

Royal Borough of Greenwich Allocations Scheme (Effective January 2025)

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Section 1: Introduction

The Law requires that all allocations or 'lettings' are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (Part 6), as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Localism Act 2011. So, in determining the rules within this scheme, the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) has given due consideration to these Acts, related legislation, case law and guidance.

The scheme has been reviewed and amended after borough wide consultation and Cabinet approval in March 2024. It reflects the new freedoms in the Localism Act which allow councils to better manage their waiting lists and tailor their allocation priorities to meet local needs and local circumstances.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is responsible for allocating Council and Housing Association homes to people who are in housing need. However, as the demand for accommodation is far greater than the supply, it is essential that the best use is made of all available housing stock and that those applying for assistance consider all options to resolve their housing situation.

The Allocations Scheme aims to:

- Manage expectations about the availability of social housing.
- Make the best use of available housing stock.
- Promote the awareness of alternative housing options and solutions.
- Provide 'reasonable preference' to certain applicants in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 s. (167) (2) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Localism Act 2011
- Provide fair access to our service.
- Allow the greatest degree of choice.

Only households on the housing register will be considered for housing. The Scheme explains who can join the Council's housing register, the rules we follow to make decisions about housing applications and the way in which homes are allocated. It also provides details about the other housing options.

Equality Policy

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good community relations and the prevention of all forms of unlawful discrimination in the way we provide Council services. The Allocations Scheme provides policies and criteria to ensure applicants are treated fairly. Applications and lettings are also monitored to make sure the service is delivered fairly. Where required, applicants and residents will be provided with information and advice about the scheme in languages and formats to meet their needs.

Section 2: The Housing Register

This section explains who can and cannot register for housing and how the housing register is managed.

2.1 Why we have a Housing Register

All eligible applicants for housing (whether existing tenants of the council or new applicants) are entered on to the Housing Register, where their details are stored and used to assess housing need. The Council can only allocate to people who are on the register.

2.2 Who can join the Housing Register

The Royal Borough of Greenwich can only allocate housing accommodation to people who are eligible and meet the qualification criteria.

A person can only join the list if they are:

- British Citizens habitually resident within the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Republic of Ireland)
- EU citizens in the following categories:
 - EU citizens habitually resident within the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Republic of Ireland), who have been granted “*settled status*” or “*pre-settled status*” in the UK (also known as “*indefinite leave to remain*” or “*limited leave to remain*”), under the ‘EU Settlement Scheme’ or UK Immigration Control.
 - EU citizens with a ‘*Frontier Worker permit*’

In addition, no one who is subject to Immigration Control is eligible to join the housing register unless:

- They have refugee status.
- They have ‘*Leave to remain*’ which is not subject to restrictions such as no recourse to public funds
- They have ‘*Leave to remain*’ in the UK, which is not tied to a sponsorship arrangement made during the last five years.

Where an application includes people who are not eligible to register, those individuals cannot be offered a tenancy. However, the Council will take into account the needs of the whole household when assessing the application.

2.2.1 16–17-Year-Olds

The Council does not generally offer tenancies to 16 and 17-year-old applicants. If the Council has a homeless or other legal duty to assist a young person aged 16-17, we will provide supported accommodation wherever possible and will only provide permanent housing to eligible persons with a support service attached. However, 16- and 17-year-olds can join the register and will be able to bid for housing when they reach 18 years of age.

2.2.2 Local Connection Requirement

The main housing applicant must have five years continuous residency in the borough at the point of application before they can join the housing register. The Council will undertake in depth checks to confirm address histories.

To comply with legislation and partnership agreements and to avoid exceptional hardship, the following groups will be exempt:

- Pan London nomination agreements
- Former Armed Forces and other service personnel in urgent housing need, in line with the Secretary of State's regulations
- Existing council and housing association tenants who live in the borough
- Reasonable preference groups as outlined in section 4.2 excluding those placed in accommodation in the Royal Borough of Greenwich by another borough
- Exceptions at the discretion and specific authorisation of the Director of Housing and Safer Communities.

In terms of partnership agreements, the following groups will be exempt:

- Care leavers
- Move on from supported housing, Greenwich refuges and other specialist accommodation
- Reciprocal requests for those fleeing domestic abuse

The Director of Housing and Safer Communities can agree amendments to this aspect of the policy in response to changes in legislation, guidance, case law or other developments.

2.3 Who will be excluded from the Housing Register

An applicant will not qualify to join the Housing Register for an allocation of accommodation if he/she or a member of his/her household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a RBG tenant.

2.3.1 Unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour includes the following:

- Criminal or Anti- Social behaviour, where they or a member of their household has put others at risk and have been convicted or are subject to an order by a court
- Being subject to a court order for breach of tenancy
- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family where this has been proven
- Being evicted within the last two years for anti-social behaviour
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example giving false information will lead to a permanent exclusion from the housing register.

The decision to exclude on the grounds of criminal or anti-social behaviour would be taken by a panel of senior officers. Before taking the decision, the Panel will take account of any evidence from professionals or others as to whether a person has gone through a programme of rehabilitation or otherwise demonstrated a meaningful period of addressing such behaviour. Factors considered when assessing applications will include:

- An assessment of housing need
- Risk assessments and information from the police, probation and other agencies
- The nature and frequency of the criminal or anti-social behaviour
- The time that has lapsed since the most recent incident (at least two years should have lapsed since the last incident)

In some circumstances the Council is required to assist families guilty of anti-social behaviour or rent arrears because of duties to protect children or to assist vulnerable adults who are homeless. In most cases the statutory duty will **not** be met through provision of Council or Housing Association accommodation. Any decisions about rehousing in such circumstances will take into account the need to protect the wider community from anti-social behaviour and to allow existing tenants to enjoy peace and quiet in their homes.

2.3.2 Rent arrears:

- Applicants will not be able to join the housing register if there is a current or former rent arrear of three months or more, where the wilful actions of the occupier have caused the arrears to accumulate. This includes owing a significant housing related debt to a Local Authority, a Housing Association or a private landlord or
- If the applicant or a member of their household has been evicted within the last two years for rent arrears

Applicants will be entitled to request a review of the decision to exclude them from the register.

2.3.3 Exemptions from the rent arrears policy

The following groups will be exempt from the arrears policy:

- RBG tenants who are being decanted
- Under occupiers who are downsizing
- Applicants at high risk of violence
- Applicants with serious medical conditions
- Other priority applicants who have made attempts to reduce their current or former rent arrears through an agreed regular pattern of payment for at least **six** months
- Households affected by the Total Benefit Cap who have been assessed as living in unaffordable accommodation

2.3.4 Homeowners

This group is excluded unless:

- They have been assessed as requiring specific adapted accommodation and are unable to afford to secure suitable alternative accommodation, including within the private sector
- The household is in mortgage arrears where homelessness cannot be prevented

2.3.5 Persons subject to immigration control

A person may not be allocated accommodation under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of accommodation under section 160ZA (6) (a) of Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

This includes the following groups:

- Those who have limited leave to enter or remain in the UK, granted on the understanding that they are not entitled to receive public funding
- Those who have valid leave to enter or remain in the UK, which includes the stipulation that they are not to receive public funding
- Those who are not habitually resident in the UK
- Illegal entrants
- Those who have overstayed their leave
- Any other person from abroad who the Secretary of State has judged ineligible for housing

2.4 Who will be suspended from the Housing Register

RBG will suspend applicants on the following grounds:

- Where there is any level of arrear (former or current) at the point of an offer, until the arrears are cleared or there has been a regular pattern of payment for six months - see exemptions 2.3.3
- Where they or a member of their household are on the housing register and have been convicted or subject to an order by a court in relation to criminal or anti-social behaviour, as a result of behaviour that has put others at risk or makes them unsuitable to be a tenant.
- Applicants will be suspended from the Housing Register if they do not attend an invitation to view a property without reasonable notice and justification

2.4.1

The decision to suspend on the grounds of criminal or anti-social behaviour would be taken by a panel of senior officers. An applicant will be entitled to request a review if they disagree with the decision.

2.4.2

Where an applicant is suspended, they will not accrue waiting time during the time of the suspension.

Section 3: The housing application process

This section explains how to apply for housing, who can be included on the application and how housing applications are processed and monitored

3.1 The on-line housing application service

The Council operates an on-line housing application service. On submission of the on-line application, the Council will verify the details and confirm registration. Applicants will also be provided with written confirmation of the following information within 30 working days:

- Their reference number, also known as their bidding number
- Which band they are in
- Their date of registration

3.2 Who can be included on an application

Household members who can be included on an application are as follows:

- Anyone who is living with the applicant as a partner
- Dependent children for whom the applicant or their partner has principal care and control and non-dependent children who are normally resident with the applicant. If the applicant or partner are not the biological parent(s) of the child(ren), evidence of guardianship or a Child Arrangement Order must be provided.
- Grandchildren who are dependent on the applicant or some other (already accepted) member of the household
- Foster children or potential foster children (where a placement has been agreed with a long-standing foster carer), where long term foster care arrangements have been endorsed by Children's Services and Housing
- Parents (of the applicant) where the applicant can demonstrate that the arrangement is permanent (i.e. not short-term following a stay in hospital or similar)
- Carers who have evidence of a formal and permanent arrangement, including carers providing long term care through the Shared Lives Scheme agreed with Housing and Health and Adult Services.

Generally, extended family members such as cousins, aunts and uncles will not be accepted as part of a household. Extended family members will be expected to make their own arrangements and will be provided with advice and assistance, as appropriate to their circumstances.

3.3 Access and Care of Children

Applicants may only include children who live with them permanently. Children who live permanently elsewhere or where there are contact arrangements may not be included.

Where the family is separated, and the children reside equally between two parents, then a decision will be required on the size of property that each party is eligible for. In reaching a decision, the Council is entitled to consider:

- Whether any court order reflects the reality of current living arrangements
- The extent to which there will be overcrowding or under occupation at each property. The extent of any under occupation (i.e. by how many bedrooms) and the demand for this size of property will be relevant

Where there has been a change in contact and residency arrangements, proof of parental responsibility is required before it can be considered. This may include confirmation from a social worker, a special guardianship order, a child arrangement order or a solicitor's letter.

Where there is suitable accommodation available for the child(ren) elsewhere and there is no risk to them if they remain / return the Council will not, in these circumstances include the child(ren) on the applicant's Housing Register

application. However, it will consider doing so following enquiries and where risks have been confirmed by agencies involved with the child(ren), such as Children's Services and the police. (Please also see section 3.2 of the Allocations Scheme 'Who can be included on an application').

3.4 Advice and Assistance

Applicants can ask for help to complete the on-line housing application form at the Council's Service Centres. We also know that not everyone has access to a computer so there are several places across the borough where people can go to access the internet for free. These include libraries and Council offices in the Borough. Translation and interpreting services can be arranged on request.

3.5 Home Visits

Applicants may receive a home visit to verify their circumstances and to:

- Check that the applicant and members of their household are living at the address
- Check the details relating to the applicant's accommodation
- Check that an offer of accommodation can be made
- Offer advice on the available housing options

After the home visit, the information gathered including any documentation will be used to confirm the applicant's eligibility for an offer. The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the visit within 21 days of the visit.

Although the applicant may be cleared for an offer, RBG reserves the right to further investigate an application if any information comes to light that questions the applicant's entitlement to an offer. This can be at any stage prior to the applicant signing the tenancy.

3.6 Proof of identity and address

All applicants must provide honest and accurate information, and are required to provide documentary proof of the following:

- Identity
- Relationship to and between all those named on the application
- Immigration status
- The property they currently occupy

A person can only be registered on one application at any one time, so checks will be made to ensure this. For every person on the application, we must normally see at least two proofs of identity and proof of where they live within 28 days of request. These include:

- Current rent book or card (if applicable)
- Current tenancy agreement (if applicable)
- A bill or receipt (no more than 3 months old) for council tax, gas, electricity, water or telephone services
- A bank statement (not more than 3 months old)
- Details of any benefit being received that shows their National Insurance Number such as Income Support, Pension or Child Benefit
- Full birth certificate
- Proof of pregnancy e.g. hospital or GP letter
- Home Office documents

3.7 Applications from Council staff

If an application for housing is submitted by a Council member of staff (or a friend or relation of a member of a Council staff), this must be declared by the applicant on the housing application.

If an application is being considered for rehousing, the offer details and the relevant file must be referred to a senior officer for approval.

Other than the above, such cases are to be treated in exactly the same way as all other applicants for rehousing.

3.8 Information about ethnicity, disability and personal needs

The housing application form asks for details of ethnic origin, disability and needs. This information is required for the Council to carry out its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. Applications and lettings are monitored to ensure that policies and systems are fair and do not discriminate against any sections of the community. Information on communication and language needs are used to improve our services to applicants.

3.9 Re-Registration

To keep the housing register accurate and up to date, we write to applicants on a regular basis to ask if they wish to remain on the register. If applicants do not respond within the specified time, the application will be cancelled.

If the applicant approaches within six months of the cancellation, senior officers can review the case and re-instate the application, if appropriate.

3.10 Ending an application

The Council will remove applicants from the register in the following circumstances:

- If they do not re-register when requested to do so
- If they are rehoused permanently by the Council or a Housing Association. If this is the case, any further request for housing will be registered and assessed as a new application.
- If they move from the application address. If they move but still wish to remain on the Housing Register, they must inform the Allocation Service. They will need to complete a new on-line housing application to show their current circumstances but will retain their original registration date if the Access and Allocation Service is notified promptly
- If they fail to provide ID within the specified timescale with no good reason
- If they are a tenant of a council property and apply to buy their home. The housing application will be suspended, pending the outcome of the transaction. Once the purchase has been completed, the housing application will be cancelled.
- If it is discovered that the applicant or someone acting on their behalf has supplied false information or has failed to provide us with information that is relevant to the application in order to gain accommodation.

3.11 Data protection and Legal Framework

The UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) has been in effect since 25 May 2018.

The UK GDPR works alongside the Data Protection Act 2018 to set out how we protect people's personal data, as well as the rights people have in relation to how their data is used.

For further information on how Royal Greenwich uses your data please see our data protection pages and privacy notices at:

https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200169/data_protection/4/our_data_protection_privacy_notice

https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/directory/86/privacy_notices

Section 4: The Legal Framework and Allocations Priorities

This section explains how the Council meets the principal legal requirements for allocations schemes, as set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended.

The Localism Act 2011 introduces significant amendments to Part 6 of the Housing Act. The main policy objectives behind these amendments are to:

- a) Enable housing authorities to better manage their housing registers by giving them power to determine which applicants do or do not qualify for an allocation of social housing. Authorities are now able to operate a more focused list which better reflects local circumstances and can be understood more readily by local people.
- b) The Localism Act also gives local housing authorities the power to discharge the main homelessness duty with an offer of private rented accommodation, and the Royal Borough of Greenwich will operate this power through this Housing Allocations Scheme. This power came into force on the 9th November 2012, through Statutory Instrument 2012/2599.

4.1 Definition of an ‘allocation’

Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, a housing authority allocates accommodation when it:

- Selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by the authority
- Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority
- Nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Housing Association (an assured tenant includes a person with an assured short hold tenancy)

4.2 Reasonable preference

Under s.166A (3), the Council must provide ‘reasonable **preference**’ to certain categories of people.

Reasonable preference means providing certain applicants with an advantage or head start compared to other applicants who do not have reasonable preference according to the law. Reasonable preference is usually described as ‘**priority**’ within the Council’s scheme.

Reasonable preference will not be given to households placed in accommodation in the Royal Borough of Greenwich by another borough.

Reasonable preference must be given to:

- People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.
- People who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any authority under s.192(3)
- Households that are owed a Prevention or Relief duty by the Royal Borough of Greenwich under the provisions of the Act and who meet the 5-year residency criteria will not be disadvantaged and will have a Reasonable Preference that will exist until the duty is discharged
- Armed Forces Personnel being discharged or ex Homeless
- personnel or widows/ widowers
- Social tenants applying under the qualification criteria for Right to Move as outlined in section 6.22.2

The Council does not have to provide the same advantage to all categories of reasonable preference. The allocations scheme is there to meet local needs and housing demand, as well as the requirements of the law.

Households with a reasonable preference who refuse an offer of either private sector or social housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1985 made under s189B (2) of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, will not be owed any further housing duty.

4.3 How the Council provides 'reasonable preference'

The scheme provides reasonable preference to the above applicants through the banding scheme. Most applicants with reasonable preference are placed in the 'priority bands' A, B1 and B2. More offers of housing are made to households in these bands, so they have an advantage or head-start over those who do not fall within a priority group.

Applicants are housed in date order from when they received priority or were first registered. Reasonable preference may also be provided by backdating applications.

4.4 Bands and Priorities

The Housing list is divided into four Bands, A, B1, B2 (the priority bands) and C reflecting whether an applicant has reasonable preference or a local priority for housing and if so, how much.

Band A is for applicants with reasonable preference because of unsatisfactory housing conditions, who the Council needs to house and for under occupiers needing to downsize. Applicants in this band are shortlisted before all other bands and are considered in date order from when the priority was awarded.

Bands B1 and B2 are for applicants with reasonable preference who the Council must prioritise for housing. Applicants in these bands are housed in date order from when the priority was awarded. Band B1 applicants will be shortlisted before Band B2.

Band C is for all applicants on the housing register. Applicants in Band C do not attract any priority and will be housed in date order from the date their application was registered.

All applicants will be placed in Band C on registration and depending on the outcome of any assessment may also be placed within one of the other Bands.

4.4.1 Banding table

The tables below give details of the groups that fall within each Housing Band.

Housing Bands

Band A			
Reasonable Category	Preference	Applicant Group	Description
Unsatisfactory conditions	housing	Major repairs	RBG tenants who cannot remain in the property whilst essential works are in progress.
		RBG Decants	RBG tenants whose homes are being demolished.
		Under-Occupation	RBG or in-borough housing association tenants who are under-occupying their homes
		Adapted properties	RBG or in-borough housing association tenants living in properties with adaptations that they do not need
		Succession	People who have succeeded to a RBG tenancy that is too large for their needs and are required by the Council to move to smaller accommodation
Medical or Welfare Grounds		Hospital Discharge	RBG tenants in hospital who cannot return to their property because it is no longer suitable for their needs

Band B1			
Reasonable Category	Preference	Applicant Group	Description
Homeless		Homeless	Homeless households that are owed a Prevention, Relief or Main duty and meet the 5-year residency criteria.
Medical or Welfare Grounds		Medical	Households with medical needs seriously affected by the design of the home
		Domestic Abuse	Households who need to move to avoid domestic abuse
		Hate Crime	Need to move to avoid racial, faith, homophobic or disability harassment
		Emergency transfers	Tenants who must move to avoid serious risk
		Care leavers	Young people leaving Local Authority care
		Move-on	Move-on from refuges, supported housing and other specialist accommodation
		Foster carers and adult carers	Rehousing for long term foster carers (or an adult child) endorsed by Children's or Adult carers endorsed by Health and Adult Services, and Housing
		Households living in leased or private rented accommodation	Households placed by RBG into either leased or private rented sector accommodation in order to prevent homelessness and who are subsequently faced with homelessness through no fault of their own
		Unlawful occupants	People left in Council properties after the tenancy ends, subject to an assessment of their needs and circumstances.
Overcrowded or insanitary housing		Residential staff	Council staff who must move to do their job, or because they are leaving their job. Staff who have been dismissed will not be eligible.
		Key Workers	Key Workers moving to the borough to take up Public Service employment, who require one-bedroom accommodation.
		Severe overcrowding.	Households who are severely overcrowded
		Insanitary housing	Households living in insanitary housing as assessed and determined by EHO and where remedial works cannot be completed within a reasonable period

Armed Services Personnel (1)	Armed Services Personnel	Armed Services Personnel and their families who are in housing need following their discharge from the Forces and who have a connection with RBG, or their widow or widowers
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Band B2			
Reasonable Category	Preference	Applicant Group	Description
Severe Hardship		Private Sector and RSL tenants affected by the benefit cap	Households living in the private sector or RSL property who are significantly affected by the Total Benefit Cap who are unable to afford the cost of their accommodation and can demonstrate that they are actively working with the Council to secure employment.
Reasonable Groups	Preference	Reasonable preference groups, including Prevention, Relief and Main Duty homeless households and Right to Move applicants who do not meet the 5-year residency qualification	Households who do not meet the five-year residency qualification but fall within a reasonable preference category. This group will be considered after reasonable preference groups who meet the residency qualification in band B1. This includes households that are owed a Prevention, Relief or Main duty, who do not meet the 5-year residency criteria. Their reasonable preference will exist until the duty is discharged.
Armed Services Personnel (2)		Armed Services Personnel	Armed Services Personnel and their families who are in housing need following their discharge from the Forces who do not have a connection with RBG, or their widow or widowers.

Band C			
Reasonable Category	Preference	Applicant Group	Description
All applicants on the Housing Register		None	All applicants on the Housing Register

4.5 Meeting Multiple Needs

Any applicant or household, who has more than one significant need so that they are in more than one reasonable preference category, will have their application date backdated by one month. Where a household contains more than one person with a medical priority, the effective date will be backdated by one month for each additional person who has medical priority.

4.6 Additional Preference

The law enables the Council to provide **additional preference** to people who must move due to threats of violence likely to be carried out, or for urgent medical reasons.

4.7 Removing Preference

The Council may remove preference from an applicant guilty of unacceptable behaviour. See 2.3 for details.

Section 5: Applicant responsibilities and their rights under legislation

This section explains what rights and responsibilities a housing applicant has according to Legislation and Council policy.

Housing applicants are legally required to be honest and truthful when applying for housing, submitting evidence or requesting a review. **It is a criminal offence** to knowingly provide false information or withhold information that the Council reasonably requires the applicant to give. Any applicant who submits fraudulent applications or information is liable to criminal prosecution, as well as loss of any tenancy that they have obtained through provision of false information.

5.1 Change of circumstances

Applicants are required to inform the Council of any change of circumstances immediately by completing the housing amendment form, (unless moving to a new address, in which case applicants will need to complete a new online application), returning it to the Allocation Service at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street London SE18 6HQ. The onus is on applicants to inform us when there is a change in their circumstances.

Applicants must provide all information that is, or may be, relevant to their application for rehousing. This includes, but is not restricted to:

- any changes to their address including change of tenure
- the birth of a child
- the removal of someone from the application
- the addition of someone to the application

Failure to keep the Access and Allocations section informed could prevent the applicant from being considered for their chosen property.

5.2 Information and Advice

The Council must provide information and advice to housing applicants. This is available from the Council's website, the Service Centres, and the Allocations Service. This includes advice about likely waiting times for different property types in different areas of the borough.

Applicants must be informed when decisions are made about their application and must be advised of their right to a review of the decision.

5.3 Right to a Review

Applicants can ask for a review on **any** decision that has been made about their application.

The review must be requested within 21 days of the decision being notified to the applicant.

Requests for a review should be made in writing. This is to make sure that there is a record of what the applicant has told us.

- **A review of a decision to exclude an applicant from the housing register** will be conducted by a more senior officer who did not make the original decision. The senior officer's decision will be final.
- **A review of a decision on the suitability or reasonableness of an offer of accommodation** that has been refused leading to a 12-month suspension of the application, or the removal of a priority, will be conducted by a more senior officer who did not make the original decision. The decision of this review is final.
- **A review of a decision made at the Case Review Panel** will first be considered by a reconvened panel who will consider any additional information or evidence that is provided. If the applicant still disagrees with the panel's decision, a senior officer not involved in the original decision will conduct the review. The decision of this review is final.

Notification on the outcome of a review will be provided in writing, with reasons for the decision, within 5 working days of the review being considered. The decision will be either that the review is upheld or not. In reaching this decision, officers must ensure policy has been followed correctly and available discretion has been applied.

5.4 Right to confidentiality

The Council will not share confidential information provided by an applicant, except where it is necessary to do so to provide a service or to verify information. The housing application includes a confidentiality clause which says how and when confidential information must be shared. Applicants should only sign and submit an application if they agree to information being shared in the limited circumstances required.

5.5 Right of access to information

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 provides access to recorded information held by public bodies, including the Council. The FOI enables any individual to see non-sensitive data, rather than personal case files.

The Data Protection Act allows access to information the Council holds about individuals, including on the housing register.

All requests for information must be made in writing (letter or e-mail). It must clearly state what information is requested and ID will be required before requests can be fulfilled.

The Information Commissioner's Office is an independent body that enforces the FOI Act, the Data Protection Act and the Environmental Information Regulations. For more information visit www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk or see the Commissioner's FOI leaflet.

Section 6: Assessing Applications and Awarding Priority

This section explains how assessments are carried out to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly, according to Council policy.

6.1 Initial assessment

On registration of an application further action is usually required to assess a person's needs, before deciding which band(s) an applicant is placed in, and the date of registration/priority that is awarded. An initial assessment will identify what referrals or investigations are required before any decisions are reached.

6.2 Case Review Panel

Applicants with exceptional urgent needs are referred to a Case Review Panel chaired by an Allocations Manager. If the need to move urgently is proven, the applicant is given appropriate assistance through the award of priority within the banding scheme.

All Case Review Panel decisions are based on written information and evidence provided. Reasons for decisions are recorded and the applicant will be advised in writing of the decision, or of the need to provide any further information.

6.3 Assessment of emergency transfers

RBG tenants requesting a transfer to avoid domestic abuse hate crime or other serious threat must contact their Tenancy Enforcement Officer. Housing Association tenants should contact their landlord, and non-tenants should contact the Housing Inclusion and Support Service at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street.

The officer managing the case for RBG tenants will obtain the relevant information from the tenant which may include information from the police, social services and support agencies and present this information to a panel chaired by the Tenancy Team Leader:

- Rehousing is not the best way to assist the person, or the person does not fit the criteria for rehousing based on their circumstances. Alternative ways to assist the person will be offered as appropriate. The tenant will be informed of the decision in writing and be given the right to a review.
- A referral to the Multi Agency Domestic Risk Assessment Conference is necessary before a decision can be reached. This panel will then make recommendations to the Case Review Panel based upon the evidence and information provided by agencies.
- The applicant's circumstances are such that they should be referred to the Case Review Panel, where a decision can be made about whether or not to award priority for rehousing.

6.4 Decant and Remedial Works

6.4.1 Decant Schemes

When the Council is redeveloping a site, or carrying out substantial repair and improvement programmes, arrangements are made to ensure the rehousing of tenants. These programmes are delivered according to specific policies designed to meet the need of the scheme and the residents. Tenants who are required to move to enable the Council to demolish or carry out major works to their homes are placed within priority Band A with their tenancy commencement date as the date of priority.

6.4.2 Remedial Works

If works cannot be completed with the tenant in occupation, the applicant will be given remedial works priority and placed in Band A with their tenancy commencement date as the date of priority.

The Repairs Centre Manager is responsible for assessing the need for a RBG tenant to move during remedial works. If there are medical reasons relevant to the decision, then a medical assessment will be carried out before priority is agreed.

Those confirmed to be in unfit housing by the Environmental Health Service will be placed in Band A.

6.5 Under Occupation

RBG and in-borough housing association tenants who are under-occupying will automatically be awarded Band A.

Households will be allocated a property of a size to meets their needs. However, in the case of non-working age households and where there are exceptional circumstances, the Council may exercise its discretion to allocate a property with an additional bedroom.

Tenants who have reached state credit pension age can keep one extra bedroom above their assessed need when downsizing, where this results in a net gain of bedrooms for RBG.

(For example, a single person aged 70 living in a 3-bedroom home could downsize to a home with 2 bedrooms.)

6.5.1 Incentive scheme for under occupiers

RBG operates an Under-Occupation Incentive Scheme (Small is Beautiful) where RBG tenants who under occupy their property are given an incentive payment to downsize. The incentive payment is paid for each bedroom released, plus reasonable removal.

Households who downsize via a mutual exchange will also get an additional set amount as part of a trial incentive package.

6.5.2 Concurrent offers (2 or more smaller properties for a larger property)

Where there are non-dependent adult children who are living with under-occupying tenants; when the tenant agrees to downsize, the non-dependents adult children can be given their own property, if this results in a net gain of bedrooms for RBG.

To qualify for this Scheme, the child/children should:

- at the time of application, must have been living with the tenant (their parent) continuously for at least the last 12 months, AND
- has been recorded as part of the household on the tenancy agreement at least 12 months. The non-dependant adult children are exempt from the 5-year residency requirement.

Moves under this Scheme will only be agreed if all occupiers have agreed to the moves, and they move on the same date.

Direct offers may be made to the non-dependant adult children to facilitate their parents' rehousing to more suitable accommodation.

The downsizing incentive payment will be based on the net gain of bedrooms and only the downsizing tenant will receive this incentive and have their removal costs covered.

(For example, where there is a 70-year-old mother living in a 3-bedroom home with her 40-year-old daughter, both could move to their own one-bedroom properties. In this case, RBG have a net gain of one bedroom, meaning we will pay the downsizing incentive of £1000 to the 70-year-old mother and also pay for her removal costs. The non-dependant adult child will not receive the incentive payment, nor the removal costs.)

6.6 Succession

RBG tenants who have succeeded to a property that is too large so are required to move to smaller, will be placed in Band A

6.7 Hospital Discharge

RBG tenants who cannot return to their existing tenancy because it is unsuitable will be placed in Band A once confirmation of the situation is received from the hospital Consultant.

6.8 Moving from Adapted Property

Applicants living in social rented properties that have been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person, who no longer require those adaptations to the home, are placed in Band A.

6.9 Domestic Abuse

6.9.1 Council Policy

The Council is committed to tackling domestic abuse and to providing safe options for people experiencing abuse. Any person who is homeless due to domestic abuse will be assisted according to the Council's homelessness duties, local guidance and policy.

Council and Housing Association tenants experiencing domestic abuse will be assisted by their tenancy officer. Advice will be given, including information about Sanctuary or other security measures where appropriate. Tenants who require rehousing due to Domestic Abuse will be assessed according to the criteria for 'case

review' (see 6.2). An applicant awarded priority will be placed in Band B1 from the date the priority is agreed.

6.9.2 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

Anybody requesting rehousing due to domestic abuse must be referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference if any of the following circumstances apply:

- The applicant has previously applied for rehousing or homelessness assistance due to domestic abuse (repeat victims)
- There are children living with the applicant and there are concerns for their safety.
- The police have not supported rehousing, although the victim is known to them.
- A local case panel has recommended rehousing, but this has not been supported by the Case Review Panel, or the Housing Options and Support Service
- The circumstances are particularly complex and/or involves a number of agencies.
- In addition, cases may be referred to the panel because the tenancy officer or agency would benefit from multi agency advice and information to assist them in assessing the case and/or supporting the victim.

6.9.3 Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Tenants who have lost their secure tenancy due to termination by the other joint tenant due to alleged domestic abuse may not be offered a new tenancy. If there is independent evidence of domestic abuse leading to the loss of tenancy, the perpetrator will be evicted as an unlawful occupant and will not be assisted with rehousing. Domestic Abuse is considered serious unacceptable behaviour, such that a proven perpetrator will be excluded from the housing register.

Where domestic abuse has not been proven through court injunction, police caution or domestic abuse related conviction, the applicant will be offered a new tenancy in accordance with the Unlawful Occupants policy.

A proven perpetrator of domestic abuse may, in exceptional circumstances, be housed by the Council. Where a perpetrator must be rehoused, he/she may be excluded from bidding and will be made a direct offer.

6.10 Racial, Homophobic and Disability Harassment

The Housing Services Hate Crime Policy and Procedure is used to respond to racial, homophobic and disability related harassment and abuse. If a person experiencing hate crime asks to be rehoused, a local multi agency panel will consider the request according to criteria set out in the Hate Crime Policy. The tenant/applicant is invited to attend the panel, along with a support agency and/or friend. The Council's procedures emphasise the provision of support to victims, taking action against perpetrators, and looking at all available options to resolve problems.

If the Tenancy panel recommends rehousing, the case will be referred to the Case Review Panel which monitors local decisions to ensure consistency. An applicant will be placed in Band B1 if priority is agreed.

6.11 Applicants who are Homeless

The Council has duties to assist homeless people, as set out in the Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act. This includes duties to provide advice and assistance, temporary accommodation or long-term accommodation, depending on the applicant and their circumstances.

Where a full homelessness duty is accepted the Council can 'discharge' or end, that duty in a number of ways. This includes, through an offer of Council or Housing Association accommodation under Part 6 of the Housing Act or, since the Localism Act 2011, through a suitable offer of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a private landlord, of at least one-year duration.

Unintentionally homeless people in priority need are included within Priority Band B1 and able to bid for properties advertised. The Council wants to reduce the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation and so direct offers or bids may be placed for homeless households who have not bid successfully through the choice-based lettings scheme. Applicants must identify at least nine housing areas that they will consider, unless there are exceptional reasons. For example, if there is a risk of harm to the applicant if they moved to a particular area.

One offer of suitable accommodation will be made. If this is refused the Council will have discharged its duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996. An applicant may request a review as to suitability regardless of whether or not he/she accepts the accommodation.

6.12 Medical Need

The Council provides reasonable preference to applicants who must move because they have medical needs and/or disability, which are seriously affected by the design of their home. The assessment is therefore of the extent to which their health is affected by their home rather than solely on the existence of a medical problem. Where someone's ill health is not seriously affected by their home, medical priority will not be awarded.

If an applicant's health is affected by factors that are not inherent to the home, such as the condition of the property or other factors that can be resolved, then medical priority will not be agreed, and appropriate referrals will be made to help deal with the cause of the problem.

6.12.1 The Medical Assessment

The housing application form asks if the applicant has a medical problem. People, who indicate that they have a medical need, will be asked to complete a medical

assessment form. This asks for more information about their health and how it is affected by the design of their home. Where an applicant, or a member of their household, develops a medical problem after joining the housing register, they must let the Council know so that an assessment can be completed.

If the applicant's health or disability is affected by the design of their home, they will be referred to the Council's Medical Adviser. The Medical Adviser will assess the information and make recommendations to the Council about whether or not the applicant should have a medical priority due to their health or disability.

The recommendations and information provided by the Medical Adviser will be carefully considered by a manager within the Allocations team on behalf of the Council, as this is a decision for the Council. The applicant will be sent a letter with the outcome and will be provided with reasons for the decision within 10 working days.

If the applicant or household member is disabled and has mobility needs related to their housing, a referral will be made to the Occupational Therapist (OT) to assess whether the disabled person could remain in their home with adaptations, or whether alternative housing must be offered to meet their needs.

Note: If an applicant is placed on the OT Rehousing List as adapted accommodation is required, they will not be able to bid for general needs accommodation advertised within the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

The Medical Adviser will only re-assess an application if there is new information to consider.

6.12.2 Guidelines for the Council's Medical Adviser

The Council has a system for considering large and competing demands for its housing stock and has developed a system to consider medical needs within this context. An applicant who has asked for a medical condition to be taken into account is asked to complete a form to explain his/her medical situation and how this is affected by his/her current housing.

The Council's Medical Adviser is asked to consider whether to recommend priority for housing. In considering each application the following criteria and guidelines are used:

- The only grounds for priority are that the applicant's health must be seriously impaired by the inbuilt design of their home e.g., someone with severe mobility problems who cannot cope with stairs, or an applicant may need an extra room for medical equipment.
- Where someone's health is affected by factors that are not inbuilt to the home, such as the condition of the property or other factors that can be resolved by investment, then medical priority should not be recommended. The cause of the problem will be referred for a repair or other form of investment.
- Where someone's ill health is not related to the home then medical priority should not be recommended

- The decision should either be to recommend priority or not.
- If priority is recommended in a particular case, the appropriate form should be used by the medical adviser to explain how the applicant's health is seriously impaired by the inbuilt design of their home.
- If priority is not recommended, the medical adviser will say why not.

6.13 Assessment of Insanitary Housing

Applications from residents who say they are living in unsafe privately rented housing will be referred to the Council's Residential Services, so that the property can be inspected by an Environmental Health Officer and the appropriate action taken. Wherever possible the Environmental Health Officer will seek to require the landlord or agent to remedy the hazards. If it is not possible to remedy the hazards the applicant will be placed in Band A.

6.14 Severe Overcrowding

Only applicants with children will be considered under the severely overcrowded policy. Applicants will not be awarded priority where it is assessed that they are responsible for creating their own overcrowding. They could be assessed as having caused their own overcrowding if it is determined that:

- They have moved into private sector accommodation or other accommodation that is too small for their needs, when they could reasonably have been expected to find more suitable accommodation.
- They have allowed friends or relatives to reside with them.

Applicants who are severely overcrowded have reasonable preference and are placed in Band B1

Overcrowding is identified from information provided on the application form, and will be verified by home visit, or other investigations.

A household is considered severely overcrowded where the group seeking to move includes:

- 3 people in a bedsit and/or a child (under 16) in a bedsit
- 4 people living in one-bedroom accommodation.
- 5 people living in two-bedroom accommodation.
- 7 people living in three-bedroom accommodation.
- 9 people living in four-bedroom accommodation.
- 11 people living in five-bedroom accommodation.

A household is also considered severely overcrowded if:

- The living conditions require unrelated families to share a living room, kitchen or bathroom/WC.
- The household is statutorily overcrowded according to legislation.
- The moving group lacks two or more bedrooms.

The following additional criteria are applied in the assessment of severe overcrowding:

- Non-family members will not be considered within the household group. Extended family members will be included if they need to live with the family to receive care and support.
- In assessing an application, a second living room or parlour is counted as a bedroom.
- If the overcrowding is caused by friends or lodgers moving into a Council property, the housing officer will be informed, and the application will be suspended until the situation is investigated.

6.15 Ex–Armed Forces personnel

Ex-Armed Forces personnel, who are in housing need following their discharge, will be considered under Band B1 if they have a connection with the borough or Band B2 if they do not have a connection if they are:

- serving in the armed forces or have left the forces within the last five years.
- suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability caused by their service as a reservist.
- a bereaved spouse or civil partner on the death of their serving partner.

6.16 Move-on Accommodation

The Council works with a range of services and other organisations to provide move on accommodation to people with a medical and/or social need for housing. 'Move-on' housing is provided to somebody who is in a hostel, hospital or other institution, and requires permanent accommodation. Applicants given priority in these circumstances are placed in Band B1

The following applicants are provided with move-on priority:

- People in private accommodation being discharged from hospital who cannot be discharged to their former home because of their health. Assessment is based upon information provided by the hospital consultant.
- Young Persons leaving care provided by Children's Services.
- People leaving supported housing or hostel accommodation where rehousing protocols exist.
- Young people moving on from home scheme.

- Those moving from block contracted step down provision

6.17 Residential Staff

Residential Staff who are employed by the Council to live in a particular property or area as part of their job or are required to vacate their property on leaving a job. Written confirmation of circumstances is required. The property offered would be a flat or maisonette of a size to fit the household regardless of the type of accommodation currently occupied. Applicants will be placed in Band B1.

6.18 Key Workers

The Council has a scheme for assisting key workers who need to move to the borough to take up employment. Key workers are placed in Band B1

The scheme applies to:

- Teachers (referred by Directorate of Education)
- Nurses (referred by NHS hospitals)
- Social Workers or Occupational Therapists (referred by Director of Health and Adult Services or Children's Services)

Applicants must be:

- Single or childless couples
- Homeless or living outside the borough.

6.19 Unlawful Occupants

Where an unlawful occupant is resident in a Royal Borough of Greenwich property following the termination of the tenancy, they can be considered for the tenancy of the premises or an offer of alternative accommodation only in the following circumstances:

Where he/she:

- Following the death of the tenant, is a person who would have succeeded to the tenancy if a prior succession had not already taken place, but they must also have occupied the premises continuously for a year preceding the death of the tenant
- Was a joint tenant when the tenancy was terminated (when a joint tenant dies the tenancy continues). Note: The 5-year residency rule does not apply to joint tenants
- Following the death of a tenant, have been a carer of long standing (1 year or more) and have lived at the property for a year,

The occupant may be granted a new tenancy in the property they occupy only if the household fits the property size. The following guidance and Allocations Policy is used to assess eligibility.

Household eligibility	Action
Household fits the property	The tenancy will be granted
Household is under occupying	The tenancy will be refused, and one reasonable offer will be made under Band B1

All other unlawful occupants will not be offered a tenancy of the property they occupy, but will be assisted through the housing register, subject to the five-year residence rule, or through advice from Housing Inclusion and Support Services.

6.20 Foster Carers

The Council will provide reasonable preference to households where there are long term foster care arrangements endorsed by Children Services, who have been approved as long-term carers for children who would otherwise come into the care of the Local Authority or carers providing long term care through the Shared Lives Scheme endorsed by Health and Adult Services. Band B1 priority will be awarded.

6.21 Households significantly affected by the Total Benefit Cap

The Council will provide reasonable preference to households significantly affected by the Total Benefit Cap, where they can demonstrate that they are actively working with the Council to secure employment. Band B2 priority will be awarded.

6.22 Moving to the Locality to avoid hardship

The Council provides reasonable preference to applicants who live outside Greenwich and need to move into the Borough to give or receive support or for employment. However, due to the shortage of housing and the demand from Greenwich Residents, circumstances where out of borough applicants will be strictly in line with the following assessments.

6.22.1 Giving or receiving support

The Council will provide reasonable preference to applicants who can demonstrate that:

- They are required to give or receive constant care and attention from a close relative, as evidenced by a doctor's report and supported by the Council's medical adviser.
- It is not possible for the other party to move
- The Royal Borough of Greenwich is the only location that would be suitable
- The 'sending' local authority agrees to a reciprocal nomination.

6.22.2 Employment - Right to Move

The Council will provide reasonable preference to any new applicant who is an existing local authority or housing association tenant who needs to move from another authority to take up employment in the borough to avoid hardship. They must have a good tenancy record.

Applicants must provide evidence that they are permanently working in the district or have a genuine intention to take up an offer of work in the district. Work does not include short-term, occasional, ancillary, voluntary, apprenticeships or working less than 24 hours per week.

They must also demonstrate that they are experiencing hardship due to one or more of the following factors:

- they live in excess of 50 miles from the current employment or intended place of work
- they have a return journey time on public transport which is generally in excess of 3 hours based upon Internet Journey Planners
- the availability of transport is restrictive causing similar difficulties as set out above
- transport is unaffordable taking into account earnings.

Section 7: Assessment of housing to meet particular needs

This section explains how assessments and allocations are carried out for accessible and adapted housing, sheltered accommodation and housing for the over 50's

7.1 Assessment by Occupational Therapist Service

Applications from disabled people who may require adapted or accessible housing are assessed by the Council's Occupational Therapist (OT) service. The OT will award Accessible Housing Need priority to people who need to move, if they or a household member:

- Is a wheelchair user (including those who use a wheelchair regularly but not all of the time)
- Has a permanent and substantial disability and uses walking aids, sticks, frame, callipers or crutches
- Is a child with a prognosis of severe mobility problems
- Has a progressive degenerative condition and the prognosis is that they will experience severe mobility problems in the near future
- Has severe breathing difficulties, requiring oxygen and/or are exhausted at the slightest exertion.

An applicant's need and priority level for a move is assessed according to criteria similar to other applicants, but with particular reference to the needs of disabled applicants.

Note: If an applicant is placed on the OT Rehousing List as adapted accommodation is required, they will not be able to bid for general needs accommodation advertised within the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

7.2 Over 50's Designated Housing

The Council has a number of blocks that are designated as accommodation for people aged 50 and over or aged 60 and over. Allocation of properties in these blocks will be limited to households who fulfil the age criteria. Properties are advertised or directly allocated according to the same priority banding rules set out above. Council blocks and bungalows that are designated for a specific age group are listed at Appendix 1.

7.3 Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing is for people aged 60 and above, who can live independently with support. Assessment for housing does not follow the same criteria as for mainstream housing and is based upon a person's need for this type of housing and support.

7.3.1 Sheltered applications and assessments

Applicants must be 60 or over, although younger applicants will be considered in exceptional circumstances. All applicants are assessed in their own homes where possible. Applications are considered from people living in all tenures except homeowners. Assessment considers the need for sheltered housing and whether the applicant would be able to live independently in this type of accommodation and has needs appropriate to living within a sheltered housing environment, given the communal living aspect of the schemes.

7.3.2 Types of Sheltered Accommodation

There are Council and Housing Association schemes within the borough, including three that are specialist schemes for Asian, Black African and Caribbean older people.

Council schemes have Scheme Managers available to provide help and assistance during office hours, up to a maximum of thirty-five hours per week. When they are not on site the schemes are covered by the 24-hour Telecare Community Alarm Service.

Most of the accommodation is one-bedroom or bedsit flats and some have shared bathrooms. There are a small number of two and three-bedroom flats for people wishing to share e.g. brothers and sisters, friends or couples who need separate bedrooms. When only one person is left in occupation of a two- or three-bedroom flat they will be asked to move to smaller accommodation, but not required to do so.

One bedroom two-person flats will be allocated to a lone person if there are no suitable couples available.

7.3.3 Sheltered Allocation Policy

Applicants who are assessed as suitable for sheltered accommodation are rehoused in the same order of priority as the groups listed in the banding table (4.4.1)

Applicants who refuse an offer for sheltered accommodation may have their priority reviewed. Applicants may be suspended from allocation due to rent arrears or other unacceptable behaviour.

Section 8: Providing Choice

This section explains about the Choice Based Lettings scheme, Greenwich Homes

8.1 Greenwich Homes

The Council is committed to **maximising choice** for housing applicants. A Choice Based Lettings scheme enables people on the housing register to find properties themselves rather than being matched to them by Council staff. The scheme includes both Council and Housing Association homes.

The Choice Based Lettings scheme is called 'Greenwich Homes'. Vacancies are advertised regularly, and applicants are asked to express an interest by 'bidding' for properties of their choice. Applicants must be on the Housing Register to be able to bid for an advertised property. Bidding is through the Council's website, via text or an automated telephone service.

8.2 Property Adverts

Homes that become available to let are advertised under the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Adverts are published regularly in the Weekender newspaper and on the Council's website which can be accessed at Service Centres.

The advert will show a photograph of the property and include information about:

- Who the landlord is
- The rent
- The type of property it is, the floor level and how many bedrooms.
- The area it is in
- The size of household that can apply.

Although we try very hard to ensure that all information in our adverts is correct, there may be times when we cannot offer a home that has been advertised as the information is incorrect or must be withdrawn for an urgent offer.

8.3 Exclusions from the Choice Based Lettings Scheme

In exceptional circumstances an applicant may be excluded from participating in the Choice Based Lettings scheme due to possible risk to others. In these instances, a direct offer will be made. Applicants will not be advised which areas are suitable for offer as this could enable him/her to establish where a previous victim is living.

8.4 Publicity

We publish information about properties that have been let through RBG's Choice Based Lettings Scheme in the Weekender Newspaper. The information shows what priority band the successful applicant was in and how long they had waited. This is to help applicants make informed estimates of how long they might have to wait for different types of properties and locations.

Section 9: Allocations and Nominations

This section explains how allocations and nominations are made, the rules used to decide what properties an applicant can be considered for and what happens when offers are refused.

9.1 The Council's Lettings Plan

The Council has a lettings plan which is used to manage the allocations and make sure that allocations are made to meet local needs. The purpose of this is to achieve a spread of lettings across different categories of applicants, whilst ensuring that the Council provides reasonable preference according to the legislation.

The figures are set in accordance with the number of vacant properties expected to become available within the following twelve-month period. The plan is subject to regular monitoring and is reviewed annually. If monitoring shows that lettings

outcomes are not in line with the Lettings Plan, the Council reserves the right to implement a quota system and/or restrictive labelling on adverts to ensure that our statutory obligations are met.

9.1.1 Local lettings Plans

The Council may agree a Local Lettings Plan for a particular Council block/estate and with individual housing associations for specific developments to reflect local circumstances and to facilitate viable and sustainable communities. Any Local Lettings Plan will reflect considerations such as the social mix of residents within the block, estate or area.

9.1.2 Suspension of the lettings plan

In the event of a large-scale emergency affecting housing the Access and Allocations service may vary, suspend or review the lettings plan wholly or in part.

9.2 Bidding for Advertised Properties

Applicants may bid for any number of properties from those advertised but should only bid for properties they are genuinely interested in. Applicants will only be invited to view one property, irrespective of whether they have bid successfully for more than one property.

Applicants will be advised at the time of registering their bid if they are eligible for the property. When there is more than one eligible bid, the successful applicant will be shortlisted in band order and within each band, according to priority or registration date order.

9.3 Direct Allocations and Bidding for Priority Applicants

Some properties are offered directly to applicants without being advertised. These properties are also allocated according to the Council's Allocation Scheme and lettings plan so will count as an offer. When making direct offers the Council always tries to meet applicant's preferences for the areas where they want to live, and for the sort of property they are interested in. However, in a borough where there is very high demand for social housing and a lot of priority needs to meet, applicants in Bands A, B1 and B2 are expected to consider a wide area of choice.

Examples of where we may consider making a direct offer or bid for the applicant are:

- Where an applicant is excluded from bidding due to the risk to others e.g. rehousing close by would threaten the safety of a previous victim
- Where a household has received a priority in accordance with the reasonable preference categories but has either failed to bid or has placed limited bids
- Where a property is identified as meeting the needs of a high priority household

- In discharge of our duty in accordance with Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- In order to facilitate a decant programme

9.4 Nominations to Registered Providers (RP's) or Housing Associations

The Council works in partnership with Housing Associations to provide social housing so applicants on the housing register will also be considered for nomination to Housing Association properties.

Applicants are considered for nomination using the same criteria as for lettings to Council properties. However, where there is an agreed Local Lettings Plan (8.1.1), nominations will be made in line with this. Anyone who is nominated to a Housing Association will be notified in writing and the relevant Association will advise the applicant of the details of the property offered.

9.5 Inter- Estate Transfers

Inter estate transfers for tenants on Barnfield, Walpole and River heights will only be agreed if there are no priority applicants on the Housing Register seeking to move to one of these areas.

9.6 Size of Property that will be Offered

The allocations criteria used to decide what sized property an applicant can be offered, falls in line with the Housing Benefit bedroom allowance. This is applied to applicants in all Bands and for those who move via mutual exchange. However, in order to continue to incentivise people to downsize or exchange, non-working age households in exceptional circumstances, are exempt from the size criteria.

The following rules are used to allocate properties to applicants in Bands A, B1, B2 and C to make sure that the Council makes best use of the available housing stock. A parlour room counts as a bedroom for allocation purposes.

The rules allow one bedroom for:

- every adult couple (married or unmarried)
- any other adult aged 16 or over
- any 2 children of the same sex aged under 16
- any 2 children aged under 10
- any other child (other than a child whose main home is elsewhere)

- children who can't share because of a disability or medical condition
- a carer (or team of carers) providing overnight care
- a foster carer approved by the LA, to have separate bedroom for a child who is in Local Authority (LA's) care or would be otherwise.
- Tenants who have reached state credit pension age can keep one extra bedroom above their assessed need when downsizing, where this results in a net gain of bedrooms for RBG.

9.7 Properties you can bid for

Applicants assessed and awarded a priority rehousing band will be able to bid for all types of properties (This change is effective from 15 February 2022 and is not retrospective), except where there is a medical recommendation excluding them from doing so.

All Band C households will also be able to bid for houses.

There are separate allocations policies for applicants with priority from regeneration areas. There is also a separate allocations policy for the allocation of caravan pitches on the Council's website.

9.8 Number of offers/nominations for priority applicants

Only **one** formal offer of accommodation will be made to priority applicants in Bands A, B1 and B2. If the offer or nomination is refused the Council will review the application and will normally remove the priority and no further offers will be made to the applicant as a priority. They will only receive consideration in registration date order under Band C.

9.9 Number of offers/nominations for non-priority applicants

We will make **two** formal offers of accommodation to households in Band C. If these are refused the application will be suspended for 12 months. The applicant will not be able to bid again during this period.

9.10 Refusing an offer of Council or Housing Association Accommodation

Applicants may bid for any number of properties from those advertised, but should only bid for properties they are genuinely interested in. This is because the Council limits the number of offers of housing that it will make to applicants due to the high demand for housing.

9.11 Ending homelessness assistance after a refusal of a suitable offer

The Council will end homelessness assistance to a homeless applicant where they have refused an offer of suitable Council or Housing Association accommodation. This includes households with a reasonable preference who refuse an offer of either private sector or social housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1985 made under s189B (2) of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

If a homeless applicant refuses suitable housing, whether offered directly or following a successful bid, the Council has 'discharged its homelessness duty' to that applicant. This means that the homeless duty has been brought to an end by the offer of suitable accommodation. If the applicant is living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, then they will lose that accommodation and will not receive further assistance.

9.12 Right of Review-refusals

Applicants have the right to request a review of the offer made. If an offer is refused, the property it will not be held during the review period. They can sign up for a property and still request that a review be undertaken. Accepting a property whilst submitting a review, will not impact on the outcome of the review, but will instead ensure that the applicant continues to have a home to occupy.

If the outcome of the review is that the offer made to the applicant was reasonable, no further offers will be made. The application will be cancelled. If the applicant is residing in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, this will also be cancelled, and they will need to make their own housing arrangements.

If the outcome of the review is that the offer made was unreasonable then the banding will be re-instated, and the applicant will not lose any waiting time. If they accepted the property offered pending the outcome of the review, the applicant will be able to remain there until a more suitable offer is made.

9.13 Removal and Disturbance Payments

The Council will make payments to assist with removal and disturbance costs where an applicant is moving according to the following criteria:

- Under Occupation Incentive Scheme
- Remedial Works
- Domestic Abuse or Hate Crime Emergency Transfer

Removal costs may include:

- Removal expenses within a 15-mile radius of the present property, or to any other London Borough. If moving further away, the Council may only make a contribution to this cost.
- Disconnection and reconnection of fixed gas and electrical appliances such as cookers and washing machines
- Reconnection of telephone if one was installed at the old address, and the cost of extra phone extensions on a like for like basis
- Redirection of mail
- Cost of altering soft furnishings (curtains and carpets). Or half the second-hand value of soft furnishings and other movable fixtures if they cannot be reused
- Money lost through the forced sale of fittings which cannot be used in the new property
- Reconnection of cable television, refitting of alarms and fitting of television aerial
- Extra travel expenses incurred in viewing properties
- The cost of new school uniforms if a change of school occurs.

Section 10: Invitations to View and New Tenancies

This section explains the arrangements for moving, and types of tenancy that may be offered.

10.1 Invitation to View

When an applicant is selected for allocation following a successful bid through Greenwich Info or by direct allocation, the Council will send an 'invitation to view' letter. The letter will say where and when the applicant must go to view the property. Failure to attend is counted as a refusal of an offer, so it is very important that the applicant lets the Allocations Service know if they are unable to attend for any reason.

10.1.1 Multiple Viewings

Under the Allocations Policy:

- Up to 3 applicants will be invited to view a property.
- An applicant can only be invited to view one property, irrespective of whether they have bid successfully for more than one property.

If an applicant is more than 15 minutes late for the viewing appointment, they will not be considered for the property.

10.2 Vacant Possession

On accepting the offer of a new tenancy or a nomination to a Housing Association property, tenants **must** terminate (end) their existing tenancy and return the keys to the Council or the housing association, providing vacant possession. Tenants who fail to terminate a tenancy will remain liable for rent and any damage to the property after they leave. Properties must be left empty and must not have been damaged by the outgoing tenant. Anybody living in the property that was not included in the application, must make their own housing arrangements.

10.3 Types of Tenancy

The type of tenancy offered depends on whether the applicant is already a tenant, and whether the property is owned by the Council or a Housing Association.

10.3.1 Council Tenancies

Existing Council or Housing Association tenants moving to a Council property will be offered a Secure Tenancy.

10.3.2 Housing Association Tenancies

Applicants moving into a housing association home will be offered a tenancy in line with the Housing Associations policy. Applicants will be advised of the tenancy type that will be offered at the interview with the Housing Association

10.3.3 Joint applicants

In most circumstances adult joint applicants who are housed will be offered a joint tenancy. This is because their needs have been assessed as one household, and the Council aims to provide secure housing to both partners in a relationship.

Where one of the applicants has been guilty of a breach of tenancy conditions, or there is evidence that s/he poses a threat to any member of the household, then the Council may decide not to offer a tenancy to that person.

Where joint applicants are across generations, such as parents and children applying together, the tenancy will be offered to the applicant(s) whose housing need has led to a priority being awarded or if there is no priority, the most senior member(s) of the family. This is to ensure that properties allocated to meet need are used by the person(s) for who that need was assessed.

Former joint tenants who are left in the property after one tenant has terminated the tenancy are dealt with according to the Council's Unlawful Occupants Policy (6.19).

Applicants who are not currently Council or Housing Association tenants will be offered an Introductory Tenancy or a Starter tenancy (Housing Associations). These tenants have a trial period of 12 months during which time they must not do anything which is not allowed by the tenancy conditions, or they may lose the tenancy.

Introductory Tenants do not have the right to:

- Take in lodgers.
- Carry out improvements.
- Mutual Exchange
- Right to Buy

Section 11: Reviews

This section explains when applicants can request a review of a decision made in their case.

The Council may make decisions that applicants disagree with. Section 166A (9) of the Housing Act 1996 gives applicants the right to have these decisions reviewed as follows:

- a) The right to request that RBG inform him/her of any decision about the facts of his case which are likely to be or have been taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing or not and
- b) The right to request a review of a decision in relation to (a) above or of a decision that he/she is ineligible or not a qualifying person and to be informed of the decision made on review, which will contain the reasons behind the decision.

Letters notifying an applicant of their ineligibility to joining the Housing Register, the band that they have been awarded, or about any other decision concerning the facts of an applicant's case, will state that the applicant has a right to request a review of the decision.

A review should be requested within 21 days of the date of the decision letter. RBG has the discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable. Requests for reviews must be in writing. The Code of Guidance states that it would be acceptable for the request to be submitted by a representative. The request for review should be made to the Access and Allocations Service at the Woolwich Centre 35 Wellington Street SE18 6HQ. If an applicant requires assistance with the process, he/she should contact a member of the Access and Allocations Service.

Please note that the Council can only review information that the applicant has already supplied. If the application has been correctly assessed on the basis of the information supplied at the point of the application a review will not be considered. The applicant will be asked to provide the up-to-date information about their circumstances and the application will be re-assessed.

11.1 Right to Review under Part VII Housing Act 1996

The right to review under part VI Housing Act 1996 is in addition to the statutory right to review homelessness decisions under Part VII Housing Act 1996. Applicants must request a review under Part VII within 21 days of notification of the decision. Such reviews are conducted by a Reviews officer who was not involved in the original decision.

Section 12: Other Schemes and Housing Options

This section outlines the other schemes that are available to assist applicants who want to move

The Council recognises that the demand for Council and Housing Association housing is greater than the supply of homes available to let. For this reason, and to maximise the options available to residents in housing need, we provide advice and assistance on housing in the private sector, in other boroughs and other parts of the country. The Council also assists tenants to swap homes through a mutual exchange scheme.

12.1 The Mutual Exchange Scheme

The mutual exchange scheme enables tenants to swap homes within Greenwich, London or elsewhere. The scheme is open to Council tenants, Housing Association and private tenants, but all landlords must give their consent before an exchange can go ahead. Applicants should be aware that tenancy conditions and rights vary with different landlords and could be less favourable.

To apply for the scheme tenants must complete a Mutual Exchange Registration Form available from the Service Centres. Applicants are registered on the scheme, and can find another tenant to swap, using the Council's website. The House Exchange website is also available for tenants to use for this purpose. If a suitable match is found, it is advisable to visit each other's homes and make sure both tenants want to go ahead with the exchange.

12.1.1 Criteria and Conditions for Mutual Exchange

The following conditions apply when the Council consider an exchange involving a Council tenant:

- The tenant must not be in breach of their tenancy agreement.
- Any rent arrears must be cleared before a mutual exchange takes place. For those affected by Welfare Reform legislation the case will be considered by the Case Review Panel
- Sheltered, adapted and other special needs properties, are not included in the Mutual Exchange Scheme except under special circumstances.

- Introductory tenants do not have the legal right to exchange but may be allowed to do so if there has been no breach of tenancy. If an exchange is agreed the person would continue as an introductory tenant in the new property for the remainder of the introductory year
- Wilful damage or neglect and unauthorised changes to the property may result in an exchange being refused. The property inspection carried out for all Council tenants with a prospective exchange will identify any such issues and determine actions required from the tenant.

12.1.2 Mutual Exchange Property Size Criteria

Applicants can exchange into smaller accommodation if they wish, but the Council will not consent to an exchange that creates statutory or severe overcrowding, or where the tenant would be under occupying under the Housing Benefit size criteria. The only exception to the latter would be households of non-working age to whom the option of an exchange to a property one bedroom larger than their need would be available. Such households are not potentially affected by the relevant Welfare Reforms.

12.1.3 Tenant Responsibilities

Once an applicant has found a mutual exchange partner, they should be aware of the following:

- After homes have been exchanged; there may be a limit to the repairs that will be done by the landlord. They may refuse to repair damage known about before the exchange.
- Greenwich Council will not carry out any decorations to the home and applicants will not be entitled to a decorations allowance.
- Applicants must be satisfied that the property selected is right for them and is in good repair. The Council cannot accept responsibility for any difficulties arising after an exchange.

12.1.4 Council Approval

The Council must approve all exchanges within six weeks of receipt of all necessary documents. Staff will advise applicants before this deadline to confirm whether the mutual exchange can go ahead. If we refuse the exchange, the applicant is able to request a review of the decision.

12.1.5 Outstanding Housing Applications

If an applicant has a housing application registered with the Council, this will be cancelled once the exchange has been completed. If the applicant wishes to move from the new home, they will need to complete a new housing form and their new situation will be assessed.

12.2 Reciprocal agreements

The Council may reach a reciprocal agreement with another Council or Housing Association to assist an applicant to move. This involves the Council housing an applicant nominated, in return for a Greenwich applicant being assisted by the other landlord. Agreement to assist on a reciprocal basis is usually on a like for like basis and applicants are awarded Band B1.

12.3 Moves across London

The Housing Moves scheme is run by the Greater London Authority and is aimed at social housing tenants who want to move from one part of London to another. Priority is given to people who:

- have more bedrooms that they currently need
- want to move to be close to employment or higher education
- need to provide care for family members or friends

Tenants must have a clear rent account and no on-going record of anti-social behaviour. RBG tenants can register on the scheme and bid for Council or Housing Association property in other parts of London. Applicants can register at www.housingmoves.org

12.4 Low-Cost home ownership

Shared Ownership involves buying part of a property from a housing association and paying rent for the other part. Applicants will need to take out a mortgage to pay for their share of the purchase price. Information about the available schemes can be found on the internet.

12.5 National Witness Mobility Scheme (NWMS)

RBG participates in the government-funded National Witness Mobility Scheme, which gives local authorities, other social landlords and the police services access to a nationally coordinated fast track witness relocation scheme.

Witnesses, who are intending to give evidence in civil and criminal cases such as cases involving domestic abuse, hate crimes, anti-social behaviour, gun crimes, sexual abuse, child abuse and other serious crimes and consider that it is unsafe to remain in their home, will be assessed by their local authority and a designated police officer.

If there is a serious risk to the witness, and it is unsafe for them to pursue an application through the normal homelessness routes, they can be offered the opportunity to

relocate quickly away from the unsafe area. Referrals are made to/from the NWMS office.

This includes Protected Persons as defined in Section 82 and schedule 5 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005.

Appendix 1: Over 50's Designated Blocks/Bungalows

<p>Eltham Tattersall Close Wayfield Link Teynham House (G/1st/2nd floor) Darland House (G/1st/2nd floor) Wooton House (G/1st floor)</p> <p>Over 60's Barley Barn Mews 1& 2 Thatchbury Cottages 1a,b,c & 2a,b,c,d</p>	<p>Coldharbour James Newman Court – 1-47 (G/1st/2nd floor) The Mound – 54-73 (G/1st/2nd/3rd floor) Brooks Close – 1-27 (G/1st/2nd floor)</p>
<p>Blackheath Corelli Estate - Corelli Road – 3-59a (G/1st Floor) Lestock House (G/1st floor) Dursley Road Whetstone Road Hargood Road Holburne Close</p> <p>Over 60's Pagoda Mews 1-6</p>	<p>Greenwich Woodville Close Jervis court (G/1st/2nd floor) Armada Court (G/1st floor) Lockyer House (G/1st floor) Tom Smith Close Ada Kennedy Court</p> <p>Over 60's Coldbath Street 59 & 61 Nectarine Way 70 & 71 Tyler Street 69 & 71 Colomb Street 116 & 118</p>
<p>Charlton Barney Close(13-33)(47-69)(79-133) (G/1st/2nd floor)</p>	<p>Woolwich Troy Court Clevely Close Chapman Court Gill Court</p>
<p>Plumstead Alabama Street (69-93c), Plumstead Heavitree Close in Plumstead (flats 1-18 and bungalows 19-29)</p> <p>Over 60's Actaeon Mews 1,2 & 3</p>	<p>Abbey Wood Andwell Close - 1-10 Eynsham Drive - 130-136 Rosedale Close - 1-4 Finchale Road - 42-56 Godstow Road - 19-49 Queensborough House - 1-6 Grovebury Road - 43-51</p>

Appendix 2: Useful Contacts for Information and Advice

The Allocations Service

The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street,
London SE18 6HQ
Telephone: 020 8921 2941
E-mail housing-allocations@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

The Housing Inclusion and Support Service

Ground Floor, The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street,
London SE18 6HQ
Telephone 0208 921 2863
E-mail housing-performance@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

The telephone service is available between the following times:

- Monday–Thursday 9 am–5.30 pm
- Friday 9 am–4.30 pm

Our Reception Service is open:

- Monday–Friday 9:30 am–4 pm