

Tower Hamlets
Common Housing Register

Lettings Policy

With effect from the 29th July, 2002
Revised 12th September, 2005 v.4

Partner Landlords:



Bethnal Green & Victoria Park Housing Association



East End Homes



LABO Housing Association Ltd



Poplar HARCA



Southern Housing Group



Spitalfields Housing Association



Swan Housing Association



Tower Hamlets Community Housing



TOWER HAMLETS

Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register **Lettings Policy**

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1 Introduction

Tower Hamlets is an area with a very large demand for affordable housing, acute housing need and limited affordable housing options. Whatever lettings policy is adopted, it is a way to distribute a small supply of homes.

Tower Hamlets Council and our partner landlords have agreed to offer all their available homes to people registered on a single list for housing. This list is called the Housing List.

We will endeavour to give the best advice to every resident about his or her prospects for housing and also offer information about other housing options.

You should refer to the Council's Homeless Service for information about your application if the Council has accepted you as a homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act. This is because different rules may apply to your application than those in this policy booklet.

Each person on the housing list has his or her own reason for wanting to move. This lettings policy has to meet the statutory duties that the Government says must be considered. In particular, this means that we have to decide housing need by giving 'reasonable preference' to the following groups of people:

- ◆ people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act);
- ◆ people who are owed a duty by any housing authority under 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act, 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under 192(3);
- ◆ people occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- ◆ people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds; and
- ◆ people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

1.1 What is excluded from this policy?

In general, this policy will apply to every home that is available to us to let. However, the following will usually be excluded from the provisions of this policy:

- ◆ grants of new tenancy made when there is an agreement for a 'second succession' as allowed by the prevailing policy;
- ◆ where Registered Social Landlord partners have superseding pre-existing commitments to third parties;
- ◆ when we need to react to extenuating or extraordinary circumstances, such as when there has been a fire or other emergency. If such a situation occurs only senior officers will be able to make the decision to make an exception to this policy;
- ◆ where a new tenancy is agreed following a sole-to-joint application by an existing tenant;
- ◆ where a Court makes a decision about a tenancy (e.g. in pursuance to an order made under the Matrimonial Causes Act, Children Act, etc.)

1.2 Equality, diversity & community

Tower Hamlets is home to many diverse communities. It is a strength of the area that this is recognised and supported.

The aim of this lettings policy is to contribute to the Tower Hamlets Community Plan promoting a **Better Place for Living Safely and Well; Creating and Sharing Prosperity; Learning Achievement and Leisure; and for Excellent Public Services.**

We are committed to delivering quality services to all, responding positively to the needs and expectations of all users of the service.

We are committed to eliminating discrimination on any grounds including race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, religion or belief. This commitment derives from our respect for every individual.

This lettings policy applies equally to everyone who applies to or is on the housing list.

1.3 What can I do if you make a decision about my application that I do not agree with?

For any decision that is made about your application, you can ask for a review within 21 days of the decision being notified to you.

If you ask us to review a decision to exclude you from the housing list, a more senior officer who did not make the original decision will carry out a review.

If you ask us to review a decision on the suitability or reasonableness of an offer of accommodation that you have refused leading to priority awarded to your application being withdrawn, a more senior officer who did not make the original decision will carry out a review.

If you disagree with the recommendation of the Health Advisor, the first review will be carried out by another Health Advisor who has not been involved in the first assessment of your application for priority on health grounds. If you still disagree with the recommendations made the matter will be reconsidered by the Health Advisors and referred to another Health Advisor for a final review. Further enquiries may be made at any stage of this process. Once we receive the recommendation from the Health Advisor we will make what will be our final decision.

If you ask us to review a decision about the priority awarded to your application by the Housing Management Panel, the Panel will first review any additional information or evidence that is presented. If you still disagree with the Panel's decision, a more senior officer than the chair of the Panel will carry out the review which will be our final decision.

For reviews of any other decision made regarding your application, an officer who was not involved in the original decision, but not necessarily someone more senior to the officer who made the first decision, will carry out a review.

If you wish to request a review of a decision it should normally be in writing. This is to make sure that we have a record of what you have told us. In exceptional circumstances we will agree to you making the request in person.

We will aim to tell you the result of a review within 56 days from the date of your request unless it is necessary to request further information. Normally, the decision is made more quickly than this. We will also tell you how we have made our decision.

1.4 Who can I contact for more information?

For more information about the lettings policy, the housing list or available homes please contact:

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

General Enquiries	☎020 7364 2826
Health priority enquiries	☎020 7364 0209
Key Worker enquiries	☎020 7364 0211
Housing Advisory	☎020 7364 3558

Bethnal Green & Victoria Park Housing Association

General Enquiries	☎020 7780 4300
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East End Homes

General Enquiries	☎020 7517 4700
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LABO Housing

General Enquiries	☎020 7790 9955
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Poplar HARCA

General Enquiries	☎020 7510 0500
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Southern Housing Group

General Enquiries	☎020 7251 6091
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Spitalfields Housing Association

General Enquiries	☎020 7392 5406
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Swan Housing Association

General Enquiries	☎020 7510 9960
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Tower Hamlets Community Housing

General Enquiries	☎020 7780 3070
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2 The Lettings Policy

2.1 How do you decide who is offered housing?

There are probably as many reasons for wanting to move as there are applicants on the Housing List. Everyone has a reason for applying to the housing list that is important to them such as wanting to be nearer family or friends, or nearer work, or in an area they like or away from an area they do not like.

There are some households that have to be re-housed. This is because their homes are being demolished as part of the commitment to regenerate the Borough and so improve the quality of life for all residents.

There are some households that it is advantageous to re-house. This is because they are living in homes that are larger than their needs and by moving to smaller homes they will free up larger family-sized homes so helping overcrowded families.

There are some households who need to be re-housed because the place they are living in is not suitable. This may be because it is not secure, it is too small, it does not have the facilities they need, it is extremely detrimental to health, or it needs repairs so extensive that they cannot live there while they are being done. The Government says that these people have to be given reasonable preference for re-housing.

There are some households that have been assessed by the Council as people to whom a legal duty to help with housing is owed. The law states who these people are and the Council does not have discretion to change this. While these households are waiting for a permanent offer of housing the Council has to arrange for a temporary place for them to live.

All these competing demands have to be weighed up and a decision made as to what priority will be awarded to each type of application. Usually a target will be set each year for how many homeless households will be offered permanent housing. We also aim to let a minimum of 30% of available homes to Council and partner landlord tenants.

2.2 How do you sort priority for housing? What is a Community Group?

Community Groups are a way for us to make sure that we comply with the Government's rules about who should be given reasonable preference for housing. Normally, each eligible application will be included in one of these four groups:

2.2.1 Group 1: Community Gain

This group includes all applications from:

- ◆ anyone awarded an emergency priority to move; and
- ◆ Council and partner landlord tenants who have to move because they live in a block that is being demolished or refurbished; and
- ◆ Council and Registered Social Landlord tenants who are moving to a home with at least 1 bedroom less than their current home; and
- ◆ Council and RSL tenants with a need to move because of extenuating repair needs.

2.2.2 Group 2: Community Priority

This group includes all applications from:

- ◆ those with an assessed need to move because of extenuating social or health needs; and
- ◆ accepted applications from one of the quota groups; and
- ◆ those assessed by the Council as Homeless under the Housing Act, 1996 Part 7 and other Homeless households who have an assessed priority need.

2.2.3 Group 3: Community Mobility

This group includes applications from all others on the housing list whose applications are not included in groups 1, 2 or 4.

2.2.4 Group 4: Community General

This group includes all applications from:

- ◆ RSL tenants whose landlord is not a member of the Common Housing Register unless eligible to be included in Community Groups 1 or 2;
- ◆ applicants who own or part own a residential property;

- ◆ applicants without a local connection to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as defined by s199 of Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

2.3 How do you decide which group my application will be in?

Group 1 Emergencies The decision to award an emergency priority can be made only by a very senior officer based on the individual circumstances of the household.

Group 1 Decants The decision to decant a block can only be made by Councillors (for Council properties) and Management Boards (for partner landlord properties).

Group 1 Under occupiers If you are an existing social tenant applying for a home with at least 1 bedroom less than you currently have.

Group 2 Homelessness The Council's Homeless Service makes the decision.

Group 2 Extenuating Repair Need The decision to make this award is made by a senior officer in circumstances as described below.

Group 2 Extenuating Health Need The Health Advisors make the recommendation for this award.

Group 2 Extenuating Social Need The decision to make this award is made by a Panel including a senior officer in circumstances as described below.

Group 2 Quotas The decision to make this award is made by a Lettings Sustainability Officer in circumstances as described below.

Group 3 If you are not included in any of these other groups your application will normally be placed in Group 3.

Group 4 RSL and local authority tenants whose landlord is not a member of the Common Housing Register unless included Community Groups 1 or 2 If you are a social tenant the decision about this is dependent on whether your landlord is a signatory to the Common Housing Register.

Group 4 New applicants who own or part own a residential property A Lettings Customer Advisor will do a search with the Land Registry to decide if this applies to you.

Group 4 Applicants without a local connection to the area This decision will be made by a Lettings Customer Advisor who will

investigate your connection to the Borough. If none of the following apply, your application will normally be placed in group 4:

- ◆ you have lived in the Borough for at least six of the last 12 months; or
- ◆ you have lived in the Borough for at least three of the last five years; or
- ◆ you have permanent employment in the Borough; or
- ◆ you have a close relative (mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter) living in the Borough and they have lived in the Borough for at least the last five years.

2.4 How will I know about homes to be let?

Usually, every home that becomes available to let will be advertised. Adverts will be published weekly. Information will be made available at the Council's One Stop Shops, housing offices and website. Partner landlords will also have information available at their offices. For some vulnerable applicants we will arrange direct mailings and contact by telephone.

Where possible, the advert will show a photograph of the block and include information about:

- ◆ who the landlord is;
- ◆ the rent;
- ◆ the sort of property it is: floor level, type and how many bedrooms;
- ◆ the area it is in;
- ◆ the size of household that can apply;
- ◆ if there are special facilities that mean that it is most suitable for certain types of households who will be given preference for it.

We expect to advertise all available homes except:

- ◆ those on new build developments that have been ring fenced to specific tenants whose homes are being demolished;
- ◆ if it is needed for an emergency;
- ◆ if it is an empty property identified for use in a 'chain letting';
- ◆ if support is offered and only specific groups of applicants are eligible for the support.

Although we will try very hard to ensure that all the information in our adverts is correct there may be times when we cannot offer a home that has been advertised or the information is not right.

You can register your interest in each advertised home each week. If you are vulnerable and unable to register your own bid you can register your choices with us then we can bid on your behalf. These auto bids will act as if you have told us about an interest in an advertised home and you should be very sure about the choice you make before telling us about them. If you have been accepted as homeless by the Council this may lead to the Council discharging their housing duty towards you and asking you to leave any temporary home provided.

2.5 Information about homes that have been let

We hope that eventually you will be able to make an informed estimate of how long you may have to wait for specific types of homes by using information about the homes that have been let. To help you with this, we will try to publish information about those successfully housed

However, we have to protect confidentiality. The information will show the type of home it was and how long the successful household had been waiting on the housing list.

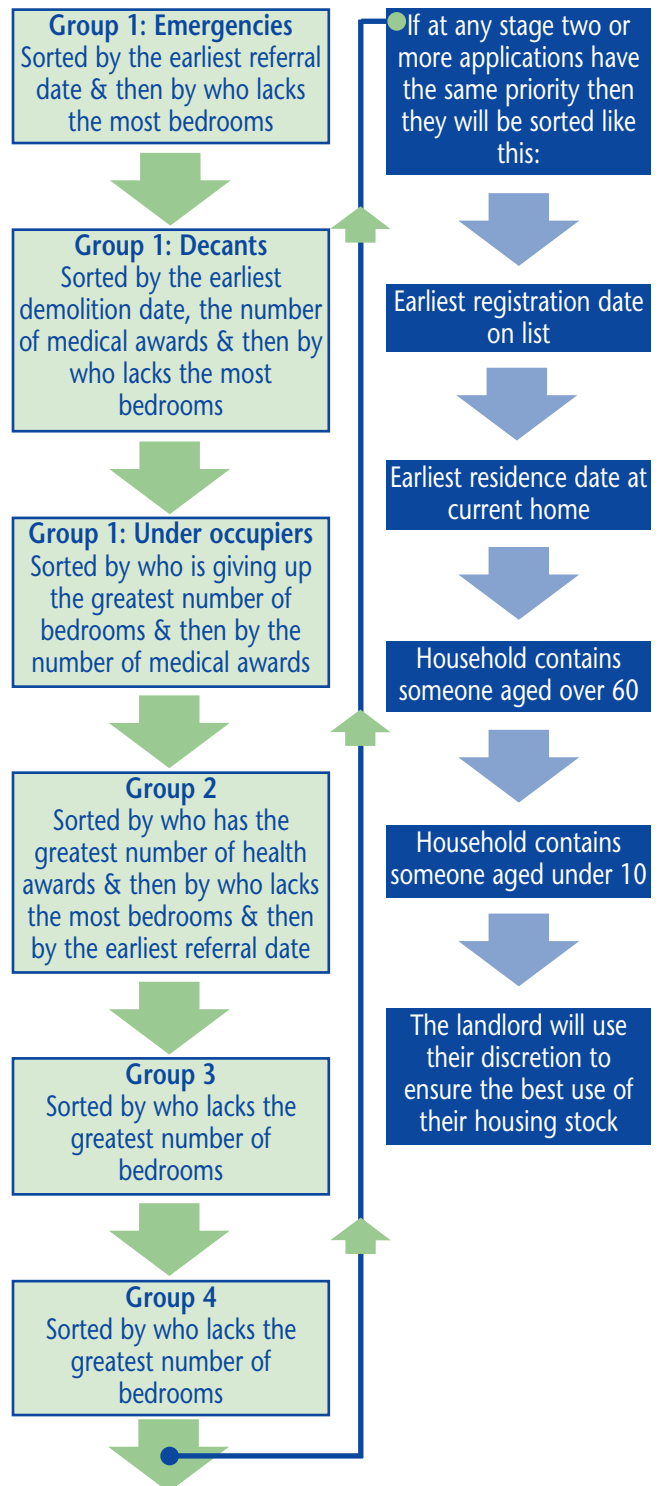
We do not think that it is legitimate to assess housing need by only looking at how long someone has been waiting on the housing list. Therefore, because of the way we sort applications within their groups some people will be housed more quickly than others. The reasons why someone may be re-housed in a shorter time than you include:

- ◆ their application was in a higher group than yours;
- ◆ they bid for a property you do not bid for;
- ◆ they were eligible for a home you could not bid for;
- ◆ they are more overcrowded than you are;
- ◆ their household has higher assessed health needs than yours;
- ◆ they had to move because of an emergency;
- ◆ they have had to move because their home is being demolished, refurbished or repaired;

2.6 How will you decide when there is more than one request for an available home?

Anyone who has an eligible application on the housing list can tell us that they are interested in an advertised empty home. They will then be put on the list for that property.

We will consider which households 'best fit' the property by comparing the size of the property with the number of people on your application as described in section 5.1. Then the order on the list will be decided like this:



3 The Council's Homeless Service

The Council will decide if it has a duty to assist you by referring to Part 7 of the Housing Act, 1996. As the Government decides these rules the Council does not have discretion to change them.

3.1 Who is Homeless?

The Council must help to house homeless people who meet **ALL** of the following criteria:

3.1.1 Eligible for assistance

This generally means someone who is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area, and is not subject to immigration control as decided by the Secretary of State although some people who are subject to immigration control will qualify.

3.1.2 Homeless or threatened with homelessness

This generally means that one of the following applies:

- ◆ you have nowhere to stay tonight;
- ◆ you have been asked to leave a home that you have no legal right to stay in;
- ◆ you face possible eviction or repossession;
- ◆ you have somewhere to live but you cannot get into it;
- ◆ you have somewhere to live but there is someone there who may be or has been violent towards you;
- ◆ you have somewhere to live but other people who you normally live with cannot live there; or
- ◆ you have somewhere to live but it is so unsuitable that the Council thinks it would be unreasonable for you to live there.

3.1.3 In priority need for accommodation

This generally means that one or more of the following applies:

- ◆ you have dependent children who live with you;
- ◆ you, or a member of your household, is pregnant;
- ◆ you have been made homeless because of a fire, flood or other disaster;
- ◆ you are vulnerable because of age; mental or physical illness; disability; risk of violence at home and/or institutional background;

- ◆ you are 16 or 17 years old;
- ◆ you are under 21 years old and have been 'looked after' by the Local Authority

3.1.5 Not intentionally homeless

This is a very complicated area of law but in simple terms means that you have not brought about your own homelessness

3.1.5 There is a local connection with Tower Hamlets

This means that:

- ◆ you have lived in the Borough for at least six of the last 12 months; or
- ◆ you have lived in the Borough for at least three of the last five years; or
- ◆ you have permanent employment in the Borough; or
- ◆ you have a close relative (mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter) who has lived in the Borough for at least the last five years.

If such a connection exists then this Council will be responsible for re-housing you. If you do not have a connection with Tower Hamlets but you do have a connection with another Council then your application may be referred to that other Council. If you have no connection anywhere then responsibility will fall on the Council that you approach

3.2 What do I do if I think I am Homeless?

The rules for Homeless applications are very complicated. Every application will be considered on its own merits.

You can contact the Homeless Service on

☎020 7364 7418 and at
Block B
Great Eastern Enterprise
3 Millharbour
London E14 9XP

3.3 What happens to my application if I am accepted as homeless?

If the Council accepts it has a homeless duty to you under these criteria your application will join the housing list.

You will then be able to exercise a choice of properties for the following 12 months. This time limit is because it costs the Council a

substantial amount of money to provide temporary accommodation.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 12 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available. You will be made one offer of one of them to ensure that the Council properly discharges any duty to you. We cannot tell you how long this may take after the 12-month time limit is up.

You will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in. You will be asked to explain why you cannot live in a particular area or in a specific type of home. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

Officers in the Homeless Service will deal with your application to the housing list and any questions you have about your application should be referred to them.

4 Making an application to the housing list

4.1 How do I join the housing list?

Everyone who wants to join the housing list has to fill in an application form. This is to make sure that we have the information needed to decide your priority for housing and to make sure everyone is assessed in the same way.

If you need it, we can help you to fill in these forms. Lettings, Housing and One Stop Shop staff, advice centres and lots of other groups around the Borough will be happy to advise you about your application.

Normally, anyone can join the housing list unless they are:

- ◆ under 18;
- ◆ a person that the Government says cannot be on the list (at the moment this means certain groups of people who are subject to immigration control);
- ◆ unsuitable to be a tenant.

Every application will be considered on its own merits and we will consider all circumstances before making a final decision on eligibility for the housing list.

4.2 What happens if you decide I am not eligible to be on the housing list?

If we decide that you are not eligible for the housing list, we will tell you why.

You can ask us to review the decision. Every application is treated individually and we will take into account any extenuating or mitigating factors you can provide evidence of.

How we carry out a review of a decision is detailed in Section 1.3.

4.3 How do you decide who is unsuitable to be a tenant?

We will normally only decide to exclude your application from the housing list if the following three tests apply to you or a member of your household:

- 1 you are, or have been, guilty of unacceptable behaviour; AND

- 2 the unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to have entitled a local authority landlord to have obtained a possession order, AND
- 3 at the time of the application, you are still unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of the behaviour.

4.3.1 Unacceptable Behaviour

We will consider whether anyone in your household is guilty of behaviour as defined in grounds 1-7 of s.84 of the Housing Act 1985. These are:

- ◆ rent arrears or breach of tenancy agreement;
- ◆ nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and/or illegal or immoral use of the property and/or domestic violence;
- ◆ deterioration in the condition of the property;
- ◆ the tenant or someone prompted by the tenant obtained the tenancy by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement to the landlord;
- ◆ a premium was paid in connection with a mutual exchange;
- ◆ the property is part of a building mainly used for non-housing purposes which was let to the tenant as an employee of the landlord and the tenant is guilty of conduct that means it would not be appropriate for him or her to continue to occupy.

4.3.2 Behaviour serious enough to have justified a possession order

We will then decide whether, had the person who is guilty of the unacceptable behaviour been a local authority tenant, would a Court consider it reasonable to grant a possession order.

4.3.3 Still unsuitable when the application is made

We will normally not consider incidents that happened more than two years ago – except where the person has been guilty of very serious acts of anti-social behaviour including racial, domestic or other acts of harassment or violence.

At this stage, we will consider any and all evidence from the applicant that would go towards them proving that they are suitable to be a tenant.

4.4 What happens when I make an application?

4.4.1 Data Protection

When your application to join the housing list is received your details will be registered on a computer.

We have a duty to protect public funds. The information you give on your form will be stored on a computer and may be shared with other public agencies (such as the Department for Work and Pensions) and Council departments (such as Housing Benefits and Council Tax) solely to detect and prevent fraud.

We will share the information you give us with Registered Social Landlords and other housing authorities for the purposes of housing nominations.

4.4.2 Obligation to be truthful

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess your application, or to provide false information that leads to your gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may mean you lose your home.

We will check if you, or anyone in your household, are already registered on the housing list. You can only be on one application at any one time.

4.4.3 When someone else at your address wants to join the list

If you are a tenant of one of the partner landlords and someone living with you applies for separate housing, we will ask you to promise that if you move you will make sure no one is left in the property. Normally, until you give this written guarantee of vacant possession you will not be able to register an interest in available homes and we will not actively consider your application.

4.4.4 Joint tenants who want to be re-housed separately

If you are a joint tenant of the Council or a Registered Social Landlord you will usually only be considered for re-housing with all other joint tenants. This is unless there are extenuating reasons why you cannot, such as if your safety is threatened. If you do not wish to be re-housed

with your joint tenant(s) then you should seek independent advice on your rights and obligations. If we agree that you can register for re-housing without your joint tenant(s) then we will normally need a written guarantee from you that:

- ◆ you will remain a joint tenant until such time as you accept an offer of re-housing;
- ◆ when you accept and sign for a new tenancy, you will assign your interest in your existing tenancy to those remaining joint tenant(s).

As you will not be releasing a vacant home for letting, you will not be given preference for available homes advertised with a preference for 'tenants'.

4.4.5 Required proof

We will ask **all** applicants to provide independent documentary proof of the following:

- ◆ identity;
- ◆ relationship to and between all those named on the application;
- ◆ immigration status;
- ◆ the property you currently live in;
- ◆ if you have a local connection with the Local Authority area.

For every person on the application we must normally see at least **two** of the following forms of proof of identity, and proof of where they currently live:

- ◆ full birth certificate;
- ◆ medical card;
- ◆ marriage certificate;
- ◆ driving licence;
- ◆ National Insurance card;
- ◆ passport;
- ◆ benefit book.

We will then assess what priority your application has and tell you:

- ◆ which Community Group your application is in;
- ◆ your preference date;
- ◆ the size of property you will have preference for.

4.4.6 Who can be on my application?

You can apply for any size accommodation that is advertised. However, because there is such a

large demand for family-sized accommodation, priority for each home will be given to the household that 'best fits' it according to the assessed size standards set out in Section 5.1.

This best fit will be decided by comparing the size of the property and the number of people in your immediate family. Only those in your immediate family, or others if previously agreed, will be registered as part of your household for the purposes of the Housing List.

Immediate family means the main applicant, their spouse or partner, their children (except as below) and anyone with whom they have to live because of extenuating circumstances.

If you are the main applicant, immediate family does not include your or your partner's parents; grandparents; aunts or uncles; grandchildren; nieces or nephews; cousins; children over 18 living with a partner (whether married or not); children over 18 who have their own children; friends; lodgers; brothers or sisters.

If you have to live with someone that we do not usually define as immediate family because you have to provide or receive care or support you can ask us to review the decision not to include these people on your application. If there is a health need for you to live together the Health Advisors can recommend whether or not they should be included. If there is an extenuating social need for you to live together the Housing Management Panel will make the decision.

If you share custody of children with someone else, we will decide who is the main provider of care by looking at who is paid child benefit or tax credits and who the children stay with for the most nights each week. If you are not the main care provider your children will not normally be considered as part of your household for the purposes of the Housing List.

4.4.7 What happens if I owe rent?

It is very important that you pay your rent. If you do not then your home may be at risk. If you are having difficulties then you should speak with your landlord who will be able to provide you with advice and support.

If you owe no more than four weeks of your weekly charge (that is the amount you have to pay after any Housing Benefit has been deducted), then your application will not be affected. You will be asked to sign an undertaking that you will pay the arrears before you move.

If you owe no more than 10 weeks of your weekly charge and you have been keeping to an agreement to pay off the arrears for at least 8 weeks then your application will not be affected. You will be asked to sign an undertaking that you will continue to pay the arrears if you move.

If you owe more than 10 weeks of your weekly charge then you will normally not be considered for any homes you may apply for.

We will always consider every case on its individual merits and may exercise discretion to override arrears if we feel that unreasonable hardship would otherwise occur. If the Housing Management Panel makes this decision then you will be asked to make an agreement to pay your arrears and sign an undertaking that you will continue to keep to the agreement if you move.

5 When your application is accepted

5.1 What size home can I have?

You can apply for any size of property you want, but we will give preference to those whose household best matches the number of bedrooms the property has or to those who lack at least 1 bedroom who apply for a smaller home than they need.

If no one in either of these groups is interested in the property, anyone else who has expressed their interest in it may be offered it. However, because of the level of overcrowding in this area it is unlikely that an offer will be made to a household that would under-occupy the property. Landlords will make a decision to make the best use of their stock.

This is the size of home that we will normally consider for your household (the policy makes no allowance for the age of your children):

1 or 2 adults	Studio or 1 bedrm
Family with 1 child Family with 2 children of the same sex	2 bedrooms
Family with 2 children of opposite sex Family with 3 children Family with 4 children of the same sex	3 bedrooms
Family with 4 children of opposite sex Family with 5 children Family with 6 children of the same sex	4 bedrooms
Family with 6 children of opposite sex Family with 7 children Family with 8 children of the same sex	5 bedrooms
Family with 8 children of opposite sex Family with 9 children Family with 10 children of the same sex	6 bedrooms
Family with 10 children of opposite sex Family with 11 children Family with 12 children of the same sex	7 bedrooms

5.2 Can I apply for a smaller home than I need?

You can apply for any size of property you want, but we will give preference to those whose household best matches the number of bedrooms the property has or to those living in overcrowded conditions that are applying for a smaller property than they need. We are not

allowed to statutorily overcrowd a home, so you may be told that you cannot be considered for a property that is a lot smaller than you need.

If you are successful for a home smaller than set out in 5.1. and you apply to move from your new home within 12 months then your new housing application will continue with the same application date as your original application and will be considered in the most appropriate target group once your new circumstances have been assessed.

The Health Advisors may recommend a size of property for you that is different to as set out above.

5.3 How many properties can I apply for?

For as long as your application is eligible and on the housing list, you can apply for as many properties as you are interested in.

5.4 How will I know if I have been successful for a property that I have applied for?

We receive thousands of bids for advertised homes every week. We will only contact the applicant who has been successful with the details of when they can view the property.

To make sure that properties are let as soon as possible, you may be asked to view a home where the repairs are not yet completed. When you view the property you will be told what repairs are to be done to it, whether any allowances are payable to help you move or decorate, and when you would be expected to move in.

If you view a property on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday you will usually be expected to move in to it on the following Monday. If you view the property on Thursday or Friday, you will usually be expected to move in on the second Monday after the viewing.

5.5 What happens if you offer me a property and I do not accept it, or I do not turn up to view it?

If you refuse a home that is offered to you your application will remain active and you will still be able to apply for available homes.

If you are an applicant that the Council has accepted a homeless duty to then different rules

apply. Please speak with someone in the Homeless Team before you refuse an offer made to you.

If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are extenuating reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.

If your application is in the community priority group (except for those with an assessed health need) your priority will be withdrawn.

You can ask us to review the decisions to withdraw any priority award.

We will consider every review on its merits. However, for the review to succeed there should be extenuating reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer. We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past) when making a decision about the reasonableness of any offer you refuse.

6 Other Re-housing Opportunities

6.1 Mutual Exchange Scheme

If you apply to the housing list you for a move, when you move, it does not have to be to a vacant home. It could be to a home that is currently being lived in by someone else who also wants to move. This is what happens when someone sells his or her home using an estate agent.

A mutual exchange is when two or more tenants swap homes once they have the permission of all landlords involved. Given the shortage of available homes in this area for many tenants this is their best prospect for moving.

All Council and RSL tenants who ask to move will be registered for the mutual exchange scheme. Your landlord will work with you to try to find a partner to swap homes with you. If you are put in touch with a partner, neither of you is under an obligation to agree, nor will it affect your housing application if you refuse to swap.

Details of your home will be advertised. However, your personal details, your full address, and your contact details will not be published without your express permission.

If you are a Council tenant who swaps homes with another Council tenant in the Borough whose home is too small for their family, we will pay you expenses for each room you give up provided that your partner needs your size of home.

You can work out how much your spare rooms could be worth...

Bedroom needs of family I am swapping with:		1	2	3	4	5	6
Studio		£500	£1000	£1500	£3000	£3500	£4000
1			£500	£1000	£2500	£3000	£3500
2				£500	£2000	£2500	£3000
3					£1500	£2000	£2500
4						£1500	£2000
5							£1500

Legally, your landlord can only say no to your request to exchange for a limited number of reasons:

- ◆ that either tenant is moving to a home that is inadequate for their needs, e.g. on health grounds, or that it would be too small;

- ◆ that either tenant is moving to a home that is substantially too large for their requirements; your landlord will usually agree to your moving to a home that has 1 bedroom more than you need, but no bigger;
- ◆ that there is a current order for possession made by the Court in respect of any of the tenancies involved;
- ◆ that any of the properties are adapted, sheltered, warden-controlled or other special needs unit and the tenant moving in to the property is not eligible for or does not need it;
- ◆ that the accommodation is tied;
- ◆ that the landlord is a charity and the proposed occupation would conflict with their aims;
- ◆ that any of the tenants has been issued with a Notice of Seeking Possession.

Your landlord may say that you cannot swap tenancies straightaway if, for example, you owe rent, or there are repairs needed to the property that you have to carry out. However, once these matters have been sorted out, they should say yes.

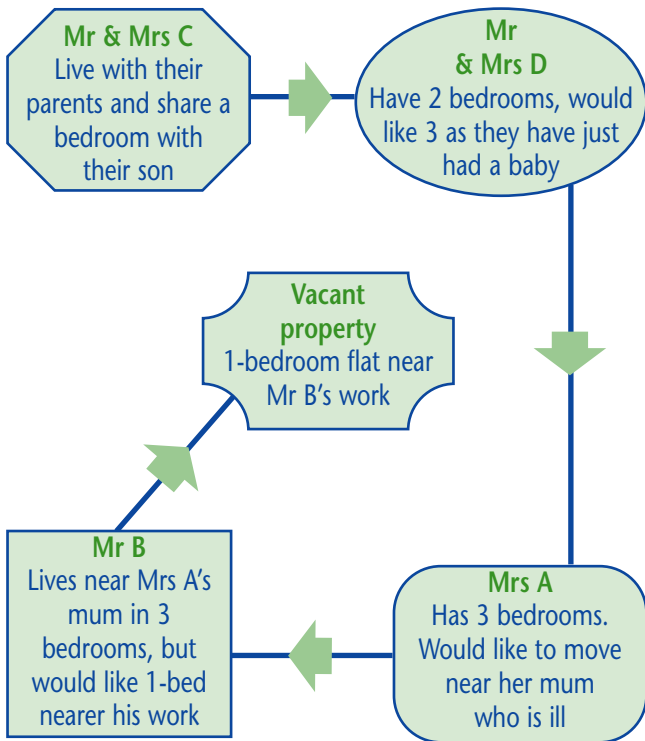
Your landlord is obliged to tell you in writing the reasons why they are saying no to your request. Whatever the decision, you should be told within 42 days of requesting to exchange. You have a right to refer the decision to the County Court under 86 of the 1980 Act if you disagree with it.

6.2 Chain Lettings

Chain Lettings is a way for us to use a vacant property as part of a chain, in the same way as estate agents do in the private owner-occupying sector.

Each year, we will aim to let a minimum of 30% of homes to existing Council and partner landlord tenants. Wherever possible, these lets will be part of a chain of moves, and may include mutual exchanges.

This is an example of how a chain could work with one vacant home used to help four families to move:



providers. If you are a tenant of a partner landlord you will need to check with them to see if they take part in this scheme.

Work out how much your spare rooms could be worth...

My home has this number of bedrooms:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Studio	£500	£1000	£1500	£3000	£3500	£4000
I want this number of bedrooms:	1	£500	£1000	£2500	£3000	£3500
	2		£500	£2000	£2500	£3000
	3			£1500	£2000	£2500
	4				£1500	£2000
	5					£1500

If you live on the ground floor in a home with 2 or more bedrooms and move to a 1 bedroom or studio home above the ground floor we will give you an extra £500.

In order for chain lettings to work, it is necessary for us to identify useful vacant properties and withdraw them from being advertised.

Discretion has been given to senior officers to decide when properties can be removed from the overall lettings scheme to assist in meeting the 30% target of lets to tenants and to make chains work so helping more people to move.

6.3 Under occupiers

There is a shortage of family-sized accommodation in Tower Hamlets. Therefore a high priority is given to those tenants who move to smaller accommodation giving up at least one bedroom.

You can apply for any size property and you will be given the priority to move as long as you give up at least 1 bedroom. If you live in a home with 3 bedrooms and you are assessed as needing 1 bedroom you will get priority if you apply for a home with 1 or 2 bedrooms.

The greater the number of bedrooms you give up, the higher your priority to move.

If you are a Council tenant and you give up at least 1 bedroom, the Council will be able to help you with moving expenses providing you move to a social tenancy and inform your landlord immediately when an offer is made to you. You could move in or outside the borough and register directly with other social housing

7 When you have a need to move because of health

7.1 Extenuating health need for housing

There are times when people need to move because of their health. The extenuating health priority is awarded when a person has a serious health problem **and** their housing is severely affecting either their health or their quality of life.

Health Advisors are health professionals used by the Council to recommend who should be given additional preference for housing on health grounds.

The Health Advisors do not assess how ill you are. They will look at how your health problem affects you on a day-to-day basis. They will then consider how your housing affects your health or quality of life. They will assess each person with a health problem and also consider the impact on your whole household

The Health Advisors work to criteria, but it is not exhaustive. It is not possible to list all the circumstances under which we will make a decision to give priority on health grounds to an application. The examples given are intended only as a guide.

The Health Advisors have discretion to make recommendations about any application and will consider all available priority awards for each application they assess.

7.2 Will everyone who requests an assessment for priority on health grounds be assessed by the Health Advisors?

If you do not have a local connection with the Borough we will normally not carry out an assessment for priority on health grounds.

7.3 How is it decided if I should have additional priority on health grounds?

We receive thousands of requests each year to carry out assessments for priority on health grounds. The resources available to carry out these assessments are limited.

Therefore, when you ask for an assessment for a health priority Lettings Client Support Officers will

make an initial decision on whether or not your application should be assessed by the Health Advisors. You will be told their decision and if you disagree with it you may ask for a review.

We will investigate whether you have a permanent and substantial disability or severe long term limiting illness. We will then consider whether your housing is severely affecting your (or your household's) health or quality of life.

Then we will decide whether where you live now can be reasonably adapted to meet your needs or if you cannot return home from residential health care or if there is an immediate and substantial risk to life.

Unless your application is in group 4, if the recommendation for a priority award is accepted then your application will be moved to either group 1 or 2 and your preference date will be the date you asked for the assessment to be carried out.

If your application is in group 4, a decision will be made at the time of receiving a report from the Health Advisors as to whether unreasonable hardship would occur if your application remained in group 4.

7.4 What priority can be awarded on health grounds?

There are two levels of award that the Health Advisors can recommend:

7.4.1 Extenuating Need

This recommendation will normally be considered if someone on your application or for whom you provide care, has a severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability. Health or quality of life must be severely affected by the place you live in now. We will also consider if where you live now can be reasonably adapted to meet your needs. It may also be that there are combinations of serious health concerns that mean that the health or quality of life of a household is being severely affected. Examples include:

- ◆ the current home does not reasonably allow essential health treatment there e.g. renal dialysis;
- ◆ the ability to live independently in the community is at risk without suitable accommodation;
- ◆ someone is housebound, effectively housebound or cannot reasonably access the essential facilities in their home;

- ◆ if there are critical concerns about someone's safety e.g. through falls due to difficulties with access.

Where awarded, the application will be placed in group 2, the Community Priority Group, except as described in 7.3.

7.4.2 Emergency

This is the highest priority award and will normally be considered where the criteria for an extenuating priority is met **and** one or more of the following conditions also applies:

- ◆ someone is in hospital/residential care and cannot return home because it is not suitable;
- ◆ there is an immediate and substantial risk to life;
- ◆ there are other circumstances or combination of circumstances that are considered exceptional;
- ◆ when the Social Services Directorate makes a nomination under the Intensive Community Support Scheme (see quota groups below).

Where awarded, the application will be placed in group 1, the Community Gain Group, except as described in 7.3.

7.5 Other Health Recommendations

The Health Advisors can also make recommendations about the type of property that is most suitable on health grounds. This can include access, essential facilities (including bathroom and toilet), space, location and heating.

The Health Advisors can make a recommendation that you should have preference for certain types of home e.g. on the ground floor or with a garden.

When the Health Advisors make a recommendation about the type of accommodation you should consider, it will still be up to you to decide what homes to apply for that you think will improve your quality of life, even if the new home does not meet all the recommendations made by the Health Advisors.

You should be careful to only choose homes that you know you will be able to live in safely.

Only in exceptional circumstances will we not respect your choices. If it is decided that you cannot be considered for an individual property you will be given the reasons why that decision has been made.

If you are successful for a home that does not meet all the recommendations made by the

Health Advisors and you apply to move from your new home within 12 months then your new housing application will continue with the same application date as your original application and will be considered in the most appropriate target group once your new circumstances have been assessed. However, we will reassess your priority for housing and health and this is likely to change because you have moved.

7.6 What other recommendations can the Health Advisors make?

As well as considering priority on health grounds, the Health Advisors may also make specific recommendations about the type of home that you should consider.

When a property with one of the these features is advertised, we will endeavour to ensure that preference for it is given to those the Health Advisors have recommended need that type of home.

However, these types of properties are scarce and so you may also consider any property that is advertised that you think will improve your quality of life.

7.6.1 Garden

The Health Advisors will normally make this recommendation if there is a capacity to benefit from a safe supervised outdoor play area by a child under 18 in your household with either:

- ◆ a permanent and substantial physical disability;
- ◆ severe long term limiting illness;
- ◆ the severest forms of learning disabilities; or
- ◆ the severest forms of behaviour problems

A garden may be recommended for an adult in the following circumstances;;

- ◆ if they have a severe cognitive impairment that means they do not sense danger, are at risk of wandering and so need constant supervision;
- ◆ if they have a severe permanent and substantial disability or severe long term limiting illness and caring for children is causing concern such that their continued residence is at risk, or the stress of caring for them is exacerbating the health problems; or
- ◆ if they have a sensory impairment and/or a guide dog and they live alone or only with others with disabilities.

7.6.2 Extra space

The Health Advisors will normally only recommend that you need extra space if:

- ◆ you, or someone in your household, has either a permanent and substantial disability, or a severe long term limiting illness, or the severest form of learning disabilities, or the severest forms of behaviour problems **and** it is unreasonable for you to share a bedroom as it would seriously affect the sleep of those you would normally share with, to the severe detriment of their or your health;
- ◆ you are having health treatment at home that needs large machinery or a stock of health supplies to be stored e.g. you are having renal dialysis at home;
- ◆ you need a full time carer to provide support night and day;
- ◆ you have a permanent and substantial disability or long term limiting illness or severe learning disability and need additional space for specialist equipment; or
- ◆ you have a severe long-term limiting illness and sharing a bedroom will exacerbate your health problems e.g. you have an immune deficiency

7.6.3 Ground floor and lower floor levels in lifted blocks

The Health Advisors will normally recommend that you need ground floor accommodation if you have a permanent and substantial disability or severe long term limiting illness that means that your mobility or exercise tolerance is so severely restricted you cannot safely manage any stairs.

The Health Advisors will recommend that you need lower floor levels in lifted blocks if your mobility or exercise tolerance is highly restricted but you can safely manage a limited number of stairs.

7.6.4 Environment

By far the majority of the housing stock in Tower Hamlets is in blocks on estates. Some of these blocks are tower blocks, many are smaller blocks. Very little 'street' accommodation becomes available each year.

The decision as to whether an advertised home will meet your housing needs is best made by you, sometimes with help, and dependent on you being given information about the property so that you can make an informed decision.

The Health Advisors will only recommend a quieter environment if you have severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability where stress has been identified as a seriously exacerbating factor or you would be considered vulnerable living in a more active area.

7.6.5 Care and Support

If you need care because of your health problems, there are different ways in which support can be provided.

You could live with the person you are supporting (or who supports you). Or you each may want to have your own home, but move nearer to each other.

As you can choose to apply for advertised homes you should talk with the person you support (or who supports you) about the best solution to your support needs. You may want to consider both applying for homes in each other's areas to see who is successful first. Or it may be that one area is better for you both because it is near a particular doctor, or hospital, or other support.

The Health Advisors will only give preference to an application where care and support are an issue if your application meets the criteria to be given preference on health grounds and there is no one currently living with you who can reasonably provide the support you need.

8 Homes that may be offered first to certain groups of applicants

8.1 Designated accommodation

There are some homes that have been designated for specific groups of people, either because of age, disability or other defined criteria.

When this type of vacancy occurs it will be advertised with preference to those who meet the designated criteria. This will be specified in the advert and we will only let the property to an application from a household that meets all the designated criteria.

8.2 Homes with gardens, on the ground floor, or on lower floor levels in blocks with lifts

There is a large demand for homes on the ground floor, with gardens or on lower floor levels. Preference for this type of accommodation will be given to households that:

- ◆ the Health Advisors have recommended should live in this type of home;
- ◆ there is a duty to offer like-for-like accommodation, such as to those who need to move because their home is being demolished or who have an extenuating social or repair need to move.

8.3 Homes provided by RSLs with a specialist remit

There are Registered Social Landlords who provide specialist services to specific groups of people in the local community. This can be because these groups of people have been disadvantaged in the past or have special needs.

When one of these landlords has an available home it will be advertised only to those who meet the designated criteria. This may be specified in the advert or used when we come to decide who should be made the offer of the home. We will only let the property to an application from a household that meets all the criteria.

9 I have a need to move that is not included in the policy

There are times when you have to move for reasons that are above and beyond the usual reasons people need to move. These are so individual they cannot easily be defined.

There are other times when it is in the community's interest that a household is offered preference for housing.

It is not possible to list all the circumstances under which a discretionary priority award may be agreed.

The demand for housing stock in Tower Hamlets is such that even with a discretionary priority award you may have to wait a long time before we can help you with an alternative home. So, re-housing is a last resort when **all** other options have been explored but have proven unsuccessful. If you are a Council or RSL tenant then we will first try to find you a mutual exchange partner.

The examples given here are intended only as a guide. The list is not exhaustive and an award may not be made in every case where these circumstances apply. Each case will be individually considered based on the evidence available:

- ◆ if moving will mean a child or elder does not need to live in institutional care;
- ◆ if you are attending Court as a witness against someone accused of anti-social behaviour;
- ◆ if you are threatened with or are experiencing violence and it is no longer reasonable for you to live at home;
- ◆ if you are threatened with or are experiencing problems that mean it is no longer reasonable for you to live at home.

9.1 I think I have an extenuating need to move what should I do?

First, you should tell your landlord if you think there are extenuating reasons why you need to move. If you are not happy speaking with your landlord about this, you can ask for help from staff in the Lettings Team, One Stop Shop, Housing Office, legal or other voluntary advice centres in the Borough.

In most cases, reports on behalf of tenants will be co-ordinated by their Housing Officer or

equivalent. This will ensure that the staff managing the tenancy are aware of all issues affecting residents in their area.

If you are not a tenant, then a Lettings Sustainability Officer will be assigned to the investigation. Again, it is very important that you co-operate with the investigation because, if you do not, all the relevant information may not be available for us to use when making a decision.

You may ask someone else to make a request on your behalf. This may be a solicitor, a social worker, or other advocate. If a 3rd party makes a request, it will usually be referred to your Housing Officer or Lettings Sustainability Officer to investigate.

The officer managing your case will get information from all relevant sources and then submit it to the Lettings Sustainability Team.

The onus is on you to prove the extenuating or mitigating circumstances you feel justifies being considered for housing before other applicants on the housing list. Re-housing is the last resort when **all** other options have been explored but have proved unsuccessful. We will consider the reasons why you feel you cannot continue to live where you do now. We will also consider whether it is reasonable for you to live there, the support you have there and if there are actions that can reasonably be taken to help you to continue to live there.

We will normally not consider referrals on issues of health or overcrowding as these are already subject to priority consideration elsewhere in this policy.

Generally, housing management staff will prepare a report that gives full details of the reasons why a request for additional priority. This should include evidence from all relevant interested parties (such as the police, Victim Support, Social Services, schools, Anti Social Behaviour Control Unit, health professionals etc). This co-ordinating role is important as it ensures that local staff are aware of issues in their area.

A Lettings Sustainability Officer will be assigned the case when information is received from other sources and it is not appropriate for local staff to carry out the investigation.

We receive hundreds of requests each year to carry out assessments for priority on extenuating social grounds. The resources available to carry out these assessments are limited. Therefore, the

Lettings Sustainability Team will make an initial decision on whether or not your application should be referred to the Panel. You will be told the decision and if you disagree with it you may ask for a review as set out in Section 1.3.

9.2 If you fear violence

The Council's Homeless Service may carry out a statutory assessment of the Council's housing duty to you if you request re-housing because you fear actual or threatened violence. This is a statutory duty placed on the Council that cannot be discharged in any other way. This includes if you are experiencing any type of hate crime: domestic violence, racial harassment, or other harassment from whatever source. Their decision will include whether or not additional discretionary priority should be made to your housing application as described above.

We have a commitment to taking all legitimate action against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. This includes asking a Court to give us possession of the property. The aim is to ensure that you have a safe place to live and we will do all we reasonably can to secure this for you.

We will not give priority for housing to the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour unless there are overwhelming extenuating reasons to do so.

Where a referral is made to the Homeless Service, Homeless Officers will explain to you what will happen.

9.3 The Housing Management Panel

A panel of at least three officers, one of who will be a senior manager, will make all other decisions about this discretionary priority. Normally you will not be able to attend the Panel meeting, although in exceptional cases the Chair has discretion to agree to your attendance.

None of the officers on the Panel will have had anything to do with your case so they will make a decision based on the information they see about it. It is therefore important that you tell the officer who is investigating your case anything that will help to make a decision.

The Panel will sit once a month. If a priority is awarded, the Lettings Sustainability Team will write to you giving details of any conditions of the award. If it is decided that no priority will be given, or that more information is needed

before a decision can be made, then the officer investigating your case will write to you giving details.

In every case you will be contacted within five days of the Panel meeting with details of the decision, the reasons for it and any conditions attached to it.

9.4 What priority will be awarded to my application if I have a proven extenuating need to move?

There are two levels of award that can be made to your application:

9.4.1 Extenuating social need priority award

This is the usual award made by the Housing Management Panel. Where awarded, the application will be placed in group 2, the Community Priority Group. Your preference date will be the date your case was referred to the Panel.

Offers with this award will be made on a like-for-like basis, unless there are extenuating reasons why this should not be the case.

You will receive only one offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation with this additional priority. This means that if you refuse a suitable and reasonable offer then the award will be withdrawn.

It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available. The preference you have been given reflects an extenuating need for you to move. It should not be used as an opportunity to jump the housing queue or improve the type of home you have e.g. to a larger home or one on a lower floor level.

If you refuse a home that is offered to you any priority awarded to your application will be withdrawn. If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are extenuating reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.

The Lettings Sustainability Officer managing your case will review the priority awarded to your application every three months to confirm whether the award made to you continues to be justified. If they cannot confirm this then the award may be withdrawn and your application will revert to the status before the award was made. It is very important that you continue to

report anything that happens that may be relevant to your award.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within three months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

9.4.2 Emergency

This is the highest priority award and will be considered only in the most exceptional circumstances. Where awarded, the application will be placed in group 1, the Community Gain Group. Your preference date will be the date your case was referred to the Panel.

Offers with this award will be made on a like-for-like basis, unless there are extenuating reasons why this should not be the case.

You will receive only one offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation with this additional priority. This means that if you refuse a suitable and reasonable offer then the award will be withdrawn.

It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available. The preference you have been given reflects an extenuating need for you to move. It should not be used as an opportunity to jump the housing queue or improve the type of home you have e.g. to a larger home or one on a lower floor level.

If you refuse a home that is offered to you any priority awarded to your application will be withdrawn. If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are extenuating reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.

The Lettings Sustainability Officer managing your case will review the priority awarded to your application every month to confirm whether the award made to you continues to be justified. If they cannot confirm this then the award may be withdrawn and your application will revert to the status before the award was

made. It is very important that you continue to report anything that happens that may be relevant to your award.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within one month then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

9.5 When you have an extenuating need for housing because of the condition of your current home

When a surveyor employed by either the Council or partner landlord reports that it is not reasonable or possible for you to continue to occupy your home while repairs are being carried out, or an Environmental Health Officer says that a property is no longer fit for habitation, your application will be awarded an emergency priority and placed in group 1. The preference date will be the date the referral by the surveyor or Environmental Health Officer was made.

Offers with this award will be made on a like-for-like basis, unless there are extenuating reasons why this should not be the case.

If you have not accepted an offer of permanent alternative accommodation within 2 months of the award being agreed then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

You will be made only one offer of permanent alternative suitable and reasonable accommodation with this priority. If you refuse it then temporary accommodation will be secured for you for the duration of the repair works and you will be expected to move back to your home once the repairs are completed.

If we are not able to secure permanent alternative suitable and reasonable accommodation for you within 3 months of the award being agreed, or if it is not safe for you to continue to live in your current home, then temporary accommodation will be secured for you for the duration of the repair works. The priority award will be withdrawn and you will normally be expected to move back to your home once the repairs are completed.

9.6 Can I ask you to reconsider my case if I disagree with the Panel's decision?

If you disagree with any decision of the Housing Management Panel you can ask us to review it as set out in Section 1.3.

9.7 How long will it take for me to be housed if I am awarded additional priority?

We are not able to tell you how long you can expect to wait before an offer of alternative accommodation is made to you. This is dependent on the number of suitable available homes that become available and the number of other applicants who may have more priority than you.

10 Who else gets priority on the housing list?

10.1 Quota Groups

Listed below are the types of applicants that will be given preference because it is in the community's interest for them to be given additional housing priority.

To qualify for one of these groups, you must be otherwise eligible for the housing list according to the prevailing Lettings Policy. In all cases, it is for you and your sponsor to provide sufficient proof that you are eligible for a group.

Unless otherwise stated, there will be no time limit on the choices you can make when your application is in one of these groups.

You will receive only one offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation with this additional priority. This means that if you refuse a suitable and reasonable offer then the award will be withdrawn. If your application is otherwise eligible for the housing list it will be removed from the quota group and re-assessed for priority.

It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available.

If you do not attend a viewing, we will assume that you have refused the property unless there are extenuating reasons why you could not turn up and you could not tell us beforehand.

You can ask us to review the decisions to withdraw any priority award as set out Section 1.3.

Whilst we will consider every review on its merits, for a review to succeed there should be extenuating reasons why the property was not suitable for you or why it was not reasonable for us to make you the offer. We will consider whether you have chosen the property (either in response to an advert or if the property meets the choices you have told us about in the past), the circumstances that you have told us about justifying a discretionary award and the reasons why you feel the offer made was not suitable or reasonable.

10.1.1 Care Leavers

The Council's Social Services Leaving Care Team will sponsor you for housing priority.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 6 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

10.1.2 City and Tower Hamlets Zone (CATHZO)

The Council's RSL partner that administers this Rough Sleeper Initiative sponsors single sole applicants living in hostel accommodation for housing priority. You will be considered for bedsit or 1-bedroom properties only.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 12 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

Each year, we will aim to accept 50 applications to this scheme.

10.1.3 Intensive Community Care and Support (ICCS)

The Council's RSL partner that administers the ICCS scheme sponsors single people living in hostel accommodation for housing priority. You will be considered for bedsit or 1-bedroom properties only.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 12 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you

will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

Each year, we will aim to accept 10 applications to this scheme.

10.1.4 Foster Carers

The Council's Social Services Department will sponsor you for housing priority.

You will normally be considered for one additional bedroom to that needed by your immediate family.

10.1.5 Living in a decant block with a Council or partner landlord tenant

You will get priority if you have been living with a Council or partner landlord tenant for the previous 12 months as your only or principal home prior to a decant being declared to the property.

If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 6 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

When considering what is suitable and reasonable, you will be asked to confirm the areas of the Borough or types of property that you cannot live in. This is not the same as properties you do not want to live in and you will be asked to explain why you are not able to consider them. You will not be asked to live in an area where you are not safe.

We are not able to guarantee that we will be able to help you with re-housing before the tenant has to move. If you are still living with the tenant when they have to move you will be expected to make your own arrangements for housing and you may be able to continue with your housing list application from your new address.

10.1.6 Sons and Daughters

If you have been living with your parents for the previous five years as your only or principal home, and they are tenants of the Council or a partner landlord, and one of the following circumstances apply:

- ◆ your parents are registered on the housing list and their application has had awarded a health priority;

- ◆ you need no larger than a home with 1 bedroom and your parents are giving up a 4 bedroom home because they have been successful for the Cash Incentive Scheme;
- ◆ your parents' household (excluding you and your immediate family and anyone else who is not their immediate family) is living in overcrowded conditions lacking three or more bedrooms.

We cannot guarantee that you will be offered housing before your parents move. If you are living with them when they move you will be expected to make your own arrangements. If they do not give their landlord vacant possession they may be asked to return any Cash Incentive Grant. If your parents fail to move once you do then, unless there are extenuating circumstances, your landlord will seek possession of your new home.

10.1.7 Key Workers

There are many public sector jobs where it is very hard to recruit and retain essential staff. If you are employed full or part time on a permanent contract within the Local Authority area as one of the following you will be considered for inclusion in a quota group:

- ◆ ambulance staff who are paramedics;
- ◆ fully qualified nurses working in the Borough's NHS hospitals;
- ◆ fire fighters and police officers stationed in the Borough;
- ◆ teachers working in the Borough's LEA maintained schools

This scheme aims to help those who do not currently have a social tenancy and/or do not currently live within a reasonable distance of their workplace.

There is a huge shortage of homes with four or more bedrooms. Therefore if your household needs this size of accommodation you will not normally be considered for this priority.

There are a small number of designated 'key worker' blocks and you will be able to apply for this accommodation in line with the prevailing lettings policy.

Some of the housing providers in the Borough offer shared homes. The Council and partner landlord will only offer you this type of home if you tell them that you would be interested in it, or if there are a number of key workers who want to share together and make a joint application.

Each year, we will aim to accept 50 applications to this scheme.

10.1.8 Retiring from tied accommodation

If you have been an employee of the Council or partner landlord and have been living in accommodation provided by them for the better performance of your duties for at least the previous five years and you are retiring due to age or health grounds.

10.1.9 Supported Housing Move-On

If you are living in supported housing provided by a RSL and you no longer require the specialist housing services provided with your tenancy.

You will have to be sponsored for housing preference by the Council's Social Services Department and your landlord.

Each year, we will aim to accept 20 applications to this scheme.

11 Decants

11.1 What happens if a decision is made to refurbish, redevelop or demolish my home, and I have to move?

If you are a Council or partner landlord tenant and your landlord makes a decision that you have to move then we will do our best to ensure that you and your family are re-housed to a home that you will be happy in.

This process is called 'decanting'. It means that a property has to be empty for works to take place or a decision to demolish the property has been made. This usually happens only after residents have been asked for their views or when there has been an emergency leaving properties unsafe.

Unless otherwise stated here, the prevailing lettings policy will apply to all applicants.

You will be told the date that your home has to be empty by. This is called the 'clearance date'.

11.2 What happens if my home has to be decanted?

Your landlord will usually talk to you about all the re-housing options available to you and your family.

Some schemes may involve new homes being built. Others will mean you have the right to return to your old home once works are finished. You may wish to move to another part of the Borough or consider home ownership. We will try to help you make an informed decision about the best choices for your family.

You will be asked to fill in a re-housing application form. If anyone in your household has special housing needs because of health problems you will also have to fill in a housing health form.

11.3 Will I be offered new homes being built?

Many decant schemes include new homes being built to replace those being demolished. The new homes will usually be owned by a RSL, not the Council. You may be offered a tenancy with the new landlord.

You will be told at the beginning of a decant scheme whether or not new homes are being built. If they are, then you may be given the

choice of them. We will try to develop a new home that meets your family's housing needs but we cannot promise that in every case it will be possible.

If more tenants want new homes than are being built or more than one household wants a single plot, preference will be decided as follows:

- ◆ first to those with an assessed health need for the type of home, then to;
- ◆ the household who has the earliest tenancy date at their current home

11.4 What happens if I have an "option to return"?

Some regeneration schemes mean that your current home will be refurbished. Sometimes your home will be demolished. In either case you may be given an option to return to the new properties built on the site of your demolished block or to your old home once works to it have been completed.

You will be given a written promise of the option to return and the type of new home that will be available to you. Your landlord will find a temporary home for you to live in until you can return permanently.

Wherever possible the temporary home will be suitable for your family's housing needs. However, if we cannot find a property that meets all your housing needs you may have to move to a home that is like-for-like with the home you are leaving.

You may be in a temporary home for some time, maybe years if a new home is being built. If you change your mind and want to stay in the temporary home permanently, wherever it is reasonable for you to do so we will agree.

11.5 Do I have to move to new homes being built to replace my demolished home?

Wherever possible you will be given the choice of where you want to move to. However, you will be given a date by which you have to make a final decision about whether or not you want to move to new homes being built. This is to ensure that a home will be available for you and choices about that home (such as layout, colours, fittings or adaptations) can be made whilst it is being built.

If you do not want to move to new homes being built then your application will be put in group 1, community gain. You can then apply for any vacant properties that are advertised.

Your preference date will be the clearance date your landlord has decided is necessary to have the properties empty. Preference will then be decided as set out in the prevailing lettings policies

11.6 What happens if I do not apply for a new home or no home that I want is advertised before the clearance date?

Whilst we will try to help you find a new home that meets all of your choices it may not be possible. It is important that you make an informed decision about the type of homes that will become available.

If we cannot identify a home you want then it may be necessary to serve a legal Notice. This is a legal document that allows your landlord to ask a Court to instruct you to leave your home. You will not be homeless if this happens, as we will have to assure the Court that we have suitable alternative accommodation available for you to move in to. This may be like-for-like the property you are leaving.

This is always a last resort when you have not accepted any of the other housing options available to you. We have to do this to ensure that a decant scheme can proceed so protecting the interest and rights of other residents.

11.7 If my home is being decanted how many homes can I apply for?

Until you accept an offer of re-housing you can continue to apply for any homes that interest you up until six months before the decant scheme's clearance date.

If you have not moved by this date, then you will be made an offer of the next property that we consider reasonable to meet the minimum housing needs of your family. If you do not accept it then we may ask a Court to instruct you to move as described above.

If you are successful for an advertised vacancy and it is suitable and reasonable your landlord will expect you to move to it. If you do not and a legal Notice has been served (as described above) either the property will be held for you or you will be made an offer of the next

property that we consider reasonable to meet the minimum needs of your family. If you still do not move then your landlord may ask a Court to instruct you to move.

11.8 What size home can I apply for?

You can apply for the size of home that meets the needs of your household, as described above in this policy booklet.

However, if you currently live in a home that is larger than that standard you can apply for a home that has one bedroom larger than the standard to a maximum of the same size as your current home. If you choose to apply for a larger home then it must be a flat or maisonette on the same floor level as you are now living. For example if you live in a 3 bedroom flat on the 4th floor and you need a 1 bedroom home you can apply for a 1 bedroom property on any floor level or a 2 bedroom flat or maisonette on the 4th floor or above.

There is a shortage of homes with four or more bedrooms so you will only be considered for this size home if you need it.

If you choose to move to new homes being built you will only be considered for the size of home that meets the needs of your household as set out in Section 5.1.

If you are a Council tenant and you agree to move to a smaller home you will be entitled to the incentive payments that are available as set out in Section 6.3.

If, during the course of the decant, a separate re-housing application is received from your address that has been awarded additional priority because of the decant (e.g. if your son or daughter wish to be re-housed independently) you will only be able to apply for a home the size of your own assessed need.

11.9 Will I get help with the cost of moving?

If you have been living in the property for at least 12 months before a decant is agreed then a 'Home Loss' payment will be made. The Government, not your landlord, has decided that this should be £3800. The Home Loss payment is made per tenancy and not per tenant. This means that where there is a joint tenancy of two or more people only one payment of £3800 will be made.

Your landlord will also pay reasonable removal expenses. This is for things such as the cost of hiring a removal van; disconnection and reconnection of services such as gas, electricity and your telephone; hiring a plumber to connect your washing machine and an electrician or engineer to move your cooker. You should always use properly qualified people and must ensure that a CORGI registered fitter carries out any works to your gas supply.

There is a maximum amount that will be paid. When your landlord visits to talk to you about the decant, they will tell you how much you can claim. You will be asked to provide receipts that show that you have paid for the service. In some cases your landlord may be able to give you some of the money before you move if you would otherwise have difficulty paying for services at the time of moving.

If you owe your landlord money, such as rent arrears, they may deduct it from any Home Loss or expense payments you claim. If the money you owe is more than you can claim you will be expected to make an agreement to pay the outstanding amount back.

11.10 What happens to other people who won't be moving with me? Will they get help finding a home?

Anyone who is not your immediate family, as defined above, will have to register separately for housing unless your landlord agrees otherwise

To qualify for the quota group the person must be able to prove that they were living with you in the property as their only or principal home continuously for at least 12 months before the decant scheme was agreed.

They must be eligible to be on the housing list. Their application will be placed in the priority Community Group with a preference date the same as the date the decant was agreed. They can then apply for advertised vacancies.

If they refuse a home that is offered to them their priority will be withdrawn. If they do not attend a viewing, we will assume that they have refused the property unless there are extenuating reasons why they could not turn up and could not tell us beforehand.

They can ask us to review the decisions to withdraw any priority award.

We will try to ensure that they have at least one offer before you have to move, but we cannot

promise that this will happen. If they are still living with you when you are moving they will be expected to leave the property when you do and make their own arrangements for housing.

You have to give your landlord vacant possession of your home as described above. If you do not give vacant possession your Home Loss payment may be withheld and your new home may not be available to you.

Anyone who does not qualify for this additional preference may apply for housing in the usual way but will be expected to leave the property when you do and make his or her own arrangements for housing.

11.11 I own a home that is included in a decant scheme. Will I be re-housed?

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, we will not consider you for housing priority if you are a homeowner.

We may be able to help you find shared ownership or other low cost home ownership opportunities, but once your landlord has negotiated to buy back your home, you will be expected to make your own arrangements for housing.

On the exceptional occasions that it is agreed a homeowner is to be considered for housing priority, they will be included on lists for all reasonable vacant properties that become available.

If you are successful for a property that your landlord thinks is reasonable and then refuse to move to it, the property will be held whilst your landlord asks a Court to instruct you to move.

If you do not apply for a property then you will be made an offer of the next available property that your landlord considers reasonable to meet the minimum needs of your family and this will be held whilst your landlord asks a Court to instruct you to move.

If you have not moved within one month of the completion date of your property being bought back then you will be made an offer of the next property that your landlord considers reasonable to meet the minimum housing needs of your family. If you do not accept it then your landlord may ask a Court to instruct you to move, as described above.

Useful Information

Lettings Service

LBTH, Block C, Great Eastern Enterprise, 3 Millharbour, London E14 9XP ☎ 020 7364 5000

For enquiries regarding:

- Medicals
- Management Awards
- Key Workers Scheme
- CATHZO
- applicants moving **to** Tower Hamlets

Please ask the switchboard for the Lettings Client Support Team

For enquiries regarding:

- Registration of Housing List applications -Transfers & Waiting List
- HOMESWAP
- Home Visits – Waiting List applicants only
- Offers of Accommodation

Please ask the switchboard for the Lettings Customer Services Team

For enquiries regarding:

- Adverts produced for Homeseekers
- Cash Incentive Scheme
- LAWNS - Making the Break....Moving Away from London Scheme
- Performance monitoring

Please ask the switchboard for the Lettings Marketing & Development Team

One Stop Shops

For enquiries regarding Council services:

Isle of Dogs/South Poplar One Stop Shop

Jack Dash House
2 Lawn House Close
London E14 9YQ

☎ 020 7364 6111

Bethnal Green One Stop Shop

255-279 Cambridge Heath Road
London E2 0HQ

☎ 020 7364 3696

Stepney/Wapping One Stop Shop

Cheviot House
227-233 Commercial Road
London E1 2BU

☎ 020 7364 2714

Bow/North Poplar One Stop Shop

1 Gladstone Place
London E3 5ES

☎ 020 8980 9212

For additional information on Tower Hamlets you can visit the following websites:

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

www.upmystreet.com

Homeless Services

Homeless Services

Block B
3 Millharbour
London E14 9XP

☎ 020 7364 7418

Repairs

For enquiries regarding:

Repairs - Council tenants *only*

Please contact the Repairs Call Centre on

☎ 0800 3761637

Partner Landlords

These share the Council's Common Housing List

Bethnal Green & Victoria Park Housing Association

410 Mile End Road
London, E3 4BP

☎ 020 8709 4300

East End Homes

Tayside House
31 Pepper Street
London E14 9RP

☎ 020 7517 4700

LABO Housing

595-597 Commercial Road
London E1 0HJ

☎ 020 7790 9955

Poplar HARCA

167a East India Dock Road
London E14 0EA

☎ 020 7510 0500

Southern Housing Group

22 Cowper Street
London EC2A 4AP

☎ 020 7251 6091

Spitalfields Housing Association Ltd

78 Quaker Street
London E1 6SW

☎ 020 7392 5406

Swan Housing Association

Cygnets House
10 Chrisp Street
London E14 6LL

☎ 020 7510 9960

Tower Hamlets Community Housing

16 Deancross Street
London E1 2QA

☎ 020 7780 3070

If you have any comments on this booklet please e-mail us:
housing.publicationscomment@towerhamlets.gov.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This information can also be made available in
large print and on audio tape. Please ring
☎ 020 7364 2834 to get a copy in either format.



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Promoting racial equality
Getting closer to communities
2004-2005
Supporting Social Care Workers
2003-2004
Community Cohesion

Somali

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Vietnamese

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Bengali

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Cantonese

如果你想索取此册的中文译本，請 ☎ 020 7364 2834

Urdu
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