



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	Consultation on changes to the Allocations Scheme
Report to	Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
Date of Meeting	10 th December 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Guzel, Cabinet Member for Housing
Executive Director / Director	Joanne Drew, Strategic Director of Housing & Regeneration
Report Author	Neil Wightman – Neil.Wightman@enfield.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected	All
Classification	Part 1 Public

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the consultation on a review of Enfield's Housing Allocation Scheme. The current scheme was implemented in December 2020. The principles and design of the scheme remain the same, but the review makes several recommendations to the relative priorities of the reasonable preference groups to respond to local and strategic housing needs.

Main Considerations for the Panel

2. Enfield's housing Allocations Policy is governed by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 ("the Act") which requires that all local housing authorities publish an allocation scheme determining priorities in allocating housing. The Act is primarily concerned with ensuring that reasonable preference is given within schemes to those in greatest housing need, also prescribed under Part VI. Any changes to an allocations policy or scheme that is major in nature requires statutory consultation to ensure within a reasonable time that those likely to be affected by the change have the effect brought to their attention. A major policy change would include amendments affecting the relative priority of many applicants or a significant alteration to procedures.

3. The Housing Act requires us to send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every private registered provider with which we have nomination arrangements, and ensure they have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.
4. Designing an Allocations Scheme is a challenging task, bound by legislation and involving a complex balancing act between the local needs and the Councils priorities. Given the very high demand for social housing, it is essential that the Council allocates its housing sensitively and fairly.
5. With approximately 450 lettings per year, and a downward trend in numbers, as a housing authority we need to make the best use of the stock we have. We need to balance the large demand for social housing with our responsibility to home those households who have the greatest need and meet our strategic objectives.

Background and Options

6. There are four main groups of housing applicant:
 - Homeless households
 - Enfield council tenants applying for or requiring a transfer
 - Housing register applicants, largely from the private sector
 - Applicants requiring specialist housing for over 60-year-olds
7. The changes build on the current Scheme which is designed to comply with prescriptive legislative requirements whilst simultaneously supporting strong Enfield communities and addressing the housing needs of Enfield residents. It is a difficult task to weigh up relative priorities of those in housing needs in a market where demand significantly outstrips supply.
8. Currently there are over 7,000 households who have applied for social housing, and Enfield allocates in the region of 450 council and housing association homes a year.
9. Available accommodation is either general needs or later living (sheltered) and may either be our own housing stock or nominations to a registered provider or housing association.
10. There has been some pre consultation work obtaining early views about the relative priorities within the current scheme and how these might be shaped in the new scheme. We have had two discussions at Housing Scrutiny along with discussions with the Cabinet Member for Housing.
11. A 12-week consultation with residents and a range of partners and stakeholders began on Monday 11th November and is due to close on Sunday 2nd February 2025. The consultation is seeking opinions on a range of proposals designed to make better use of the housing stock we have, meet our strategic objectives and best as we can meet local housing needs. At the close of consultation we will review the feedback, consider the final design of the scheme and implementation with a target implementation date in early 2025 following approval by Cabinet.

12. We have put the consultation on our web site and in the Housing Newsletter.

We have also shared with:

- Applicants on the Housing Register
- Partnership Boards
- Registered Providers
- Faith and Voluntary Sector
- Residents Associations

13. The proposed changes to the current scheme are as follows:

- **Direct offers** - Currently the allocations schemes allow a single suitable direct offer to be made where there is an urgent need to move or if a household has been unable to find a home themselves. We aim to have no more than 50% of all lettings to be made direct offers, which will be to priority households. We will review allocations made and publish an annual report.
- **Residence qualification** - Like most other local authorities, we want to strengthen the Scheme to support lettings to local Enfield residents. We therefore propose to extend the time that applicants need to have lived in Enfield to be eligible for housing from the current qualification period of three out of five years to 5 years.
- **Homeless applications** - We propose to support homeless households who have been living in temporary accommodation in Enfield for a long period of time. There are over 3,000 households in temporary accommodation to whom Enfield Council has a duty to assist. Many of these families have been in temporary accommodation for a considerable time and we believe that we should be assisting them as best as we can. We therefore propose to give additional priority to vulnerable homeless households who cannot move either out of borough or need to be no more than 60/90 minutes away from Enfield (approximately 300 households). We also propose to give additional priority to those families who have been living in TA in Enfield for more than ten years (approximately 120 households).
- **Homeless households housed in the private rented sector** - We currently award additional points to applicants who were owed under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, a prevention duty (section 195(2)), relief duty (section 189B (2) or S193 main duty, who have then accepted a private sector tenancy option. We propose to end this as these households are no longer homeless and have been housed into suitable accommodation. We propose to give transitional protection to those currently on the housing register of a further 24 months to bid before their points are changed. Where the household has been housed into settled accommodation *outside* the borough of Enfield, we propose to remove them from the Housing Needs register as they are suitably housed in another local authority.
- **Severely overcrowded families** - We propose to support households who are most affected by crowded conditions and give additional priority to council tenants who lack two or more bedrooms. This will be managed via our current panels.

- **Later living accommodation** - Our later living sheltered accommodation is designed for over 55-year-olds with support needs. It takes longer to let this accommodation and some buildings are less appropriate for older people due to design and number of floors and an absence of a lift. The process for letting later living accommodation is not the same as general needs accommodation and we would like to align the approach as part of this review. We therefore propose to speed up lettings by including later living accommodation in Choice Based lettings. Some residents will need support and so we will provide assisted bidding where required. We will redesignate some blocks as mixed use to allow general needs placements. We will adopt a sensitive lets policy to these allocations.

14. The plan for the consultation and development of the scheme is as follows (the consultation questions are appended to this report):

- Consultation (11/11/24-2/02/25)
- Consultation analysis
- Scheme review and development
- Seek Cabinet approval for full adoption of changes

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

15. Our Council Plan 2023-26 sets out our priorities for providing more and better homes in Enfield. Our proposed changes to the Allocations Scheme will enable us to support households in need into secure social housing in a fairer and more consistent way.

16. By bolstering our plans around local lettings, we will look to help keep communities together, enabling families to rely on support networks and remain in familiar areas. This will help children and young people thrive and also give rise to opportunity.

Report Author: Neil Wightman
Director of Housing Services (residents)
Neil.wightman@enfield.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Table of information on Housing Register applicants

Appendix 2 - Allocations Scheme proposed changes consultation questions

Background Papers

Equalities Impact Assessment
Allocations Scheme

Departmental reference number, if relevant: HRD2425_030

Appendix 1

7187 applicants on the Housing Register (as at 31.10.24)			
Eligible households	78.4% (5637 of all applicants)	These are households that are over the bidding threshold.	
Overcrowded	11% (828 of all applicants)	12% of overcrowded applicants are Council tenants lacking 2 or more bedrooms (100 applicants) 29% of the above overcrowded Council tenants have a medical need (29 applicants)	16% of overcrowded applicants are private rented tenants lacking 2 or more bedrooms (122 applicants) 24% of overcrowded private-rented tenants have a medical need (39 applicants)
Under-occupiers	1.4% (105 of all applicants)		
Homeless households in TA	35% (2501 of all applicants)		
Homeless households moved to PRS	23% (1651 of all applicants)	13% of homeless households moved to PRS are out of borough placements (217 applicants)	
<i>An applicant can be in more than one group below. This means the groups are not exclusive and figures should not be compared separately.</i>			
Family-sized home required	81% (5809 of all applicants)		
High medical need	0.6% (42 of all applicants)		
Wheelchair-adapted home required	0.6% (45 of all applicants)		

Appendix 2

Allocations Scheme – proposed changes consultation questionnaire

Introduction

The council is required by law to have a housing allocations scheme that sets out who qualifies and who is eligible for social housing (Council and Housing Association). We do this by setting out the criteria and relative priorities for all households eligible to register, and then award points. Those applicants with the higher points will have more chance of successfully bidding for housing.

Why are we changing the Allocations Scheme?

The last review of Enfield's Allocation Scheme took place in 2021 and the principles and design of the scheme remain the same. This review makes several recommendations to the relative priorities of the reasonable preference groups to respond to local and strategic housing needs.

We are consulting on these proposed changes before we review and refresh the scheme, ready for publication during early 2025.

The information you provide will be treated confidentially and when we report the findings, you will not be identifiable. All information will be treated in compliance with relevant legislation (General Data Protection Regulation 2018).

1. On what basis are you responding to this questionnaire?
 - As an Enfield Council Housing tenant
 - As an Enfield Council Housing applicant (not in Council Housing)
 - As a Registered Provider/ Housing Association
 - Other

Local connection

Currently, to be eligible applicants must show that they have a local connection to Enfield for three out of the previous five years. Given Council housing is in such limited supply we want to make sure that local Enfield residents are prioritised. We therefore propose to increase the local connection time to five years. We propose that no priority is given to those applicants who do not live in the borough.

2. To what extent do you agree with an increase in the length of time an applicant needs to have lived in Enfield?
 - A great deal
 - To some extent
 - Not very much (route to 2b)
 - Not at all (route to 2b)
 - Not sure/ do not know

2b- Please explain why you selected this option

Overcrowding

There are many families living in crowded conditions. We propose to give greater priority to council housing tenants who are severely overcrowded, who lack two or more rooms in their current home. These cases will be assessed on an individual basis at panel.

3. To what extent do you agree that we should give higher priority to severely overcrowded families who lack 2 or more rooms?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Not very much (route to 3b)
- Not at all (route to 3b)
- Not sure/ do not know

3b- Please explain why you selected this option

New build housing

Enfield Council and partners are building more homes for social rent. We want to make sure that these new homes are meeting local housing need and so we propose to prioritise existing secure council tenants currently living on the estate on which they are being built. This will be according to a local lettings plan for the individual scheme for up to 100% of the allocations.

Successful applicants must be secure council tenants living on the estate who meet the bidding threshold and fulfil the size and property requirements for the new homes. Under occupiers will be able to be allocated a property with an extra bedroom if required. Applicants with the same number of points will be prioritised based on the length of time on the housing register. Any remaining properties subject to local lettings will be allocated to assured or secure social housing tenants with an assessed housing need.

The current scheme prioritises secure tenants of Enfield Council that live within a defined local area. At the same time we want to meet the needs of our applicants on the housing register we want to amend the list of priorities and once we have considered council tenants with housing need we will then revert back to allocations being made according to the scheme.

4. To what extent do you agree with prioritising existing secure tenants on new build estates?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Not very much (route to 4b)
- Not at all (route to 4b)
- Not sure/ do not know

4b- Please explain why you selected this option

Long term homeless households

We propose that in instances where a household has been owed a legal housing duty under S193 and has been in temporary accommodation for more than 10 years and/or they are vulnerable – as determined by Panel on an individual basis - they will be awarded additional points and then made a direct offer.

5. To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Not very much (route to 5b)
- Not at all (route to 5b)
- Not sure/ do not know

5b- Please explain why you selected this option

Homeless households housed in the private rented sector.

We currently award additional points to applicants who were owed under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, a prevention duty (section 195(2)), relief duty (section 189B (2) or S193 main duty, who have then accepted a private sector tenancy option. We propose to end this recognising that they are no longer homeless and have been housed into suitable accommodation. These households will be removed from the housing register.

6. To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Not very much (route to 6b)
- Not at all (route to 6b)
- Not sure/ do not know

6b- Please explain why you selected this option

Homeless households housed in the private rented sector.

We propose that in instances where a household has been housed into settled accommodation outside the borough of Enfield we propose to remove them from the Housing Needs register

7. To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- A great deal (route to Q8)
- To some extent (route to Q8)
- Not very much (route to 7b)
- Not at all (route to 7b)
- Not sure/ do not know (route to Q9)

7b- Please explain why you selected this option (route to Q9)

Homeless households housed in the private rented sector.

(conditional question) Do you agree that we should give transitional protection to those currently on the housing register of a further 24 months to bid before their application is closed.

8. To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Not very much (route to 8b)
- Not at all (route to 8b)
- Not sure/ do not know

8b- Please explain why you selected this option

9. If you have any further comments on our proposals for the Allocations Scheme, please add them below.