

Housing Allocations Policy Consultation Frequently Asked Questions

What is the housing allocations policy?

The Housing Allocations Policy sets out how residents can apply to join the waiting list for social housing, how the council allocates properties and how residents are prioritised on the waiting list.

What are the main changes the council is proposing to make?

There are four main changes being proposed:

1. Adjusting the eligibility of access to the waiting list: currently you can join the waiting list if you have lived in Newham for two years, if you work in Newham or if you have family in Newham. We propose to change this so that you must have lived in Newham for three years, and removing the employment and family criteria. This brings us in line with most of our neighbours, where applicants need to live in borough for 3 to 5 years. There are some exceptions to the three-year rule.
2. Waiting time: We propose changing the way time on the waiting list contributes to your priority when you bid on properties. Waiting time before a housing need arises will not count.
3. Removing the bidding advantage of households in employment: currently households in employment have the highest priority when they bid for a property. We propose to remove the priority given to people in employment, so that priority is based on housing need and time on the waiting list.
4. Creating a new category based on overcrowding: We propose to create a new category, giving higher priority to households who are overcrowded plus have one other reasonable preference (housing need). We define severe overcrowding as being short of two or more bedrooms.

Full details of these proposals can be found [here](#)

Why are you proposing changes to the policy?

The policy was last updated in 2012 and things have changed a lot in Newham since then. There isn't enough social housing for everyone who needs it, so we need to make difficult choices to decide who is most in need. We think the fairest way to do this is to look at housing need and how long a household has had this housing need.

The council also believes that there are many ways someone can contribute to their community, other than just employment which is why we are removing the priority given to working households.

We had been planning this proposal before the Covid-19 pandemic, but we believe this change would benefit many residents who might lose their job because of the pandemic. Over 100,000 residents are on furlough or unemployment benefits and we don't think it's fair that they have a lower priority due to impacts of Covid-19.

Why is the waiting list so long in Newham?

This is partly due to the housing crisis. In the last eight years, the housing crisis has got worse- private rents increased by 56% between 2012 and 2019 but wages haven't increased as much. This means a lot of people are having to live in overcrowded, unsuitable accommodation.

There has also been historic underinvestment in social housing. 'Right-to-buy' means that people living in social housing have been allowed to buy the property they live in at a reduced price, but these properties haven't been getting replaced. This means there are lots of people who need social housing but there are fewer properties.

You are proposing that people in overcrowded properties will be given a higher priority, but there aren't enough large houses available. How does this change actually help larger families?

There is a very limited supply of larger houses. The new category means families who are short of two or more bedrooms (and have another housing need) will have a higher priority, which means we will be able to give a priority to households who are most in need.

We won't have more large houses but families living in the most overcrowded, most unsuitable conditions will be prioritised when larger houses become available.

These changes don't help families with No Recourse to Public Funds even though they are living in inadequate housing- why not?

The Council is not allowed to let people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) join the housing waiting list. It would be against the law. So this means that no changes we make to the housing allocations policy will impact on these families.

I've been on the housing waiting list for years and I'm in employment- how will these changes affect me?

If you have a housing need and are currently able to bid on properties, you will still be able to bid. But you will no longer have priority over someone who isn't in employment. We will now only consider your housing needs and how long you have been on the list.

This could mean that you will be further down the priority rankings, as there may be others on the list that have a housing need and have been waiting longer than you.

Newham has thousands of households in temporary accommodation – how will this help them?

Households in temporary accommodation will still have their housing need, so they won't be affected. Some households could benefit from the new category for overcrowding, if they are living in overcrowded temporary accommodation.

These proposals would mean that a lot of people won't be able to join the waiting list anymore, but are still struggling to find suitable, affordable housing in Newham. How will the council help these people?

The council will not forget about people who need housing support. We were the first council to introduce a borough-wide landlord licensing scheme to bring up the standards of privately rented properties, and we continue to work with landlords to improve standards.

We offer advice and support through our Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service (HPAS). More information about this service can be found [here](#).

There is also information on our website about the different ways of buying a lower-cost home in Newham, for example through shared ownership. You can find out more [here](#).

There will always be emergencies and the allocations policy does offer priority to people who are in emergency circumstances (for example, because of domestic abuse).

When will the final decision be made?

The consultation is running until Monday 4th January 2021. The council will then consider the responses it receives. Recommendations will then be made to Cabinet members to help them make a decision. We expect this to happen in March 2021.

How can I comment on the proposals?

You can fill in a questionnaire online [here](#). If you have any questions, or would like to request a paper copy of the questionnaire you can call 0800 304 7488 or email newhamconsultation@mysavanta.com