

Housing placements policy:

Location of accommodation offers
for homeless households



Introduction

Newham Council has a duty to provide accommodation if there is reason to believe that an applicant may be eligible, homeless and in priority need. If criteria are met, interim accommodation is arranged for the applicant until a decision has been reached on their application. If the Council decides that it owes the 'main homelessness duty' to an applicant, they will be offered temporary accommodation (under s193 (2), Housing Act 1996 as amended) until they find their own accommodation or are made an offer of accommodation that ends the duty (which will usually be in the private rented sector), or the duty otherwise ends.

The location of accommodation is a factor in assessing suitability. So far as is reasonably practicable the Council seeks to accommodate homeless households in Newham, but a key factor in determining location is the availability of suitable affordable housing.

Policy Principles

The Council has a policy to provide suitable accommodation within Newham wherever possible, except in cases where there is a specific reason why the household should not be accommodated within the borough (e.g. those at risk of violence in Newham). However, we are only able to do this subject to the supply of suitable and affordable accommodation being available within the borough.

When assessing the suitability of any accommodation for a homeless household, the Council will consider if the applicant can afford their housing without being deprived of basic essentials such as food, clothing, heating, transport costs and all other reasonable expenditure.

The Council will take account of the distance to the accommodation from the borough, travel time to employment, education or caring responsibilities, access to essential medical facilities and support, and access to local amenities, services and transport.

Any allocation of accommodation, whether within the borough or further away, will also take into account the Council's obligations under the Children Act 2004 including the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Making a suitable offer of accommodation

All homeless or potentially homeless households are individually assessed prior to placement to determine the suitability. Before an offer of accommodation is made, a matching exercise will be carried out, considering the specific requirements of the household. We aim to ensure that the accommodation we offer, meets the needs of the household and meets suitability criteria in relation to size, affordability and location.

We will usually only make one offer of accommodation to a household in housing need. The household will be expected to accept it on the date it is made.

Affordability

Before making an offer of accommodation, we will assess each household's income and expenditure, to check that the household can afford to pay the rent for the property. We will aim to secure properties for rent within the Local Housing Allowance rate as far as reasonably practicable so that they are affordable for people receiving housing benefit/universal credit. Given the context of rapidly rising rents in Newham and the rest of London, we need to procure accommodation out of London so that we can continue to provide affordable accommodation.

Location

The Council allocates accommodation within areas categorised as A, B or C zones. Households will be offered accommodation in Zone A if sufficient suitable properties are available and if affordable to them. However, we are only able to do this subject to the supply of suitable and affordable accommodation being available within the borough. If no suitable properties are available in Zone A, households will be placed in suitable properties in Zone B. If there are no suitable properties in Zone B, they will be placed in suitable properties in Zone C.

Zone Criteria

| Zone | Location | Priority Group |
|---|--|---|
| Zone A  | <p>Located in the London Borough of Newham or within 30 minutes' travelling time by public transport from the nearest boundary of Newham</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households with one child (or more) who has an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan in Newham. Households with one child (or more) subject of a Child Protection Plan; or families who are currently helped by Children and Young People Services where it is confirmed and accepted by the Housing Needs Service that a transfer to another area would have a significant negative impact on their welfare. Households where one person (or more) has a severe and enduring physical or mental health condition requiring intensive and specialist medical treatment and this treatment is only available in Newham. Households with one or more persons in receipt of a significant care package administered by the Council, and/or the NHS, which cannot be transferred to another area. Households who have a longstanding arrangement to provide care and support to another family member in Newham, who is not part of the resident household, and who would be likely to require statutory health and social care support if that care and support ceased and there were no other relatives willing and able to provide that care or other suitable arrangements available. The family member would usually be a parent or sibling, but other relations might also be appropriate if no other relative was willing and able to provide care. |
| Zone B  | <p>Located outside Newham but within 90 minutes' travelling time by public transport from the nearest boundary of Newham</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A child in Year 10, 11, 12 or 13 preparing for or taking public exams in the current or next academic year at a school in Newham or 90 minutes' travel distance from the borough. Households where one person or more is/are in permanent and settled employment where they have been continuously employed for a period of six months and for 16 hours or more per week. Women who are on maternity leave from employment and meet the above criteria are also included. Households interested in moving out of Newham. |
| Zone C  | <p>Located more than 90 minutes' travelling time by public transport from the nearest boundary of Newham</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households where risk of gender-based or gang and drug-related violence makes a move outside London preferable. Households not meeting the criteria for Zones A or B. |

Emergency housing

The Council aims to keep a small number of vacant properties to provide accommodation for households who are homeless on the day and meet one or more of the local placement criteria, or to accommodate any household with an exceptional and emergency requirement to transfer immediately from temporary accommodation that is not local.

If no accommodation is immediately available that meets the household's identified needs, a homeless household can be placed on an emergency basis into suitable accommodation that may only be suitable for a short period.

This may be in a location that would not be suitable longer term. If it is deemed unsuitable for their longer-term occupation a household will be given priority to be transferred to alternative temporary accommodation as soon as a more suitable unit is available.

Supporting households placed in accommodation out of Borough

We will offer support to households who move out of the borough and the surrounding area. All households will be assessed at the point of placement so that we can identify and provide relevant information and support.

The level of support will depend on the individual and collective needs of the household and the location. Relocation support may include:

- Information on their new local council, Council Tax, registering to vote and relevant local services
- Information on local schools and childcare
- Information on housing benefit as well as any other benefits the household may be entitled to
- Assistance with contacting statutory social care services if required
- Information on relevant social, community and support networks
- Guaranteeing rent payments to private rented sector landlords for up to a year where a resident cannot provide evidence of income

Ongoing support to residents in temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation is not a long-term solution for residents, and we will continue to work with households in this type of housing, to support movement into a more sustainable long-term housing solution.

Reviewing the Policy

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed annually in consultation with the Lead Member with the responsibility for Housing to ensure its effectiveness. Amendments to this policy will be made as and when required.

Alignment with National Policy

This policy fully complies with the requirements of:

- Sections 206, 208, and 210 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.
- Allocations and Homelessness Codes of Guidance
- The DCLG Supplementary Guidance on the homelessness changes in the Localism Act 2011 and on the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 (November 2012) and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 1996
- Decisions and guidance from the Courts to local authorities regarding the suitability of temporary accommodation including the leading case of *Nzolameso vs Westminster Council*.
- Children Act 2004

How to apply

Applications for housing can be made online through My Newham (my.newham.gov.uk) Our libraries have free computer usage and internet access (newham.gov.uk/libraries-arts-culture)