.

115. Details of your home will be advertised. However, your personal details, your full address, and your contact details will

not be published without your express permission.

116. If you are a Council tenant who swaps homes with another Council tenant in the Borough whose home is too small for their family, we will pay you expenses for each room you give up provided that the other Council tenant needs your size of home.

117. You can work out how much your spare rooms could be worth.

118. Legally, your landlord can only say no to your request to exchange for a limited number of reasons:

- that either tenant is moving to a home that is inadequate for their needs, e.g. on health grounds, or that it would be too small;
- that either tenant is moving to a home that is substantially too large for their requirements;
- your landlord will usually agree to your moving to a home that has 1 bedroom more than you need, but no bigger;
- that there is a current order for possession made by the Court in respect of any of the tenancies involved;
- that any of the properties are adapted, sheltered, warden-

controlled or other special needs unit and the tenant moving in to the property is not eligible for or does not need it;

- that the accommodation is tied;
- that the landlord is a charity and the proposed occupation would conflict with their aims;
- that any of the tenants has been issued with a Notice of Seeking Possession.

119. Your landlord may say that you cannot swap tenancies straightaway if, for example, you owe rent, or there are repairs needed to the property that you have to carry out. However, once these matters have been sorted out, they should say yes.

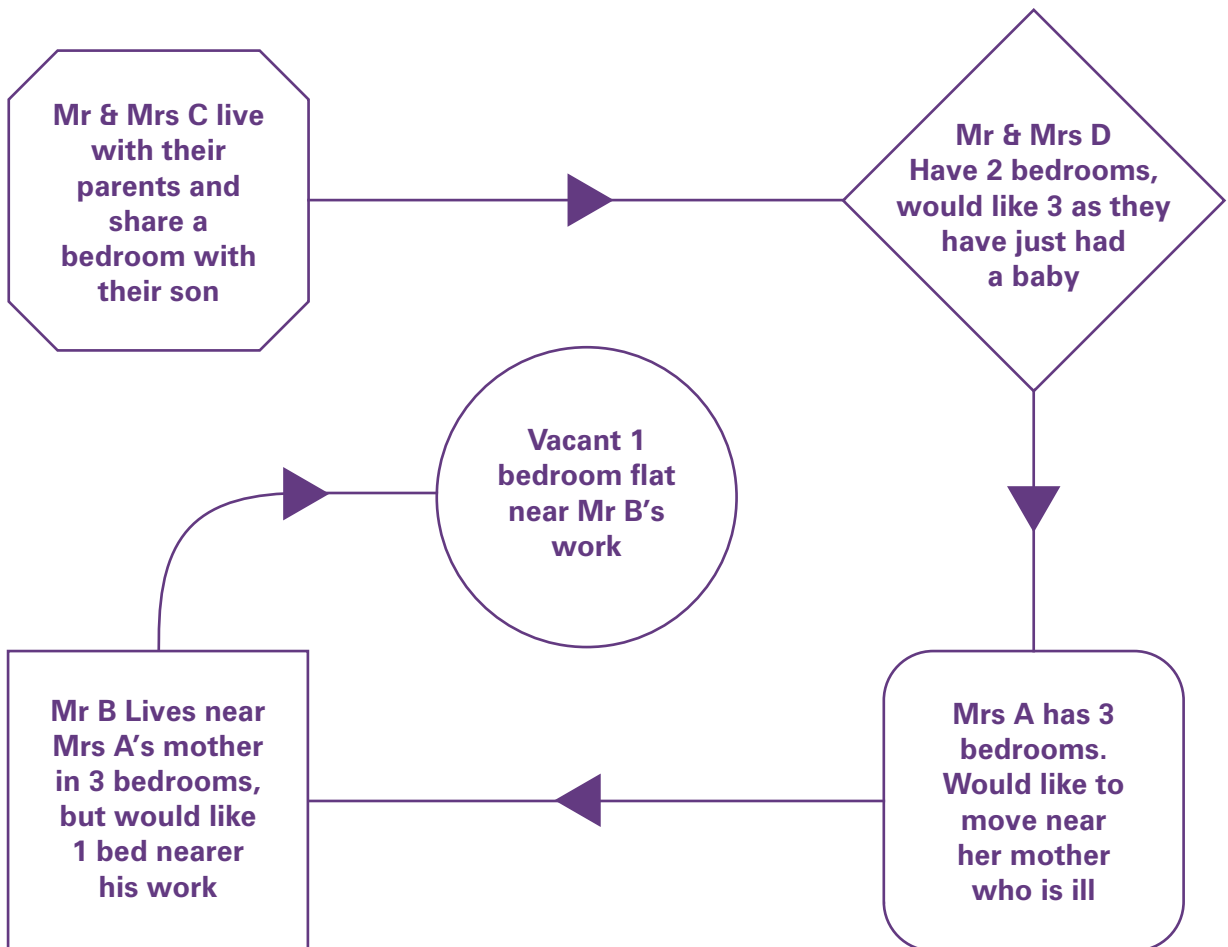
120. Your landlord is obliged to tell you in writing the reasons why they are saying

no to your request. Whatever the decision, you should be told within 42 days of requesting to exchange. You have a right to refer the decision to the County Court under 86 of the 1980 Act if you disagree with it.

Chain Lettings

121. Chain Lettings is a way for us to use a vacant property as part of a chain, in the same way as estate agents do in the private owner-occupying sector. Each year, we will set a target for the number of homes to be let to existing Council and partner landlord tenants. Wherever possible, these lets will be part of a chain of moves, and may include mutual exchanges.

122. This is an example of how a chain could work with one vacant home used to help four families to move:



123. In order for chain lettings to work, it is necessary for us to identify useful vacant properties and withdraw them from being advertised. Discretion has been given to senior officers to decide when properties can be removed from the overall lettings scheme to make chains work so helping more people to move.

Seaside and Country Homes Scheme

124. Seaside and country homes is a mobility scheme that offers people living in Council or Housing Association homes in Greater London the opportunity to move home. The landlords in the scheme manage about 3,500 bungalows and flats along the southwest coast from Cornwall through the countryside from Shropshire to Cambridgeshire, over to Norfolk and Lincolnshire in the east.

125. The scheme does not guarantee you a move and priority is given to tenants who are giving up large sized properties. Referral is usually made by the landlord on behalf of tenants put forward for Sheltered Housing vacancies. Applicants giving up the most bedrooms in their existing tenancy are given priority.

Priority on Health grounds

126. There are times when people need to move because of their health or disability. Priority can be awarded on health or disability grounds after an assessment if an applicant has a serious long term health problem and their housing is severely affecting their health or their quality of life.

127. **Please Note: A priority medical award is not given on the basis of the medical condition or disability alone but upon the effect the housing circumstances are having on a long term and serious medical condition.**

How is it decided if I should have additional priority on health grounds?

128. A Client Support Officer in the Lettings Team will either make a decision that you applications does not qualify for additional priority on health grounds or ask for an assessment from a Health Adviser. You will be told their decision and if you disagree with it you may ask for a review.

129. The Council and Common Housing Register partners will ask qualified health advisers to recommend who should be given additional preference for housing on health or disability grounds. The Health Advisors do not make a recommendation based upon how ill you are. They will look at how your health or disability problem affects you on a day-to-day basis and how your housing affects your health or quality of life. They will assess each person with a health or disability problem and also consider the impact on your whole

household. The Health Advisor's recommendation will be taken into account when a decision is made on your application for additional priority on health or disability grounds. In addition, other non medical factors affecting you or members of your family can be taken into account where appropriate.

130. Case examples are given on the "Homeseekers" website as a guide to the kind of decisions made.

131. We will not normally carry out an assessment for priority on health grounds if you do not have a local connection with the borough as defined in Appendix 1.

132. If you do not live in the borough you can apply to go onto the Housing List. But we will not normally carry out an assessment for priority on health grounds unless you are having long term or substantial medical treatment in the borough. A decision will be based upon consideration of your individual circumstances. If you disagree with our decision you can ask for a review (See Appendix 3)

133. There are two levels of additional priority on medical grounds linked to housing circumstances that can be awarded

Priority Medical award

134. This recommendation will normally be considered if someone on your application or for whom you provide care, has a severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability. Health or quality of life must be severely affected by the place you live in now.

135. **Please Note: A priority medical award is not given on the basis of the medical condition or disability alone but upon the effect the housing circumstances are having on a long term and serious medical condition or disability.**

136. We will also consider if where you live now can be reasonably adapted to meet your needs. It may also be that there are combinations of serious health or disability concerns that mean that the health or quality of life of a household is being severely affected.

Examples include:

- the current home does not reasonably allow essential health treatment there e.g. renal dialysis;
- the ability to live independently in the community is at risk without suitable accommodation;
- someone is housebound, effectively housebound or cannot reasonably access the essential facilities in their home;
- if there are critical concerns about someone's safety e.g. through falls due to difficulties with access.

137. Applicants in Bands 1, 2 or 3 who are awarded priority medical status will be placed in Band 1 Group B (unless they are already in Group A as an under occupier). Your preference date will be the date you applied for the assessment.

138. If your application is in Band 4 and you do not have a local connection or you have an interest in a property, a decision will be made at the time of receiving a report from the Health Advisors as to whether unreasonable hardship would occur if your application remained in Band 4. Each case will be looked at on its merits, for example consideration will be given to whether your property could be adapted. All other applicants in Band 4 who are awarded priority medical

status after an assessment will be placed in Band 1 Group B.

Emergency Medical

139. This is the highest priority award and will normally be considered where the criteria for a priority medical award is met **and** one or more of the following conditions also applies:

- someone is in hospital/residential care and cannot return home because it is not suitable;
- there is a risk to life;
- there are exceptional circumstances
- when the Adult Services Directorate makes a nomination under the Independent Living and Community Support Scheme (see priority target groups in Band 1 Group B below)

140. When awarded emergency medical status, the application will be placed in Band 1 Group A. The preference date will be the date the award was made. Applicants awarded emergency priority are considered first when bidding for the available homes.

Other Recommendations that can be made on health grounds

141. The Health Advisors can also make recommendations about the type of property that is most suitable on health grounds. This can include access, essential facilities (including bathroom and toilet), space, location and heating or access to a garden.

142. When a property with one of these features is advertised, preference for it will be given to applicants where a recommendation by Health Advisors have been accepted.

143. If a specific recommendation has been made by the Health Advisor that a specific type of home or facilities are

essential you will only be able to bid for homes that meet this recommendation.

How does a Health Advisor recommend what is needed?

Use of a Garden

144. The Health Advisors will normally make this recommendation if there is a capacity to benefit from a safe supervised outdoor play area by a child under 18 in your household with either:
- a permanent and substantial physical disability;
 - severe long term limiting illness;
 - the severest forms of learning disabilities; or
 - the severest forms of behaviour problems
145. A garden may be recommended for an adult in the following circumstances:
- if they have a severe cognitive impairment that means they do not sense danger, are at risk of wandering and so need constant supervision;
 - if they have a severe, permanent and substantial disability or severe long term
 - limiting illness and caring for children is causing concern such that their continued residence is at risk, or the stress of caring for them is exacerbating the health problems; or
 - if they have a sensory impairment and/or a guide dog and they live alone or only with others with disabilities.

Extra space

146. The Health Advisors will normally only recommend that you need extra space if:
- you, or someone in your household, has either a permanent and substantial disability, or a severe long

term limiting illness, or the severest form of learning disabilities;

- or the severest forms of behaviour problems **and** it is unreasonable for you to share a bedroom as it would seriously affect the sleep of those you would normally share with, to the severe detriment of their or your health;
- you are having health treatment at home that needs large machinery or a stock of health supplies to be stored e.g. you are having renal dialysis at home;
- you need a full time carer to provide support night and day;
- you have a permanent and substantial disability or long term limiting illness or
- severe learning disability and need additional space for specialist equipment; or
- you have a severe long-term limiting illness and sharing a bedroom will exacerbate your health problems e.g. you have an immune deficiency

Ground Floor on health / disability grounds

147. An additional recommendation that can be made is that an applicant must have ground floor on health or disability grounds or must have a ground floor property that is wheelchair accessible category A or B. This may be recommended by a Health Advisor if you have a permanent and substantial disability or severe long term limiting illness that means that your mobility or exercise tolerance is so severely restricted you cannot safely manage any stairs.
148. Applicants awarded the recommendation that they must have ground floor and they have been awarded priority medical status, will be placed in Band 1 Group A (unless the application is in Band 4 and no medical priority has been awarded). Apart from

emergency status, Band 1 Group A is the highest possible priority in the lettings policy. The preference date will be the date the application for an assessment was made.

149. Where an under occupier in Band 1 Group A has bid for a ground floor property with an earlier preference date than an applicant who has been given a recommendation that they must have a ground floor property on medical grounds, discretion may be exercised to offer the property first to the applicant with the medical recommendation.

Environment

150. The majority of the housing stock in Tower Hamlets is in blocks on estates. Some of these blocks are tower blocks, many are smaller blocks. Very little street accommodation becomes available each year. The decision as to whether an advertised home will meet your housing needs is best made by you, sometimes with help, and dependent on you being given information about the property so that you can make an informed decision. The Health Advisors will only recommend a quieter environment if you have severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability where stress has been identified as a seriously exacerbating factor or you would be considered vulnerable living in a more active area.

Care and Support

151. If you need care because of your health problems, there are different ways in which support can be provided. You could live with the person you are supporting (or who supports you). Or you each may want to have your own home, but move nearer to each other. As you can choose to apply for advertised homes you should talk with the person you support (or who supports you) about the best solution to your support needs. You may want to

consider both applying for homes in each other's areas to see who is successful first. Or it may be that one area is better for you both because it is near a particular doctor, or hospital, or other support. The Health Advisors will only give preference to an application where care and support are an issue if your application meets the criteria to be given preference on health grounds and there is no one currently living with you who can reasonably provide the support you need.

Homes that may be offered first to certain groups of applicants

Designated accommodation

152. There are some homes that have been designated for specific groups of people, either because of age, disability or other defined criteria. When this type of vacancy occurs it will be advertised giving preference to those who meet the designated criteria. This will be specified in the advert and we will only let the property to a household that meets all the designated criteria.

Homes designated as wheelchair accessible Category A or B

153. Will be allocated to applicants recommended for this type of property.

Homes with access to gardens or play areas, on the ground floor

154. There is a large demand for homes on the ground floor, with gardens. Preference for this type of accommodation will be given first to households that the Health Advisors have recommended should live in this type of home; then second where there is a duty to offer like-for-like accommodation, such as to those who need to move because their home is being demolished or who have been given a priority social award.

Homes provided by RSLs with a specialist remit

155. There are Registered Social Landlords who provide specialist services to specific groups of people in the local community. This can be because these groups of people have been disadvantaged in the past or have special needs. When one of these landlords has an available home it will be advertised only to those who meet the designated criteria. This may be specified in the advert or used when we come to decide who should be made the offer of the home. We will only let the property to an application from a household that meets all the criteria.

Discretionary Additional Priority

I have an urgent or unusual reason for wanting to move

156. There are times when an applicant may be considered for discretionary additional priority for unusual or urgent reasons that are not covered by the general criteria in the lettings policy. There are also times when it is in the community's interest that a household is given additional priority for housing.

157. The Housing Management Panel will make all decisions to award discretionary additional priority under this policy unless an application is considered an emergency. In these cases a senior officer will make the decision.

158. The circumstances under which a discretionary priority award may be agreed are:

a) Where an applicant has an exceptional need or where a combination of significant social/welfare/medical/safety or urgency factors occur that cannot be

adequately dealt with within the normal rules of the Lettings Policy.

b) Where it is in the Council or a Common Housing Register partner landlord's interest to award additional priority for : effective management of the stock; for financial or legal reasons ; or in order to support housing strategy objectives or priorities ; or to remedy an injustice.

159. The purpose of having this discretion is to respond to exceptional cases. Whilst it is not possible to define all the circumstances where discretion should be exercised, any decisions should fall within the guidance set out above for genuinely exceptional and justifiable reasons.

160. Decisions to grant discretionary additional priority should not be made in circumstances that do not reflect the broad direction of policy and priorities set by the Council and its Common Housing Register partners.

161. Some examples are given below as a guide.

- if moving will prevent a child or elder needing to live in institutional care;
- if you are attending Court as a witness against someone accused of anti-social behaviour;
- if you are threatened with or are experiencing violence and it is no longer reasonable for you to live at home;
- if you are threatened with or are experiencing problems that mean it is no longer reasonable for you to live at home.

162. The list is not exhaustive and an award may not be made in every case where these circumstances apply. Each case will be individually considered based on

the information and evidence available to the case.

163. The demand for homes in Tower Hamlets is so great that even with discretionary additional priority award you may have to wait a long time before you will be offered an alternative home. If you are Council or Residential Social Landlord tenant all other options will also be considered to assist you that are set out in paragraph 105 onwards.

If I want to be considered for additional priority what should I do?

164. We will need to investigate your circumstances and gather information and evidence in order to assess your claim.
165. First, you should tell your landlord why you need to move. If you are not happy speaking with your landlord about this, you can ask for help from staff in the Lettings Team, One Stop Shop, Housing Office, legal or other voluntary advice centres in the Borough.
166. In most cases, reports on behalf of tenants will be co-ordinated by their Housing Officer or equivalent. This will ensure that the staff managing the tenancy are aware of all issues affecting residents in their area.
167. If you are not a tenant, then a Lettings Sustainability Officer will be assigned to the investigation if it is considered inappropriate for the investigation to be carried out locally.
168. You may ask someone else to make a request on your behalf. This may be a solicitor, a social worker, or other advocate. If a third party makes a request, it will usually be referred to your Housing Officer or Lettings Sustainability Officer to investigate.
169. The officer managing your case will get information from all relevant sources and then submit it to the Lettings Sustainability Team. It is in your interest to present all available information or evidence about the circumstances that you feel justifies you being considered for a discretionary additional priority award and therefore given greater priority for housing over other applicants on the housing list.
170. We will consider the reasons why you feel you cannot continue to live where you do now. We will also consider whether it is reasonable for you to live there, the support you have there and if there are actions that can reasonably be taken to help you to continue to live there. If there is no other effective solution available, giving additional priority for rehousing you may be decided upon as the most appropriate course of action.
171. We will not normally consider referrals on grounds of health or overcrowding as provision for this is already made elsewhere in this policy.
172. The officer dealing with your case will prepare a report that gives full details of the grounds for additional priority to be considered. This should include evidence from all relevant interested parties (such as the Police, Victim Support, Social Services, Schools, Anti Social Behaviour Control Unit, health professionals etc). This co-ordinating role is important as it ensures that local staff are aware of issues in their area.
173. We receive hundreds of requests each year to carry out assessments for priority on social grounds. The Lettings Sustainability Team will make an initial decision on whether or not your application should be referred to the Panel. You will be told the decision and if you disagree with it you may ask for a

review of the decision as set out in Appendix 3.

If you fear violence

174. If you feel unable to continue to live where you are because of fear of violence then you should approach the Council's Homeless Service which has a statutory duty to carry out an assessment and consider whether the Council has a housing duty to you. This includes if you are experiencing any type of hate crime: domestic violence, racial harassment, or other harassment from any other source. Their decision will include whether or not additional discretionary priority should be made to your housing application as described above and whether temporary accommodation should be provided in the meantime.
175. We are committed to taking all legitimate action against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour or hate crime. This could include taking legal action against perpetrators. The aim is to ensure that you have a safe place to live and where appropriate we will do all we reasonably can to secure this for you.
176. We will not give priority for housing to the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour unless there are overwhelming and justifiable reasons to do so.
177. Where a referral is made to the Homeless Service, Homeless Officers will explain to you what will happen.
178. Where appropriate your case can also be referred to the Housing Management Panel.

The Housing Management Panel

179. This is a panel of at least three officers, one of whom will be a manager. The Panel will make all decisions on requests for discretionary additional

priority unless the case is considered an emergency. In these circumstances a decision can be made by a senior manager before a meeting of the panel. Normally you will not be able to attend the panel meeting, although in exceptional cases the Chair has discretion to agree to your attendance.

180. The officers on the Panel will not have had anything to do with your case previously. They will make a decision based on the information and evidence they are given about your case. It is therefore important that you tell the officer who is investigating your case everything that may be relevant.
181. The Panel sits regularly. If discretionary additional priority is awarded, the Lettings Sustainability Team will write to you with the decision and any conditions of the award. If it is decided that no priority will be given, or that more information is needed before a decision can be made, then the officer investigating your case will write to you giving details.
182. We aim to contact you within five working days of the Panel meeting with details of the decision, the reasons for it and any conditions attached to it. If you do not agree with the decision you can ask for a review.

What additional priority may be awarded to my application?

183. There are two levels of additional priority that can be made to your application, a) additional priority social need award and b) emergency priority award. They are set out in detail below.

Additional priority social need award

184. This is one of the awards that can be made by the Housing Management Panel. If it is awarded the application will be placed in Band 1 Group B. Your

preference date will be the date your case was first considered by the Panel.

185. The Lettings Sustainability Officer managing your case will review the priority awarded to your application every three months to confirm whether the award made to you continues to be justified. If due to change of circumstances it is considered the award is no longer justified your application will revert to the status before the award was made. It is therefore very important that you continue to report anything that happens that may be relevant to your award.
186. It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available. The additional priority you have been given reflects a genuine and compelling reason for you to move. This will give you higher priority than most applicants in housing need on the Housing List.
187. Offers with this award will be made on a like-for-like basis, unless there are sound reasons why this should not be the case. You will only receive one offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation. Where appropriate you may be made a direct offer.
188. If you have not moved to permanent accommodation within three months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available. When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.
189. If you refuse a home that is offered to you, the additional priority awarded to your application will be withdrawn. If temporary accommodation has been provided this will also be withdrawn. If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are genuine reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.
190. If you disagree with a decision made you can ask for a review. (See Appendix 3) Whilst we will consider every review on its merits, for a review to succeed there should be genuine reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer. We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past) ; the circumstances that you have told us about justifying your application being given higher priority ; and the reasons why you feel the offer made was not suitable or reasonable.
- Emergency priority award**
191. This is the highest priority award available and will only be given in exceptional circumstances. Your preference date will be the date your case was first considered by the Panel or the date of an award if the decision is made by a senior manager. If awarded, the application will be placed in Band 1 Group A. Applicants awarded emergency status are considered first for any suitable homes available.
192. The Lettings Sustainability Officer managing your case will review the priority awarded to your every three months to confirm whether the award made to you continues to be justified. If due to change of circumstances it is considered the award is no longer justified your application will revert to

the status before the award was made. It is therefore very important that you continue to report anything that happens that may be relevant to your award.

193. It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available. The additional priority you have been given reflects a genuine and compelling reason for you to move. This will give you higher priority than any applicants on the Housing List except emergency cases agreed before you.
194. Offers with this award will be made on a like-for-like basis, unless there are sound reasons why this should not be the case. You will only receive one offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation.
195. If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within one month then your application may be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available. When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe. Where appropriate a direct offer may be made.
196. If you refuse a home that is offered to you the emergency priority awarded to your application will be withdrawn. If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are genuine reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.
197. If you disagree with a decision made you can ask for a review (See Appendix

3). Whilst we will consider every review on its merits, for a review to succeed there should be genuine reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer. We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past) ; the circumstances that you have told us about justifying your application being given higher priority ; and the reasons why you feel the offer made was not suitable or reasonable.

When you need re housing because of the condition of your home

198. When a surveyor employed by either the Council or partner landlord reports that it is not reasonable or possible for you to continue to occupy your home while repairs are being carried out, your application will be awarded an emergency priority and placed in Band 1 Group A. The preference date will be the date the award was made.
199. Offers with this award will be made on a like-for-like basis, unless there are genuine reasons why this should not be the case.
200. If you have not accepted an offer of permanent alternative accommodation within one month of the award being agreed then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available. Where appropriate you may be made a direct offer.
201. When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider

them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

202. You will be made only one offer of permanent alternative suitable and reasonable accommodation with this priority. If you refuse it then temporary accommodation will be secured for you for the duration of the repair works and you will be expected to move back to your home once the repairs are completed.
203. If we are not able to secure permanent alternative suitable and reasonable accommodation for you within 3 months of the award being agreed, or if it is not safe for you to continue to live in your current home, then temporary accommodation will be secured for you for the duration of the repair works. The emergency priority award will be withdrawn and you will normally be expected to move back to your home once the repairs are completed.

What if I disagree with the Panel's decision?

204. If you disagree with any decision of the Housing Management Panel you can ask for a review (See Appendix 3).
205. Whilst we will consider every review on its merits, for a review to succeed there should be genuine reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer. We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past) ; the circumstances that you have told us about justifying your application being given higher priority ; and the reasons why you feel the offer made was not suitable or reasonable.

How long before I am housed if I am awarded additional priority?

206. We are not able to tell you how long you can expect to wait before an offer of alternative accommodation is made to you. This is dependent on the number of suitable available homes that become available and the number of other applicants who may have greater priority than you. However applicants given emergency status are considered first for all the homes available. Applicants given discretionary emergency priority are in Band 1, the highest priority band in the Lettings policy.

Priority Target Groups

207. Listed below are groups of applicants that will be given additional priority because of their specific circumstances; or that it is in the community's interest to do so ; or where they may be a statutory duty. Applicants in these groups will be placed in Band 1 Group B and are referred to as "priority target groups".
208. Each year a target will be set for these groups that will be published in the annual lettings plan. The targets will be based upon the number of applicants who qualify for these groups and an assessment of the housing needs and priorities prevailing in the borough in order to balance the groups needs with other applicants and the housing supply available. Targets will be decided in order to plan for the anticipated number that will require housing.
209. To qualify for a priority target group, you must be eligible for the housing list according to the prevailing Lettings Policy. It is in yours and your sponsor's interests to provide sufficient information and evidence to demonstrate that you are eligible.

210. Unless otherwise stated, there will be no time limit on the choices you can make when your application is in one of these groups. When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

211. It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available. You will receive only one offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation with this additional priority and if it is refused then the award will be withdrawn. If your application is otherwise eligible for the housing list it will be removed from the priority group and re-assessed for priority.

212. If you are offered a home but do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are genuine reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.

213. You can ask us to review the decisions to withdraw any priority award as set out in Appendix 3. We will consider every application for a review on its merits. For a review to succeed there should be genuine reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer. We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past) ; the circumstances that you have told us about justifying your inclusion in the quota group ; and the reasons why you feel the offer made was not suitable or reasonable.

Care Leavers

214. The Council's Social Services Leaving Care Team will sponsor you for housing priority. If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 6 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

City and Tower Hamlets Zone (CATHZO)

215. The Council's Host team that administers this Rough Sleeper Initiative sponsors single applicants living in hostel accommodation for housing priority. You will be considered for bed-sit or 1-bedroom properties only.

216. If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 12 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

Intensive Living and Community Care and Support (ILCCS)

217. The Council's Adults Services department that administers the ILCCS scheme and sponsors single people living in hostel accommodation for housing priority. You will be considered for bed-sit or 1-bedroom properties only.

218. If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 12 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

Foster Carers

219. If the Council's Social Services Department will sponsor you for housing priority you will normally be considered for one additional bedroom to that needed by your immediate family.

Living in a decant block with a Council or partner landlord tenant

220. You will be placed in this group if you have been living with a Council or partner landlord tenant for the previous 12 months as your only or principal home prior to a decant being declared to the property.
221. If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 6 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available. Where appropriate you may be made a direct offer.
222. We are not able to guarantee that we will be able to help you with re-housing before the tenant has to move. If you are still living with the tenant when they have to move you will be expected to make your own arrangements for housing and you may be able to continue with your housing list application from your new address.

Sons and Daughters of tenants of CHR partner landlords

223. Your application can be placed in this group if you have been living with your parents for the previous five years as your only or principal home, and they are tenants of the Council or a Common Housing Register partner landlord, and one of the following circumstances apply:
- your parents are registered on the housing list and their application has been awarded a health priority;
 - you need no larger than a home with 1 bedroom and your parents are giving up a 4 bedroom home or larger because they have been successful for the Cash Incentive Scheme;
 - you need no larger than a 1 bed home and your parent/s also wish to move to a smaller property where there is a net bed gain and a 2 bed or

larger property would be available to let to another household on the Housing List. In these circumstances we will make direct offers to both parties simultaneously to ensure vacant possession of the existing tenancy

- your parents' household (excluding you and your immediate family and anyone else who is not their immediate family) is living in overcrowded conditions lacking two or more bedrooms.

224. We cannot guarantee that you will be offered housing before your parents move. If you are living with them when they move you will be expected to make your own arrangements. If they do not give their landlord vacant possession they may be asked to return any Cash Incentive Grant. If your parents fail to move once you do then, unless there are justifiable circumstances, your landlord will seek possession of your new home.

Key Workers

225. There are many public sector jobs where it is very hard to recruit and retain essential staff. If you are employed full or part time on a permanent contract within the Local Authority area as one of the following you will be considered for inclusion in a target group:
- ambulance staff who are paramedics;
 - fully qualified nurses working in the Borough's NHS hospitals;
 - fire fighters and police officers stationed in the Borough;
 - teachers working in the Borough's LEA maintained schools
226. This scheme aims to help those in these occupations who do not currently have a social tenancy and/or do not currently live within a reasonable distance of their workplace.

227. There is a serious shortage of homes with four or more bedrooms. Therefore if your household needs this size of accommodation you will not normally be considered for this priority.

228. There are a small number of designated 'key worker' blocks and you will be able to apply for this accommodation in line with the prevailing lettings policy.

229. Some of the housing providers in the Borough offer shared homes. The Council and partner landlord will only offer you this type of home if you tell them that you would be interested in it, or if there are a number of key workers who want to share together and make a joint application.

Retiring from tied accommodation

230. If you have been an employee of the Council or partner landlord and have been living in accommodation provided by them for the better performance of your duties for at least the previous five years and you are retiring due to age or health grounds.

Supported Housing Move-On

231. If you are living in supported housing provided by a RSL and you no longer require the specialist housing services provided with your tenancy. To qualify to be included in this priority group, your application should be supported by the Council's Adult Services Department and your landlord.

Homeless and in priority need due to vulnerability

232. If you are accepted as homeless and vulnerable due to age; mental or physical illness; disability; risk of violence at home and/or institutional background. See paragraphs 52 - 67 for further information regarding homeless applicants.

Decants

What happens if a decision is made to refurbish, redevelop or demolish my home, and I have to move?

233. If you are a Council or partner landlord tenant and your landlord makes a decision that you have to move then we will do our best to ensure that you and your family are re-housed to a home that you will be happy in. This process is called 'decanting'. It means that a property has to be empty for works to take place or a decision to demolish the property has been made. This usually happens only after residents have been asked for their views or when there has been an emergency leaving property unsafe. Unless otherwise stated here, the prevailing lettings policy will apply to all applicants. You will be told the date on which your home has to be empty. This is called the 'clearance date'.

What happens if my home has to be decanted?

234. Your landlord will usually talk to you about all the re-housing options available to you and your family. Some schemes may involve new homes being built. Others will mean you have the right to return to your old home once works are finished. You may wish to move to another part of the Borough or consider home ownership. We will try to help you make an informed decision about the best choices for your family. You will be asked to fill in a re-housing application form. If anyone in your household has special housing needs because of health or disability problems you will be asked to fill in a housing health assessment form.

Will I be offered new homes being built?

235. Many decant schemes include new homes being built to replace those being demolished. The new homes will usually be owned by a Registered Social

Landlord, not the Council. You may be offered a tenancy with the new landlord. You will be told at the beginning of a decant scheme whether or not new homes are being built. If they are, then you may be given the choice of them. We will try to develop a new home that meets your family's housing needs but we cannot promise that in every case it will be possible. If more tenants want new homes than are being built or more than one household wants a single plot, preference will be decided as follows:

236. Tenants with decant status where their clearance date is less than a year away; or need a 4 bed home or larger; or a home that is wheelchair accessible category A or B, will be placed in Band 1 Group A. The preference date will be the clearance date. Priority for available homes will be given in preference date order with the tenant with the earliest date being considered first and so on. Where tenants have bid for a home and have the same clearance date, any tenants with a medical award or are overcrowded will be given preference. If this does not resolve the issue, the tenant with the earliest tenancy date will be given preference.
237. Tenants with decant status in Band 1 Group A who have not received or accepted an offer within six months of their clearance date will have their case reviewed by a senior officer and where appropriate, their priority may be amended.
238. Tenants with decant status where their clearance date is more than a year away will be placed in Band 1 Group B. Their preference date will be the clearance date. Priority for available homes will be given in preference date order as above.

What happens if I have an "option to return"?

239. Some regeneration schemes mean that your current home will be refurbished. Sometimes your home will be demolished. In either case you may be given an option to return to the new properties built on the site of your demolished block or to your old home once works to it have been completed. You will be given a written promise of the option to return and the type of new home that will be available to you. Your landlord will find a temporary home for you to live in until you can return permanently. Wherever possible the temporary home will be suitable for your family's housing needs. However, if we cannot find a property that meets all your housing needs you may have to move to a home that is like-for-like with the home you are leaving. You may be in a temporary home for some time, maybe years if a new home is being built. If you change your mind and want to stay in the temporary home permanently, wherever it is reasonable for you to do so we will agree.

Do I have to move to new homes built to replace my demolished home?

240. Wherever possible you will be given the choice of where you want to move to. However, you will be given a date by which you have to make a final decision about whether or not you want to move to new homes being built. This is to ensure that a home will be available for you and choices about that home (such as layout, colours, fittings or adaptations) can be made whilst it is being built.
241. If you do not want to move to new homes being built then your application will be put in Band 1 Group A or B as set out above. You can then apply for any vacant properties that are advertised. Your preference date will be the clearance date your landlord has

decided is necessary to have the properties empty. Preference will then be decided as set out above.

What happens if I do not apply for a new home before the clearance date?

242. Whilst we will try to help you find a new home that meets all of your choices it may not be possible. It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available.

243. If you haven't been able to identify a home you want then it may be necessary to serve a legal notice. This is a legal document that allows your landlord to ask a Court to instruct you to leave your home. You will not be homeless if this happens, as we will have to assure the Court that we have suitable alternative accommodation available for you to move in to. This may be like-for-like the property you are leaving.

244. Serving a legal notice is always a last resort when you have not accepted any of the other housing options available to you. We have to do this to ensure that a decant scheme can proceed so protecting the interest and rights of other residents.

If my home is being decanted how many homes can I apply for?

245. Until you accept an offer of re-housing you can continue to apply for any homes that interest you up until six months before the decant scheme's clearance date.

246. If you have not moved by this date, then you will be made an offer of the next property that we consider reasonable to meet the minimum housing needs of your family. If you do not accept it then we may ask a Court to instruct you to move as described above.

247. If you are successful for an advertised vacancy and it is suitable and reasonable your landlord will expect you to move to it. If you do not and a legal notice has been served (as described above) either the property will be held for you or you will be made an offer of the next property that we consider reasonable to meet the minimum needs of your family. If you still do not move then your landlord may ask a Court to make you move.

What size home can I apply for?

248. You can apply for the size of home that meets the needs of your household, as described above in paragraphs 78 - 82.

249. However, if you currently live in a home that is larger than that standard you can apply for a home that has one bedroom larger than the standard to a maximum of the same size as your current home up to a 3 bed property. If you choose to apply for a larger home than the standard then it must be a flat or maisonette on the same floor level as you are now living. For example if you live in a 3 bedroom flat on the 4th floor and you need a 1 bedroom home you can apply for a 1 bedroom property on any floor level or a 2 bedroom flat or maisonette on the 4th floor or above.

250. There is a shortage of homes with four or more bedrooms so you will only be considered for this size home if you need it.

251. If you choose to move to new homes being built you will only be considered for the size of home that meets the needs of your household as set out in paragraphs 78 - 82.

252. If you are a Council tenant and you agree to move to a smaller home you will be entitled to the incentive payments that are available as set out in paragraph 110.

253. If, during the course of the decant, a separate re-housing application is received from your address that has been awarded additional priority because of the decant (e.g. if your son or daughter wish to be re-housed independently) you will only be able to apply for a home the size of your own assessed need.
254. **Will I get help with the cost of moving?**
255. If you have been living in the property for at least 12 months before a decant is agreed then a 'Home Loss' payment will be made. The Government, not your landlord, decides the amount, which is reviewed annually. At present the amount for a tenancy is £4,700. For joint tenancies only one payment is made. You will be told if there is any change in this amount following the annual review.
256. Your landlord will also pay reasonable removal expenses. This is for things such as the cost of hiring a removal van; disconnection and reconnection of services such as gas, electricity and your telephone; hiring a plumber to connect your washing machine and an electrician or engineer to move your cooker. You should always use properly qualified people and must ensure that properly registered fitter carries out any works to your gas supply.
257. There is a maximum amount that will be paid. When your landlord visits to talk to you about the decant, they will tell you how much you can claim. You will be asked to provide receipts that show that you have paid for the service. In some cases your landlord may be able to give you some of the money before you move if you would otherwise have difficulty paying for services at the time of moving.
258. If you owe your landlord money, such as rent arrears, they may deduct it from any Home Loss or expense payments you claim. If the money you owe is more than you can claim you will be expected to make an agreement to pay the outstanding amount back.
- What happens to other people who won't be moving with me? Will they get help finding a home?**
259. Anyone who is not your immediate family, as defined above, will have to register separately for housing unless your landlord agrees otherwise. There is provision to house them through a priority target group in Band 1 Group B. To qualify for this group the person must be able to prove that they were living with you in the property as their only or principal home continuously for at least 12 months before the decant scheme was agreed.
260. They must also be eligible to be on the housing list. Their application will be placed in Band 1 Group B. Their preference date will be the date the decant was agreed. They can then apply for advertised vacancies.
261. If they refuse a home that is offered to them their priority will be withdrawn. If they do not attend a viewing, we will assume that they have refused the property unless there are genuine and substantial reasons why they could not turn up and could not tell us beforehand.
262. They can ask us to review a decision to withdraw any priority award (See Appendix 3)
263. We will try to ensure that they have at least one offer before you have to move, but we cannot promise that this will happen. If they are still living with you when you are moving they will be expected to leave the property when

you do and make their own arrangements for housing.

264. You have to give your landlord vacant possession of your home as described above. If you do not give vacant possession your Home Loss payment may be withheld and your new home may not be available to you.

265. Anyone who does not qualify for this additional preference may apply for housing in the usual way but will be expected to leave the property when you do and make his or her own arrangements for housing.

I own a home that is included in a decant scheme. Will I be re-housed?

266. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will not consider you for housing priority if you are a homeowner. We may be able to help you find shared ownership or other low cost home ownership opportunities, but once your landlord has negotiated to buy back your home, you will be expected to make your own arrangements for housing.

267. On the exceptional occasions that it is agreed a homeowner is to be considered for housing priority, they will be included on lists for all reasonable vacant properties that become available.

268. If you are offered a property that your landlord thinks is reasonable and then refuse to move to it, the property will be held whilst your landlord asks a Court to instruct you to move.

269. If you do not apply for a property then you will be made an offer of the next available property that your landlord considers reasonable to meet the minimum needs of your family and this will be held whilst your landlord asks a Court to instruct you to move.

270. If you have not moved within one month of the completion date of your property being bought back then you will be made an offer of the next property that your landlord considers reasonable to meet the minimum housing needs of your family. If you do not accept it then your landlord may ask a Court to instruct you to move, as described above.

Appendix 1 – How decisions are made to place you in a Band

Band 1 Group A

Emergencies

271. The decision to award an emergency priority can be made by a senior manager or the Housing Management Panel based on the individual circumstances of the household. It will usually consist of a combination of exceptional social/ welfare/ safety/ medical and urgency factors affecting an applicant or their household that cannot be adequately dealt with within the normal rules of the Lettings Policy. (see paragraphs 156 and 191 – 197).

Decants

272. The decision to decant a block can only be made by councillors (for Council properties) and Management Boards (for partner landlord properties). (See paragraphs 233 – 270).

Ground Floor Priority

273. The decision to award priority for ground floor on medical or disability grounds is made following a medical assessment and recommendation by a Health Advisor. (See paragraphs 147 – 149).

Under occupiers or downsizing

274. If you are an existing social housing tenant applying for a home with at least 1 bedroom less than you currently have – (See paragraphs 107 - 111). (If you are a tenant of a landlord who is not a partner in the Common Housing Register then a reciprocal agreement will be required)

Band 1 Group B

Priority Medical Award

275. This award is given following a health assessment and recommendation by a Health Advisor. (See paragraphs 126 – 155).

Priority Social Award

276. The decision to make this award is made by a Panel including a senior officer in circumstances as set out in this policy. (See paragraphs 156– 73 and 184 – 190)

Priority Target groups

277. The decision to make this award is made by a Lettings Sustainability Officer if evidence is provided to verify that an applicant meets the criteria for the relevant target group. (See paragraphs 207 – 232 for details of the groups).

Priority Target group - Single homeless in priority need due to vulnerability

278. The Council's homeless service makes this decision following an assessment (see paragraphs 52 – 67).

Band 2

Homeless applicants with children and in priority need

279. The Council's Homeless Service makes the decision on homeless applications whether the Council accepts a full statutory duty following investigation and an assessment. (See paragraphs 52 – 67)

Overcrowded applicants

280. This will be based upon an assessment and verification of your circumstances

as stated on your housing application. (Note: Single applicants lacking a room of their own will be included in this category. This includes applicants who have been found to be homeless but following assessment are not in priority need).

Band 3

Applicants who are not overcrowded

281. This will be based upon an assessment and verification of your circumstances as stated on your housing application. This will include applicants who are tenants of Common Housing Register partner landlords who are not overcrowded but wish to move to the same size property.

Band 4

RSL and local authority tenants whose landlord is not a member of the Common Housing Register

282. If you are a social housing tenant the decision about this depends upon on whether your landlord is a signatory to the Common Housing Register.
283. However, if you awarded emergency status following an assessment of your circumstances your application will be placed in Band 1 Group A. If you are awarded priority medical status following a medical assessment your application will be placed in Band 1 Group B.

New applicants who own or part own a residential property

284. A Lettings Customer Advisor will do a search with the Land Registry to decide if this applies to you.

Applicants without a local connection to the area

285. This decision will be made by a Lettings Customer Advisor who will investigate your connection to the Borough. If none

of the following apply, your application will normally be placed in Band 4:

- you have lived in the Borough for at least six of the last 12 months; or
- you have lived in the Borough for at least three of the last five years; or
- you have permanent employment in the Borough; or
- you have a close relative (mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter) living in the Borough and they have lived in the Borough for at least the last five years (Note: Proof of these relationships will be required).

Appendix 2 – Preference Dates

286. Each applicant will be given a preference date on the Housing List. In some bands this will be their original date of application. For others it will be a date of notification of their change of circumstances especially where higher priority has been given. How the preference date is decided for each category in each band is set out below.

Band 1 Preference dates

Group A	
Emergencies	Date of Award
Ground Floor Medical/Disability/Wheelchair Accessible Category A or B	Date of application for medical assessment
Priority Decants (less than a year to clearance date – or as a decant require 4 bed or larger – or as a decant require wheelchair accessible category A or B)	Earliest clearance date
Under Occupiers	Greatest number of bedrooms released first then date order of application

Group B	
Priority Medical	Date of application for assessment
Priority Social	Date of award by Housing management panel
Decants (More than a year to clearance date)	Earliest clearance date
Priority Target Groups	Date of application for the target group
Priority Target Group Single homeless assessed as in priority need due to vulnerability where the Council has accepted a full statutory duty	Date of application as homeless

Band 2 Preference Dates

Overcrowded applicants on the Housing List on the date this Lettings Policy is implemented	Original date of application (defined as the date the application was received)
New applicants who are overcrowded	Date of application (defined as the date the application was received)
Applicants who are not overcrowded on the date this Lettings Policy is implemented who have since become overcrowded	Date of notification of change of circumstances
Applicants moving from Band 1 to Band 2	Earliest preference date in Band 1 or 2 (if they were previously in Band 2)
Homeless applicants with children where the Council has accepted a full statutory duty	Date of application as homeless

Band 3 Preference Dates

Applicants who are not overcrowded	Date of application
Tenants of Common Housing Register partner landlords who are not overcrowded but wish to move to the same size home	Date of application
Applicants moving to Band 3 from Bands 1 or 2 due to change of circumstances	Earliest date of application

Band 4 Preference Dates

No local connection	Date of application
Property Owners or with an interest in a residential property	Date of application
Tenants of social housing landlords who are not Common Housing Register partners	Date of application

What if my circumstances change?

moves to a lower priority band they do not lose time already spent on the Housing List in a higher band.

287. If your circumstances change, for example you change address or your family composition changes, or you apply for additional priority on medical or social grounds you may be moved to another band and be given a new preference date. The following rules apply should this happen.

Rule 1:

288. When moving up a band, i.e. to a higher priority band, a new preference date based upon the change of circumstances will be given.
289. The reason for this rule is that an applicant will not overtake applicants that were already in the high priority band before them.

Rule 2:

290. If an applicant moves from Band 1 to Band 2 - they will retain the earliest preference date they were in Band 1 or 2 (if they were previously in Band 2).
291. Applicants in Bands 1 & 2 fall within the categories where the law states they must be given "reasonable preference" on the Housing List. The reason for this rule is that if an applicant was in this category in Band 1, it is considered fairest that they do not lose time spent waiting in a "reasonable preference" category if they move to Band 2 where they will also be in this category. The preference date will be the earliest date the applicant was in reasonable preference category.

Rule 3:

292. If an applicant moves from either Band 1 or 2 to Band 3 or 4 – they will retain their earliest date of application.
293. The reason for this is that if, due to a change of circumstances, an applicant

Appendix 3 – Right of Review

What if you make a decision about my application that I do not agree with?

294. You can ask for a review on any decision that is made about your application. You should do this within 28 days of the decision being notified to you. If you ask us to review a decision to exclude you from the housing list, a more senior officer who did not make the original decision will carry out a review.
295. If you ask us to review a decision on the suitability or reasonableness of an offer of accommodation that you have refused so that the priority awarded to your application is withdrawn, a more senior officer who did not make the original decision will carry out a review.
296. If you disagree with the Council's decision following a recommendation by a Health Advisor, an initial review will be carried out by another Health Advisor who has not been involved in the first assessment of your application for priority on health grounds. The Council will make a decision based upon the recommendation of the second Health Advisor.
297. If you still disagree with the Council's decision the matter will be reviewed again by a Health Advisor in the Primary Care Trust. Following this Health Advisor's recommendation a final decision will be made.
298. Further enquiries may be made at any stage of this process if appropriate.
299. If you ask us to review a decision about the priority awarded to your application by the Housing Management Panel, the Panel will first review any additional information or evidence that is presented. If you still disagree with the Panel's decision, a more senior officer than the chair of the Panel will carry out the review which will be our final decision.
300. For reviews of any other decision made regarding your application, an officer who was not involved in the original decision, but not necessarily someone more senior to the officer, who made the first decision, will carry out a review.
301. If you wish to request a review of a decision it should normally be in writing. This is to make sure that we have a record of what you have told us.
302. In exceptional circumstances we will agree to you making the request in person. We will aim to tell you the result of a review within 56 days from the date of your request unless it is necessary to request further information. Normally, the decision is made more quickly than this. We will also tell you how we have made our decision.