Housing Allocation Policy Consultation: Frequently Asked questions

Lambeth Council is required by law to have a policy for allocating homes (Council Housing and Registered Social Landlords properties) to residents. This is a legal framework within which the council must operate.

The council proposing some changes about who can join the register and how homes are allocated.

Here are some frequently asked questions:

What is the housing context in Lambeth today?
Lambeth is in the midst of a housing crisis. The lack of affordable housing in Lambeth is having a profound impact on the borough and its residents.

The factors contributing to this crisis, include:
- The ongoing impact of right-to-buy, removing social homes from circulation
- Fewer households moving out of a social tenancy
- Soaring property prices, placing homeownership out of the reach of most
- Increasing private sector rents, rising faster than people's incomes
- Government cuts to housing benefit, pricing people out of private rentals.

The lack of adequate affordable housing in Lambeth has seen the demand for social housing rapidly increase. Many families are in need of a genuinely affordable place to call home, and the cost-of-living and housing crisis has left more and more households turning to the Council for assistance.

The number of households seeking social housing in Lambeth now exceeds 43,000. Of those 4,000 households live in temporary accommodation.

At the same time, the number of social properties becoming available to let has reduced year on year due to the impact of right-to-buy and fewer households moving out of their social housing.

Why are you making changes now?

The current allocation scheme has been in place for 10 years and was due a review.
The main things we want to change are giving more priority to homeless households living in temporary accommodation and making sure the scheme is fair and realistic.

If people in Temporary Accommodation have a higher priority how would this affect other people trying to get social housing?

This change won't impact most people but will mean that fewer residents in the current Band B get a home each year. Band B includes severely overcrowded households, those

with urgent medical needs and those at risk of homelessness working with the council to prevent their homelessness.

People with a lower medical or overcrowding need currently have less priority than people in TA so won't be affected.

It also won't affect people in Band A which includes people in life threatening medical situations, the most overcrowded households and other priority groups like care leavers. Band A applicants will continue to have the highest priority to move.

Why are you proposing to prevent people from joining the list?

We do want to hear views on this but feel that we are giving people unrealistic expectations. We don't want people to exclude alternatives in the generally mistaken belief that they will eventually get a council home.

We desperately wish we could offer a council home to everyone who wants and needs one, but - due to the housing crisis - the reality is that the vast majority of those households who do not have acute housing needs will never be successful in getting a council home.

What help can the council provide for people who won't get social housing?

Dedicated advice and support in finding suitable, alternative accommodation is available to everyone in Lambeth. This includes one-to-one sessions, for the first time, to help residents create a personal housing plan, employment, benefit and budgeting advice, assistance identifying affordable properties and locations and, for those eligible, financial assistance with rent in advance and deposit.

Why don't you prioritise those who have been on the register for many years?

Priority on the housing register is based on housing need rather than the amount of time spent on the register. As applicants with a greater housing need join the register, they will take priority over those with lower needs who may have been on the register longer.