



HILLINGDON
LONDON

London Borough of Hillingdon
Draft Social Housing Allocation Policy
June 2011

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the Council's priorities for how Hillingdon's social housing is used, and the guidelines which determine entitlement and eligibility to that housing for Hillingdon residents. The document explains what help certain groups can get from the council to meet their housing needs and sets out the processes through which the Council allocates council homes and makes nominations for housing to Registered Providers (RPs).

Hillingdon Council receives many enquiries every year from people looking to rent a home in the borough. There are around 8,000 households on Hillingdon's housing register at any time and each year only around 600-700 of these households are rehoused into social rented housing.

Because Hillingdon only has a limited amount of social housing available to rent we have set up a system which allows us to prioritise the needs and requirements of the households on the housing register and manage lettings effectively in line with the Council's own objectives. The rules of this system come from the Allocations Policy, which is set out below.

1.1 Aims of the allocation policy:

Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 requires all local authorities to have and to publish an allocation scheme which sets out how they coordinate access to Council and RSL housing stock and determines local priorities in allocating housing.

Hillingdon's Allocation policy reflects the council's vision of putting our residents first and supports our aim of working with partners to deliver decent affordable housing in both the public and private sectors.

The council is committed to preventing homelessness and our allocations policy focuses on supporting residents to actively pursue suitable alternatives to avoid becoming homeless.

Through this review of the allocations policy the council has sought to create and maintain mixed and sustainable communities, to offer help and support to some of the most vulnerable groups in the borough, to focus local resources on delivering excellent services for local people and to provide some realistic options for working households.

The policy also seeks to reflect the council's intention to support and reward those residents who make a positive contribution to their community, and to actively discourage households from perpetrating negative behaviour which could have a detrimental impact on the community in which they live.

1.2 Housing in Hillingdon

Hillingdon is a very popular place to live, and the quality and type of our social rented accommodation means that most Hillingdon residents who are on the housing register are unwilling to move outside of the borough even though this may help them to access housing which meets their needs more quickly.

Of the approximately 8,000 households waiting to be rehoused on the housing register, over 50% of them will never be offered a social housing tenancy however long they wait. Hillingdon is committed to supporting these households to look at the other options available to them, and to making sure everyone joining our housing register is given clear and accurate information to enable them to make informed choices about their housing options.

In Hillingdon, people who apply for housing through the council are divided into two main groups:

- 1) **Transfers** are existing Council and Housing Association tenants who want to move to another council or housing association tenancy.
- 2) **Home Seekers** are households who are not currently social housing tenants but who want to be housed in a property owned by us, or one of our partners. Households living in temporary accommodation are included in this group.

1.3 Eligibility to join the Housing Register:

Most Hillingdon residents can join our Housing Register, even though their chances of being re-housed are very small if they don't fit within the Council's priority groups.

Each person applying to join the register is assessed individually at the point of application and at each review or verification. If at any time an applicant or a household member ceases to be eligible they will be removed from the housing register immediately.

There are a number of defined groups who are not eligible to register with the council for housing. Ineligible groups fall into two types as follows:

1.3.1. Not Eligible by reason of immigration status.

The Secretary of state has determined that the following groups are not eligible to access social housing because of their immigration status:

- 1) A person registered with the Home Office as an asylum seeker
- 2) A visitor to this country (including an overseas student) who has limited leave to enter or remain in the UK granted on the basis that he or she will not have a recourse to public funds
- 3) A person who has valid leave to enter or remain in the UK which includes a condition there will be no recourse to public funds
- 4) A person who has a valid leave to remain in the UK which carries no limitation or condition and who is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area
- 5) A sponsored person who has been in this country less than 5 years (from date of entry or date of sponsorship, whichever is the later) and whose sponsor(s) is still alive.
- 6) A person who is a national of a EU country that is subject to immigration control. (see below for eligibility as an EU national)
- 7) A person who is a national of a non EEA country that has ratified the ECSMA and/or the ESC but is not lawfully present in the UK (i.e. does not have leave to enter or remain or is an asylum seeker with a temporary admission) and/or is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area
- 8) A person who is in the UK illegally or who has overstayed his/her leave to remain

1.3.2 Not eligible due to household's behaviour or actions.

- 1) Any applicant or member of their household who has perpetrated serious anti-social behaviour where either a possession order is being sought or has been obtained, or where the antisocial behaviour is of a level which would warrant eviction.

- 2) Any applicant or member of their household who has assaulted a member of staff and an injunction is being sought or has been obtained.
- 3) Any applicant or member of their household who has given false or misleading information on their housing application, or has withheld information that has been reasonably requested.
- 4) Any applicant who owes four weeks or more gross rent to either the council or a registered provider, who has not made an agreement to repay and complied with the repayment agreement for a minimum of 6 months.
- 5) Any household members who are in full time education and studying away from home are excluded from joining the application for the duration of their study.

1.4 Choice Based Lettings

Households who are eligible to join the housing register are required to use our choice based letting scheme (locata) to obtain a new home. Only in very limited circumstances will the Council directly allocate a property to a household.

The locata choice based lettings scheme is operated in partnership with the West London boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow and Hounslow and key RSLs based in the West London area.

All applicants to the housing register are placed in date order within a priority band according to their particular need for housing. Vacant properties are advertised online at www.locata.org.uk and applicants can bid for properties advertised by the local authority or RSL with whom they are registered. After verification checks are carried out, the advertised properties are offered to the applicant with the highest priority band and date who has placed a bid. Around 10% of all properties advertised within the West London region are let on a cross-borough basis. This means that an applicant from any of the registers or either the partner local authorities or RSLs can bid for these properties.

2. Housing Options in Hillingdon.

Because the number of people looking for a home in Hillingdon far outstrips the supply of available properties, we encourage all households to carefully consider any housing options available which could meet their housing need.

Hillingdon's housing options team offers individualised advice to each person that contacts us. We aim to assist Hillingdon's residents in the manner which best meets their needs. This could be through phone advice, a home visit, online tailored information, or an appointment at our offices.

The options that are relevant to most people include:

- 1) **Private Rented Accommodation:** Privately rented housing is the most widely available housing option. The advantages of renting privately are that it is available in most areas of the country – either in Hillingdon or further afield. The Council offers a range of useful information and tips on where to look for a new home, which are available at <http://www.locata.org.uk/hillingdon/> . If you fall within one of the council's priority groups we may also be able to refer you to one of our partners working in the private sector who can help you find a new home.
- 2) **Tied accommodation:** Finding work or starting to train for a recognised qualification can greatly improve your housing options. Our advisors can put you in touch with agencies working in Hillingdon that will help you get into work, help you to look for work opportunities that offer tied accommodation and provide you with information, advice and guidance about studying for training or qualifications.
- 3) **Low Cost Home Ownership:** The council makes sure that every development of new homes built in Hillingdon includes a percentage which are for sale through shared ownership or low-cost home ownership. These homes are available to any household with a combined income under £60k per year.
<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=7102>
- 4) **Moves out of London:** Moving to an area of the country where properties are more freely available. Schemes available to help with this include HomeStart and Seaside & Country Homes. [web address/link](#).
- 5) **Maintaining your current home:** Our Housing Needs service can carry out individual assessments of your household and your home and advise you how best to keep the accommodation you already have. This could include helping you make better use of space, asking some household members to leave to reduce overcrowding, adapting your home to make it more accessible, helping you to deal with any disrepair issues, or helping you to negotiate with a landlord or mortgage lender.
- 6) **Mutual exchange:** Social housing tenants can register on Homeswapper to find details of other households who they may be able to swap homes with.
<http://www.homeswapper.co.uk/>

If you are already homeless or think you may be going to lose your home you should contact our housing options team as soon as possible. We may be able to help you to keep your current home, at least for long enough to enable you to find somewhere new to live. If you do become homeless you may have to wait many years and move several times in temporary accommodation before you obtain settled accommodation.

3.0 Hillingdon's Housing Priorities:

LB Hillingdon is committed to helping local people to find and maintain reasonable settled accommodation and to manage the council's own housing stock effectively and in line with local priorities.

3.1 Reasonable preference:

Hillingdon Council is required by law to determine the relative priority that different housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important when, as is the case in Hillingdon, the demand for social housing is greater than the availability of homes. The Housing Act 1996 contains the requirements our Government has placed on local authorities to determine how they prioritise who they allocate homes to. These standards give what is known as "reasonable preference" to certain groups. The main groups of households that we are required by law to give reasonable preference to include:

1. People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing, or who are otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions,
2. People who need to move on either medical or social welfare grounds, including needs relating to a disability,
3. People who are homeless as defined by the Housing Act 1996, part VII,
4. People who are owed a duty under the housing act 1996 or the Housing Act 1985 under certain specific sections: HA 1996 =part VII sections 190, 193(2) or 195(2) under section 65(2) of the 1985 act.
5. People who will suffer hardship if they are unable to move to a particular locality or district.

Details of the priority bands awarded to these groups under reasonable preference and key features of each category are contained within the summary table on pages 15 – 25.

3.2 Local preference:

Alongside the reasonable preference criteria, Hillingdon Council has a number of local priorities for how social housing should be allocated. Hillingdon is committed to driving up our resident's aspirations and creating a true borough of opportunity, and the local housing priorities we have set reflect this. Hillingdon awards additional priority to certain groups in housing need who also meet the Council's local priorities. These groups are:

1. Households living in social rented accommodation which is larger than the household size requires and which could be used by a family in housing need,
2. Households living in social rented accommodation which is suitable for disabled persons and could be let to a household in need of that accommodation,
3. Households where one or more adult is in secure employment,
4. Households that contribute to the community through volunteer work.
5. Childless couples.
6. People who have served in the British armed forces,
7. People with a local connection to Hillingdon of 10 years or more.

For the purposes of awarding local preference Hillingdon Council has defined housing need as:

1. People who the council assesses as living in housing which is not affordable - this is typically where your income is less than a reasonable cost of living for a household of that size living in this borough.
2. People living in unsettled or insecure housing.

The council will assess each case on an individual basis based on the entire circumstances of the household. Typical examples of circumstances which we would consider as unsettled or insecure housing include: households which include children which are lodging on a short term basis with family/friends, households living in “tied” accommodation or other housing which is linked to employment, households with school age children who have held tenancies and moved house 3 or more times within the last 24 months, other households who have held tenancies and moved house more than 4 times within the last 24 months.

Further details of the categories and priority bands awarded are contained within the summary table on pages 17 – 27.

Whilst we cannot exclude people who are not Hillingdon residents from joining our register, we award these households less priority than those who are Hillingdon residents. All out of borough applicants are awarded a Band D (no priority) unless we agree that they have a specific need relating to their housing which can only be met by the household coming to live in social housing in the borough of Hillingdon.

3.3 Annual lettings plan:

In order to ensure that local housing needs are met and the allocations process is clear and transparent to local residents the Council will publish an annual lettings plan setting out the ratio by which housing will be allocated to certain groups. The annual lettings plan will run alongside reasonable and local preference priorities and works by grouping applicants to the housing register into 1 or more categories according to their circumstances. Each year the council will determine in advance the percentage of total lettings to be allocated to each of these categories in order to reflect local needs. Within each group the priority banding and date system will be used as standard to determine the order within which applicants who bid for properties are offered accommodation.

Examples of group types are:

1. Homeless households
2. Households freeing up supported or residential accommodation
3. Overcrowded households
4. Under occupying households
5. Transfer tenants
6. Need to move on medical grounds.

4. Applying to join Hillingdon's housing register:

Hillingdon residents can apply to join the housing register through the Locata website at www.locata.org.uk.

People who live in the borough of another LOCATA partner who want to move to Hillingdon must either apply to their own authority or housing provider and bid cross borough to obtain a home in Hillingdon or can apply directly with Hillingdon as an out of borough applicant. It will take up to 14 days from the date that a completed application and all supporting evidence is received for it to be processed and the applicant's banding confirmed. Applications received from people over 60 will be assessed and processed within 7 days of receipt of the application and all supporting evidence.

4.1 Tackling Housing Fraud:

Hillingdon Council is committed to dealing decisively with any fraud, misappropriation or theft of its assets or services. Where our initial assessment of a household's circumstances indicates that they may fit into one of the priority groups for housing we carry out further checks to make sure that we only include household members who are eligible to be on the housing register. Part of these checks involves cross referencing information provided by applicants when they apply to the register with other data the Council holds, including information on housing and council tax benefit and the electoral roll.

4.2 Household Members

4.2.1. Who can be added to an application:

We will include to the application any household member who was part of the household at the point of registration and is still living in the household.

We can also add some persons to an application after it has been registered. Only certain groups are eligible for this as follows:

1. Partners, spouses or civil partners can be added to the application upon request of the main applicant.
2. Children who have been born since the registration date, or other children aged under 18 where it is proved that the main applicant is the sole legal guardian and that there is no other available legal guardian who could reasonably accommodate the children.
3. Dependent relatives who have joined the household because they are unable to live independently and there are no other suitable options available to accommodate them.
4. Non Dependent children or direct relatives who have been in residence with the household since the date of application or who are returning from education, or who could reasonably be expected to live in the family home.
5. Live-in carers where an applicant is confirmed to have an essential need for a carer and this is agreed by the housing needs service.
6. In some situations family members who do not have recourse to public funds can be added to existing applications in order that they are rehoused as part of the family group; however these persons cannot apply for housing in their own right or access public funds to pay for their accommodation. All such cases will be checked with the home office prior to adding them to an existing application.

4.2.2 Who cannot be added to an application:

1. Non dependant adults cannot be added to an application after the date of the original application.
2. Friends or visitors will not be considered as part of the household and so will not be added to an application after it has been made.

4.2.3 Previously excluded applicants:

Where a household has previously applied to the housing register but was not eligible or was excluded from applying, the council will only allow that person to make a new application in certain circumstances:

1. Household members whose immigration status has changed,
2. Household members who were originally excluded or evicted for antisocial behaviour must be able to demonstrate good behaviour on behalf of the whole household for at least one year,
3. Household members who knowingly gave false or misleading information or withheld information that was reasonably requested where they are making a new claim using only accurate and truthful information and where it is at least 12 months since the previous application.

4.3 Reviews of the Register

In order to ensure that council resources are used effectively and give all housing register applicants a clear understanding of whether they are likely to be housed into social rented accommodation, the Council regularly reviews the housing register to update the information we hold and remove any ineligible or inactive applicants.

4.3.1 Individual review – change in eligibility:

Individual housing register applications are reviewed by housing advisors when they apply and in future when any work is done on an application. When an individual case is reviewed, Hillingdon will remove any household members who are not eligible or who do not meet our set criteria, which are as follows:

1. Household members who have never been or cease to be an eligible person,
2. Household members who have or should be excluded from the register because they do not meet the council's eligibility criteria,
3. Homeless households who do not actively bid for property and/or who refuse 1 reasonable offer of settled accommodation,
4. Household members who do not re-register their application online every 12 months.
5. Household members who do not provide the required documents we need to verify their application (e.g. proof of identity for each household member, proof of address, any other supporting documents they are relying on in their application within set timescales (14 days).
6. Household members who do not provide the information required to verify them for a property allocation within the set timescale (24 hours).
7. Household members who ask to withdraw their application from the housing register.
8. Household members who die.
9. Household members whose eligibility for housing cannot be established, or whose circumstances have changed since their last housing assessment and they have not updated these (e.g. inaccurate contact numbers or address).

4.3.2 Change of circumstances:

Each time an applicant logs on to locata to place a bid they are asked whether anything about their application has changed and to update their contact details. It is important that the Council and other housing providers have applicant's correct contact details so they can be contacted about properties they bid for.

Where a household's circumstances have changed, it is their responsibility to make an appointment to see a housing advisor to tell us about the change and to enable us to check any supporting evidence they have to provide. If during the course of carrying out other checks to applications we find that someone's circumstances have changed and they have not informed us we will suspend the household from bidding until the application is reviewed and we are satisfied all details are correct.

4.3.3 Annual Review:

Each year in Q4 we audit the housing register to identify households who have not logged on to the locata website in the last 12 months. This helps us to identify any households who are not actively making use of choice based lettings to find suitable housing. Any households who have logged on within the last year are expected to have updated their circumstances as set out in 4.3.2.

Any households that have not logged on are contacted directly by email, telephone, or letter to establish whether there is any change in their circumstances. Any cases with a change are made an appointment to see a housing advisor to tell us about the change and to allow us to check any supporting evidence they have to provide.

Any households who do not take these steps within 14 days of our contacting them will have their application cancelled.

4.4 Reinstating a cancelled application:

Sometimes applications are cancelled where the household has a valid reason for not providing the information the Council has asked for or not responding to our requests. In cases where a household's application has been cancelled, as long as the applicant contacts us within three months of the date of the cancellation we will usually reinstate them to the housing register. To arrange for reinstatement the applicant must make an appointment to see a housing advisor at which they must tell us about any changes to their household and provide us with proof of address and any other supporting evidence we need. If they have moved home they will also need to provide proof of their new address.

We will reassess the banding and priority date if there is any change in a household's circumstances at the point of review.

If an application is cancelled but the household does not contact us about this until after 3 months from the date of cancellation we will not reinstate the application. If the household still wants to apply for social rented housing they will have to make a new application to the housing register and a new banding and priority date will be given.

4.5 Appealing a decision to cancel an application:

Where a household's Housing Register application has been cancelled they can ask for a review of the decision to cancel the application.

The review request must be made within 21 days of the date of the cancellation. All reviews are carried out by an independent officer within the Council and will be concluded within 56 days of the date the review was requested.

5. Assessment of Need and Determining Priority

5.1 Priority Bands

Hillingdon council uses a choice based lettings system (locata) which is described in section 1.4 of this policy to manage its social rented lettings.

The system works by allocating each application a priority band according to the urgency of their housing need.

There are four priority bands, which are as follows:

- | | |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Band A | This is the highest priority band and is only awarded to households with an emergency and very severe housing need. |
| Band B | This is the second highest band and is awarded to households with an urgent need to move |
| Band C | This is the third band, and the lowest band awarded to households with an identified housing need. This band is awarded to all households within the reasonable preference categories (section 3.1). |
| Band D | This is the lowest band and is awarded to all other applicants. This band means that the Council does not consider the household to have any priority for re-housing. |

5.2 Priority Dates:

Because there are many households within each priority band, Hillingdon ranks the households within each band in date order. This process allows us to assess each household's priority for rehousing not only on the level of need but also on how long they have been in need for. Using this system each household's priority increases with time and a new applicant will not normally overtake an existing applicant within a priority band.

This system is called the priority date and is awarded either on the date of the original application, on the date the application is reassessed due to change in circumstances or on the date of a banding change.

Where a household already on the housing register is assisted into alternative accommodation by our housing needs team the household must submit a change of circumstances as per section 4.3.2 above within the prescribed timescales or their application will be closed.

5.2.1 Moving up or down a Band:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moving up | The priority date is the date the higher priority is awarded. |
| Moving Down | The priority date becomes either the date that applied previously when the household was in the same band they have moved to OR to any earlier date when they were in a higher band. The principle is that when moving down a priority band the household will be awarded the earliest date that they have been in a low band. |

5.2.2 Examples of priority date system:

Example 1	Priority Date
Household applies to register in January and is awarded band D	January
In February household is awarded band B	February
In March household is awarded band A	March
In April household is downgraded to band C	February

Example 2	Priority Date
Member applies to register in January and is awarded band C	January
In February member is awarded band A	February
In April member is downgraded to band B	February

Example 3	Priority Date
Member applies to register for sheltered accommodation in January and is awarded band C	January
In February member changes his mind and wants one bed non-sheltered and is downgraded to band D	January
In April member is awarded medical priority – band C	April
In May member is awarded urgent medical priority band B	May
In June medical priority reduced again – band C	April
In June member is awarded emergency medical priority – band A	June
In July medical need disappears – band D	January
In August new medical assessment – band B	August

5.3 Summary Table of Priority Band and Date Categories:

- Cases considered by the Social Welfare panel (although it is expected that most of these cases would be approved for direct allocation at the time this priority is awarded)

Band A				
Case Type		Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.	Band	Priority Date
Tenants	Home Seekers			
Emergency medical	Emergency medical	<p>1. Emergency banding is granted only in exceptional circumstances, when the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has a life-threatening condition, which is seriously affected by their current housing.</p> <p>2. Emergency banding will also be given to hospital bed-blockers i.e. applicant occupying hospital bed because they cannot return to their previous accommodation because it is unsuitable for medical reasons.</p>	A	Date approved as emergency
Management Transfer (e.g. emergency harassment, domestic violence)	Reciprocal agreement for tenants of RSLs or other local authorities.	<p>Agreed in exceptional circumstances due to significant and insurmountable problems associated with the tenant's occupation of a dwelling and there is imminent personal risk to the tenant or their family if they remain in the dwelling.</p> <p>Time limited to 3 months – reviewed/extended in exceptional circumstances only.</p>	A	Date approved as emergency
	Ex-service tenants	<p>Ex-service tenants e.g. Caretakers or sheltered wardens who have to leave their home on retirement, redundancy or redeployment, where the Council has a contractual obligation to rehouse. The Policy applies to dependants of service tenants in the event of the applicant's death.</p> <p>Time limited to 3 months– reviewed/extended in exceptional circumstances only.</p>	A	Date informed of retirement, redundancy or redeployment by personnel.

Permanent Decants		Where the property is imminently required (within 3 months) for essential works and the tenant will not be returning (e.g. development schemes) Time limited to 3 months.	A	Date agreed move is urgent
Enable fostering/ adoption	Enable fostering/ adoption	Where agreement has been reached to provide permanent accommodation on recommendation of Social Services and the current accommodation is not large enough or would cause overcrowding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each case to be considered by Severe Social Hardship Panel for confirmation. ▪ Time limited for 6 months – reviewed/extended in exceptional circumstances only. 	A	Date that the adoption or fostering is agreed.
Release adapted property or otherwise make best use of adapted stock.		At the authority's discretion where there is an unmet need for the property occupied e.g. tenant does not require DSL1 walk-in shower and/or wheelchair-accessible features OR Where current property needs major adaptations and it is in the Council's interest for the tenant to move	A	Date application registered (or occupant with disability deceased/moved out, if later)
	Homeless households owed main duty by Hillingdon* under s.193 of the 1996 Act or s. 65 of the 1985 Act & placed in temporary accommodation	Landlord wants property back AND the council cannot find alternative suitable temporary accommodation OR Property not suitable to meet applicant's or a member of the applicant's household's needs AND the only prospect of meeting them is in permanent accommodation (e.g. where they have obtained employment and are experiencing severe financial hardship/ medical or disability reasons/ harassment/ violence or disrepair)	A	Date on which it is agreed that person is priority for move-on

		<p>(*Provided that Hillingdon has not referred to another authority under s.198)</p> <p>Time limited for 3 months.</p>		
Statutory Duty	Statutory Duty	<p>Closing Order issued (i.e. Properties unfit for human habitation as advised by Environmental Health where there is no alternative measure to render the property fit)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Similar duty where emergency re-housing is essential e.g. CPO to enable site clearance for a road-widening scheme.</p>	A	Date of Closing Order or equivalent
	Unauthorised occupants (non-statutory successors) in priority need.	<p>Approved by Housing for an offer of smaller accommodation (studio or one bed or giving up 2 or more bedrooms)</p> <p>Time limited for 3 months.</p>	A	Date approved for rehousing
Under occupation		Applicant is willing to move to smaller property by giving up 2 or more bedrooms). These applicants will be exempted from minimum occupation criteria.	A	Date application (for smaller property) registered.
	Armed Forces Personnel	People who have served in the armed forces and have not been dishonourably discharged (Navy, Army, Air Force)	.A	Date evidence provided for service length

Band B				
Case Type		Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.	Band	Priority Date
Tenants	Home Seekers			
Medical (including mental health) hardship	Medical (including mental health) hardship	<p>Band B status for medical need will only be given where an applicant's or a member of the household's current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on their medical condition.</p> <p>It will not apply where the effect of housing conditions on health is comparatively moderate, slight or variable.</p>	B	Date medical assessment completed by Medical Adviser
	Homeless households owed main duty by Hillingdon* under s.193 of the 1996 Act or s.65 of the 1985 Act except those adequately housed with an assured shorthold or non-secure tenancy	<p>Homeless individuals or households accommodated in Bed & Breakfast or Hostel accommodation.</p> <p>Once an assured short hold or non-secure tenancy is offered such applicants move to Band C until such time as the landlord wants the property back AND the council cannot find alternative suitable temporary accommodation OR their needs can no longer be met unless they are offered permanent accommodation.</p> <p>(*Provided that Hillingdon has not referred to another authority under s.198)</p>	B	Date of homelessness acceptance or if on lower band, date this band applies from.
	Other unauthorised occupants (non-statutory successors)	Non- statutory successors approved for move to smaller accommodation but requiring two beds or more and/or relinquishing only one bedroom.	B	Date approved for rehousing
Other under-occupiers		Want move to smaller accommodation but requiring two beds or more and/or relinquishing only one	B	Date application (for smaller

		bedroom		property) registered.
Statutory Overcrowding or Court Order or Severe Overcrowding.		Statutory overcrowding as defined in Part X of Housing Act 1985, OR Court Order to re-house the household, OR Other household overcrowded by two or more bedrooms where the overcrowding is caused by children aged under 16 years.	B	Date agreed as statutorily overcrowded.
	Ex-tenant discharged from an institution (e.g. hospital, prison)	Where a commitment has previously been made in order that such tenants relinquish their council tenancy on entering the institution.	B	Date new housing application registered.
	Release supported housing	Ready and approved for independent living by Social Services or Move on Panel.	B	Date application registered or Date agreed by Panel.
	Young People leaving care.	Agreed at Care Leavers panel that applicant needs social housing to meet their ongoing support needs.	B	Date agreed by Panel.
	Move-on Quotas	Agreed by the move on quota panel - Applicants leaving hostel accommodation.	B	Date agreed by move on quota panel.
Unsatisfactory housing dependant children.	High Priority Hardship	1. With dependent children and Living in insecure accommodation and Not having a bedroom and Lacking or sharing amenities 2. People with children who are living in Colley House which was purpose-built for single people	B	Date high priority agreed.
Permanent		Where property is required because of lease expiry or	B	Date of referral

decants		for essential works & tenant will not be returning e.g. development schemes		from landlord or date of application, whichever is the latter.
Severe Social hardship	Severe Social hardship	<p>Urgent need to move agreed by Severe Social Hardship Panel in liaison with Social Services/landlord/police/other welfare agency:</p> <p>To give or receive care or support, for example: Where rehousing of a relative or friend will directly lead to the discharge of a resident from care</p> <p>For child protection reasons, for example: Where the household includes a child or young person for whom the Council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 and rehousing is an essential element in fulfilling that duty.</p> <p>Where a household has more than one serious need and their current housing condition has a major adverse effect on the household, for example medical condition and severe overcrowding (requiring 2 or more bedrooms)</p>	B	Date higher priority agreed
Local additional preference – in employment	Local additional preference – in employment	<p>Households where the applicant or their partner is working. Work must be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. either full time or part time averaging 20 or more hours per week. 2. The applicant or their partner must have been in work continuously for at least 12 months at the time of awarding priority. 3. The applicant or their partner must retain work in order to retain their priority. 	B	Date supporting evidence provided.

Band C				
Case Type		Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.	Band	Priority Date
Tenants	Home Seekers			
Older Hillingdon residents approved for Sheltered housing	Older Hillingdon residents approved for Sheltered housing	Applicants over 60 years old that have applied only for sheltered accommodation and have no other reason warranting a higher band.	C	Registration date unless moving from Band D to Band C because of change in circumstances.
Care Plan Need	Care Plan Need	Accommodation required to assist Social Services in delivery of Care Plan.	C	The date that the banding upgrade is agreed
	Unsatisfactory / unsanitary housing conditions.	<p>Unsanitary housing conditions that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action</p> <p>Examples include lacking one or more of the following: Food preparation facilities (i.e. sink and space for a cooker)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inside WC • Bathing and personal washing facilities 	C	Registration date unless moving from Band D to Band C because of change in circumstances
Unsatisfactory housing conditions - Overcrowding	Unsatisfactory housing conditions - Overcrowding	<p>Overcrowded households lacking one bedroom.</p> <p>The following criteria will determine minimum provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohabiting couples: 1 bedroom • Children of opposite sex aged over 7 years should not have to share a bedroom. • Each independent adult (18yrs +): 1 bedroom • Two Children of the same sex may share a bedroom unless one child is aged over 10 years and there is an age gap of 5 years or more. 	C	Registration date unless moving from Band D to Band C because of change in circumstances

		<p>N.B For this purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second reception room will generally be deemed as available for use as a bedroom. • Box rooms which could reasonably be used by a child will count as a single bedroom <p>Depending on the size of the property couples occupying studio flats may not be deemed overcrowded</p>		
Local additional preference – community contribution	Local additional preference – community contribution	<p>Households that contribute to the community through regular volunteer work or other community involvement. Volunteer work must be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The applicant or their partner must carry out the role for a minimum of 10 hours per month. 2) The applicant or their partner must have been carrying out this role for at least 6 months at the time the priority award. 3) The applicant or their partner must continue the role in order to retain their priority. 	C	Date evidence supplied to support application.
Severe Social Hardship	Severe Social Hardship	Out of borough applicants with a medical or support need that can only be met through social rented accommodation in Hillingdon.	C	Date higher priority awarded
Medical (incl. Mental health) hardship	Medical (incl. Mental health) hardship	Band C status for medical need will be given where an applicant's or member of the household's current housing conditions are having an adverse effect on their medical condition which creates a particular need for them to move.	C	Registration date unless moving from Band D to Band C because of change in circumstances
	Homeless not included in A or B	Households confirmed to be homeless according to the Housing Act 1996 Part VII.	C	Date of homelessness application decision or date of housing register priority

				date if band A-C on housing register.
Childless Couples aged 21-55	Childless Couples aged 21-55	Couples with a housing need who have not had any children (including same sex partnerships).	C	Date evidence provided to support application.
10 years established residency	10 years established residency	Applicants with a housing need who have been registered for housing with Hillingdon for more than 10 years and have continuously lived in the borough throughout this time.	C	Date evidence provided to support application.

Band D				
Case Type		Defining features of applicant or circumstances in which the band applies.	Band	Priority Date
Tenants	Home seekers			
Sheltered Housing	Sheltered Housing	Applicants in or out of the Borough who currently live in sheltered accommodation that are looking to move to alternative sheltered housing.	D	Registration Date
Significant Assets, income or Equity	Significant Assets, Income or Equity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Households who have a joint income over £40k and/or who have savings/assets over £35k. 2. Households who own a property or have an interest in a property regardless of equity levels will not be verified as suitable to be allocated a property through the housing register. The following exceptions apply, which will be assessed and allocated a priority band according to their housing need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra care accommodation – an equity cap of £200,000 applies (or the market value of a typical 	D	

		<p>extra care property for sale in the area if greater) .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered accommodation – an equity limit of £200,000 applies (or the market value of a typical sheltered property for sale in the area if greater). • Disabled adapted accommodation – an equity limit of £150,000 applies (or the market value of a minimum share in a LCHO disabled adapted property for sale in the area if greater.) 		
Tenants with band A-C who have failed to attend viewings on 3 or more occasions or properties.		<p>Households of any band who fail to attend viewings will have one month's priority time removed for each viewing not attended or property refused.</p> <p>This does not apply to under occupying households.</p>	Previous band applies.	Date of refusal/failure to attend viewing.
	Homeless households – any band	Homeless household's participation in CBL is limited to the average waiting time on their band. Once this is reached these households will be made a one-off direct allocation as soon as a suitable property becomes available.	Previous band applies.	
All other registered transfers	All others on Housing Register not included in band A, B or C	<p>No Priority status for re-housing</p> <p>Owner Occupiers</p> <p>Out of Borough Applicants (includes Sheltered Housing)</p>	D	Registration date

6 Special Circumstances.

6.1 Panels & Quotas: There are certain groups which the Council has agreed should have additional priority for rehousing which must be agreed by a senior officer before the designated band can be awarded. These groups are:

- Hillingdon residents living in supported accommodation who are ready to vacate this accommodation freeing up the support for someone who needs it,
- Hillingdon tenants who have been put forward for an emergency management transfer within social rented stock,
- Households who have requested a reciprocal move from social rented stock with other RPs and local authorities,
- Households who are on discretionary tenancies.

Hillingdon's housing needs service maintains a series of targeted forums to make sure that the process of filtering and assessing cases and awarding any additional priority is transparent and can be readily understood by housing register applicants or their advocates. At the time of this review there are two panels that can award a change in band. These are the Severe Social Hardship Panel and the Care Leavers Panel.

6.1.1. Severe Social Hardship Panel

There are a small number of households applying to the housing register who have experienced serious hardship because of a combination of different factors which make the need for rehousing more urgent than the conventionally awarded banding assessment reflects. In circumstances where this applies the Council's Severe Social Hardship Panel (SSHP) will undertake a review of the case to determine whether additional priority for rehousing is necessary either to prevent further hardship or deliver social services support.

Referrals:

Applicants can only be referred to the SSHP by Adult Social Care & Housing Services, Children's Services, Health Services, support workers or another relevant welfare agency. Elected members may also make referrals either directly or indirectly through a Council Officer.

Self referrals are not permitted. Any applicant referred to the panel must have a current, valid Hillingdon Housing Register application.

All referrals must be made on the SSHP referral form and submitted electronically within the submission timeframes. Incomplete referral forms will not be considered and will result in the referral being rejected. Each referral should highlight any relevant information and include a copy of the applicant's LOCATA bidding history. An income / expenditure form should be included if there is any question of current accommodation affordability.

Outcomes:

In order to ensure a holistic overview the panel will take into consideration all factors presented, for example medical needs, affordability, housing conditions, social factors, education and family welfare.

The panel will consider all the circumstances of each case. Three levels of priority banding will be considered:

- Band A The applicant or a member of their household is in severe need constituting exceptional circumstances, or has multiple needs which necessitate emergency rehousing.
- Band B The applicant or a member of their household has an urgent need to move due to severe social hardship and/or multiple needs which warrant emergency priority. The urgent need to move will be due to:
- The need to give or receive care or support;
 - For child protection reasons;
 - Other urgent social/welfare reasons; and/or
 - Where the applicant meets more than one priority band reason and when looked at holistically warrants an increased band.
- Band C The applicant or a member of their household is experiencing another social or welfare hardship which does not warrant the urgency of band A or B above.

Applicants can only be re-referred to the panel if there has been a significant change in their circumstances. In these cases the referral must include new information or evidence in regards to the application.

6.1.2 Care Leavers:

In acknowledgement of the comparatively high vulnerability and support needs of a small percentage of care leavers the Council has established a panel (the Care Leavers Panel – CLP) which meets on a scheduled basis and jointly assesses the needs of any care leaver who is referred. The panel is made up of delegated senior officers from the Housing Options team, Education and children’s services, and where relevant from the asylum team.

Referrals:

All referrals must be made electronically to the delegated officer in Housing Options a week in advance on the designated form.

Outcomes:

The panel assesses each referral individually to ensure the needs of any particularly vulnerable or at risk households are met and determining whether additional priority should be awarded where the client is agreed by the panel to be vulnerable. To be considered for additional priority care leavers must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Young people subject to Care Orders under section under section S31 of the Children Act 1989 where the Local Authority has Parental Responsibility (Looked after Children).
- Young people with moderate learning difficulties or disability or those who were subject to a statement of educational needs or a psychological assessment.
- Young people with significant mental health issues – (at Tier 3 or 4) who have had admission or have had involvement with CAMHS or CMHT for a period of three months or longer and are continuing to receive treatment, from either CAMHS CMHT or another relevant agency.
- Young people with complex needs placed in high cost placements where they no longer require that degree of support and whose application has been approved by the ‘Access to Resources Panel’ or the ‘Asylum High Cost Placement Panel’.
- Those young people with significant offending behaviour, which limits access to other types of suitable accommodation.

- Young people leaving care who are also parents and also meet one other criteria listed (e.g. they or their baby are especially vulnerable).
- Other mitigating circumstances.

The panel will take into consideration all factors presented, and where warranted may award a priority band B. The band can only be increased with the agreement of all panel members.

Cases that do not qualify for an upgrade will be assessed based upon their housing need through the normal assessment procedures.

6.1.3 Succession Tenancies:

In limited circumstances cases the Council is required by law to award tenancies to dependants of previous tenants. This is called succession, and is defined by Section 87 of the Housing Act 1985, which states that a person is qualified to succeed if he or she occupies the property as his or her only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death and is either:

1. The tenant's spouse,
2. Another member of the tenant's family who has lived with the tenant for the twelve months ending with the tenants death. Family members include husband/wife, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces. Step and half relatives are treated as full blood relatives.

In line with statute, Hillingdon allows one succession for each secure tenancy. This means that if there has already been a succession to a property, no further succession will be allowed. The only exception to this is where the potential second successor is agreed to be vulnerable and meets the following criteria:

1. Have a clear housing need **and**
2. Be aged 65 yrs+ or 50 yrs+ with learning difficulties **and**
3. Have lived at the property for the last 10 years or as long as the property has been available.

6.2: Medical Assessment.

Households which include one or more person who has told us they have a medical need will be asked to complete a medical assessment form. Applicants will only be awarded additional priority due to medical reasons if the Council agrees that their current housing is having a significant negative impact on their health or condition. The assessment is not based on the seriousness of the household's condition, but is solely based on the impact of their current housing on that condition and whether this would improve through a move to alternative housing. If there is an adverse effect on the whole household, the Medical Adviser considers whether the effect on the entire household warrants inclusion in a higher band.

Assessments are carried out by the Council's Medical Adviser. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide background or supporting information of their medical needs as they see fit. If the Council's medical advisor needs additional information to inform the decision making process, this will be sought at the cost to the council.

Following assessment the Medical Adviser will recommend that the applicant is placed in one of the following bands:-

- 1) Band A – Emergency Medical: the applicant or a member of the applicant’s household has a life threatening condition that is seriously affected by their housing.
- 2) Band B – Medical Hardship: the applicant’s current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or a member of the applicant’s household.
- 3) Band C – Medical Need: the applicant’s current housing conditions are having a moderate or variable adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or a member of the applicant’s household which creates a particular need for them to move.
- 4) Band D – no medical priority awarded.

6.3 Time Limited Priority bands:

Some of the groups which the Council has determined should have additional priority have their additional priority time limited to either 3 or 6 months. In these cases if the household has not bid successfully for a property within the time limit, their priority status will be reviewed with a view to reduce the priority band to band C or D.

The review will consider:

- Whether the exceptional circumstances that led to the additional priority being awarded still apply
- Whether the household has taken all possible steps to secure alternative housing that meets their needs;
- Whether a one off direct allocation is now appropriate,
- In light of the above, confirm what the household’s priority band should be.

Cases with a time limited band are reviewed periodically by a senior designated officer. Households are informed in writing of any change in their band.

The Officer reviewing the band will consider any related information, including

- Summary of the bidding history of the household
- Details of any offers made that have been refused
- Number of suitable properties that have been available for bidding

6.4 Overcrowding

Hillingdon’s allocations policy reflects the Council’s intention to tackle overcrowding and to encourage households experiencing overcrowding to take an active role in improving their own housing situation. The Council expects households who are overcrowded to consider all the options we make available to them, such as:

- Asking adult household members to move into separate accommodation to reduce the overcrowding,
- Not increasing the size of your household if you are living in accommodation that is currently the right size,
- Moving into housing other than social rented which is the right size for the household,
- Moving to another area of the country where there is a greater supply of affordable larger properties.

The Council has a dedicated team (Room2Move) who visit households who contacts us as experiencing overcrowding and offer them individualised advice and support to

address their situation. This team gather information during their assessment which enables the council to assess the household's situation and award any applicable additional priority.

The summary table on pages 15 – 25 sets out the priority we award to a household depending on each household's circumstances and the level of overcrowding they are experiencing. The detail below sets out the background to each category:

6.4.1: Statutory overcrowding:

Statutory overcrowding only applies to Social Housing tenants. The Housing Act 1985 sets out the Governments minimum standards of space that it considers a family needs to live in. This is done using two separate calculations to determine:

- How many “people” are considered to be part of the household.
- How many of those people are expected to sleep in each of the rooms available for this purpose.

The definitions that are set by the legislation for these 2 calculations are as follows:

People

An adult living in the property	One person
A child aged 10 or over	One person
Children aged between 1 and 10 years	Half a person
Children under 1 year	Not counted/not considered for purpose of room standard

Room Occupancy

Floor Area of Room	Number of persons
110 sq foot or more	2
90 sq foot or more but less than 110 sq foot	1.5
70 sq foot or more but less than 90 sq foot	1
50 sq foot or more but less than 70 sq foot	0.5

Rooms available for sleeping:

- All bedrooms and living rooms in the accommodation are taken into account in the calculation, whether or not the household is or wishes to use them for sleeping.
- Bathrooms and kitchens are not included as sleeping accommodation.
- Open plan kitchen/living rooms are not included as sleeping accommodation.
- Rooms which contain a back boiler are not included as sleeping accommodation on health and safety grounds.
- Rooms with a floor area of less than 50 sq foot are not included as sleeping accommodation.

6.4.2: Overcrowding:

Hillingdon has its own accommodation occupancy standards which sit alongside the statutory regulations which we use to determine and categorise other less serious overcrowding.

Because we generally have a shortage of larger homes, applicants are allowed to bid for accommodation with less bedrooms than we assess them as needing if they want to as

long as their household matches the minimum to maximum person count on the advertised property.

Accommodation is assessed using the following guidelines:

Household size	Size of property
Lone person	Studio flat or one-bedroom
Couple without children	One-bedroom
Pregnant woman (with or without partner)	One-bedroom
Parent/s with child under one	One or two bedrooms
Parent/s with child over one	Two bedrooms

Additional Rooms are awarded as follows:

- Children of opposite sex aged over 7 years should not have to share a bedroom.
- Two Children of the same sex can share a bedroom unless one child is aged over 10 years **and** there is an age gap of 5 years or more.

Non dependant adults (where eligible - see point below):

- Cohabiting couples: 1 bedroom
- Non dependant adult (17yrs +): 1 bedroom

Rooms available for sleeping:

- A second reception room is considered available for use as a bedroom.
- Box rooms are considered as single bedrooms

6.5 Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions

Households living in unsanitary conditions may be entitled to increased priority banding if their home lacks one or more of the following:-

- Adequate food preparation facilities (i.e. a sink and space for a cooker)
- Adequate bathroom facilities (i.e. an inside toilet and washing facilities)

Where a household tells us they may be living in unsanitary conditions we will arrange for an environmental health officer to visit, assess the property and their needs and recommend actions for the landlord, the occupant, or the Council.

If the property to be unfit by virtue of substantial or major disrepair which would justify service of notice under Section 189 of the Housing Act 1985, is subject to a closure order or compulsory purchase order, we will provide support to help the household find some other suitable accommodation and will increase their band as applicable.

6.6 Members of the Council, Council Employees and their relations:

In order to ensure that the Council treats all applicants fairly and equally, any application for housing or re-housing from Members of the Council, Employees of the Council any members of their family or household, and any other associated persons must be disclosed. These applications are assessed in the normal way but prior to any offers of

accommodation being made the case will be reviewed and approved by the senior designated officer.

Applications within this category which do not disclose this information are referred to the Council's Fraud investigations team for assessment and legal action where it is considered that an attempt to commit fraud has been made.

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7 Allocation of Specialist Accommodation

7.1 Disabled Adapted Properties

The council aims to only allocate adapted properties to applicants who it has confirmed need such a property, either for themselves or a member of their household. Households who have a professed need for an adapted property are assessed by the Council's Medical Adviser, who determines whether the household should be awarded a mobility grouping.

The mobility groupings are:

- 1) **DSL 1:** Wheelchair user indoors and outdoors
- 2) **DSL 2:** Cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the time
- 3) **DSL3:**

Households awarded one of the above groupings can bid for properties identified as suitable for people in those mobility groups.

These households are recorded on a sub section of the housing register (the Disabled Housing Register - DHR) in order to improve the process of matching the needs of each household against the proposed or existing adaptations in an advertised property. Adapted properties are restricted on the choice based lettings system so that only applicants who match the mobility grouping may bid for them. In exceptional circumstances where an adapted property is urgently required the designated senior officer may allocate a suitable property directly to the most appropriate applicant and outside any strict order and the CBL system.

7.2 Older Person Dwellings

- LB Hillingdon has a small volume of accommodation designated specifically for older people who can live independently. These units are advertised through our CBL system (locata) and have an age bracket published within the advert. Applicants can bid for these properties in the normal way as long as they meet the age criteria specified in the advert.
- Older Person Dwellings are restricted either for people aged over 55 (these are usually flats) or in a few cases for people aged over 60 (these are usually bungalows.)
- If the applicants are a couple the main applicant must meet the age range specified. Partners aged under 55 are only permitted to live at the schemes if they are over 50 years, and will not be permitted to be a joint tenant until they reach the minimum age for the accommodation.

7.3 Sheltered Accommodation:

- LB Hillingdon has a number of sheltered housing schemes which are aimed at older people who want to live independently and are able to manage alone, but who prefer the added security of a warden and the support systems that sheltered accommodation offers. Residents should be able to manage alone with the aid of a social service care package if one is needed.
- RSLs accept applicants to their sheltered schemes from age 55, and Hillingdon Housing Services accept applicants from age 60. If a couple applies to a scheme, both household members must meet the age criteria.

- Anyone on Hillingdon's Housing Register can express an interest in sheltered housing either at the point of application or at their regular review. Support workers or other third parties (such as relatives, carers, GPs) can also express an interest on behalf of an applicant for sheltered housing.
- Each applicant requesting sheltered accommodation is visited by Hillingdon Housing Services Sheltered Housing Team to assess the applicant's ability to manage independently, any medical problems and how these may affect day to day activities and their present living conditions and any difficulties they are experiencing in their current home. As we are not able to carry out assessments outside the borough, applicants for sheltered housing from outside Hillingdon have to travel in to the borough to the sheltered housing teams offices to be assessed.
- The sheltered housing team will report back with a recommendation indicating whether each applicant is suitable for Sheltered Accommodation
- Applicants confirmed suitable are placed in priority band C unless they qualify for a higher band for other reasons. The band C will only apply to bids on sheltered properties, when bidding on any general needs or older person's property the other effective band will apply.
- If the applicant's care and support needs are considered too high for sheltered accommodation the case will be referred to the extra care panel for assessment.
- Transfer applicants already living in sheltered housing are awarded priority Band D unless they have any mitigating circumstances which warrant a higher priority. These households can request a banding review through the Severe Social Hardship Panel.

7.4 Extra Care:

- As well as Sheltered Housing, LB Hillingdon also provides Extra Care Housing schemes. The purpose of Extra Care housing is to provide older people with their own home and tenancy within a support and care environment ensuring that appropriate personal and housing support are available as required. A tenant may move into a scheme with no or low needs but can access further care as and when the needs arises as they get older and more frailer. Extra Care housing is intended to enable older people to live as independently as possible for as long as possible and improve the quality of life and choice that older can expect as they become less able. Extra Care housing should remove the need for Residential Care for older people in many cases.
- Extra Care housing is allocated outside of the locata choice based lettings scheme by a remote panel. All referrals to the panel must have a full Community Care Assessment which identifies any care and/or housing related support needs.
- Extra Care accommodation is intended to accommodate households with a broad range of needs spread across a diverse spectrum. To ensure a sustainable balance of both tenants need for care and providers ability to implement good standards of service delivery within Extra Care housing schemes, the scheme balance is reviewed at each remote panel meeting and referrals are prioritised against this.
- Occupancy and allocation of void units is ultimately determined on the level of need of existing applicants as well as the needs of current residents at the scheme to ensure that agreed dependency levels are not routinely exceeded.

8. Lettings:

7.1 Using the Choice Based Lettings System:

All Council and Housing Association property, including traveller's site pitches available in Hillingdon are advertised online at www.locata.org.

Available properties are advertised fortnightly on Fridays. Applicants can bid for any available properties for which they are eligible from the Friday of the advert through until 2pm the following Wednesday, when bidding closes. Each applicant or household may bid for a maximum of three properties each fortnight. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure they only bid for properties for which they are eligible, using the description of the property, information about their household entitlements and any special information attached to the advert as a guide.

8.1.1 Help with bidding:

A detailed guide of how to bid for properties is sent out to all new applicants when their application to join the register is approved. This includes their HIL number which is needed to make a bid.

All new applicants, as well as applicants who tell us they are finding bidding difficult or who are bidding incorrectly are invited to attend a bidding workshop at the Civic Centre. The workshops are intended to improve applicants understanding of how choice based lettings works and enable applicants to use the system themselves.

The Council also offers a temporary personal bidding service (PBS) to applicants we agree are particularly vulnerable and are not able to bid for themselves. Referrals to the PBS can be made by any person with an interest in a household's case, e.g. housing officers, social workers, GPs, self referral, MP or Councillor.

Eligibility for the PBS is determined by the designated housing officer and will be removed at any time or at the quarterly review if households on the list are not engaged in the process of securing a suitable home for their household or are considered to be unreasonably refusing properties or not attending viewings. Typical groups to whom the Council may provide assistance through PBS are: vulnerable elderly, people with a sensory disability, people with no or low literacy or low English comprehension.

There are two types of service available through the PBS, both of which are time limited and reviewed every quarter:

Assisted Bidding - The applicant can contact the designated housing officer each fortnight when properties are advertised and get help with making a choice of which properties to bid for and/or talk through the process of bidding before placing their bids.

Automatic Bidding - The applicant specifies the area and type of property they are interested in when applying for the PBS. Staff automatically place bids for the applicant on up to 3 properties matching their description every fortnight.

8.2 Bidding Entitlements & Eligibility:

8.2.1 Registering with Partners:

Housing Register applicants from Hillingdon are entitled to bid for properties advertised in the "Hillingdon" section of Locata and can also bid for properties advertised in the "cross borough" section. In addition, Hillingdon residents can bid for properties advertised by several housing associations (registered providers) that have social rented accommodation in the borough. The housing associations always give priority to applicants who are registered with them directly, so it is advantageous for Hillingdon

applicants who are interested in housing association properties to register with each provider as well. The providers are:

- Catalyst Housing Association
- Paddington Churches Housing Association
- Paradigm Housing Group
- Shepherds Bush Housing Association
- Thames Valley Housing Association
- A2 Dominion
- Inquilab Housing Association
- Notting Hill Housing
- Octavia Housing
- Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation
- Stadium Housing Association
- Westway Housing Association

8.2.2 Eligibility:

Each applicant household may only bid for up to 3 properties in each bidding cycle. In order to eliminate wasted bids and improve clarity of the process for our residents the following rules are applied:

1. Applicants will not be shortlisted or offered a property if they already have a live offer on another property.
2. To bid for properties advertised in the Hillingdon section, a household must be registered on Hillingdon's housing register,
3. If a property is ring fenced for a specific type of household, only those which match the household type will be eligible to bid for that property,
4. Any bids must be placed and reach locata before the shortlist closes,
5. The applicant's household must match the advert specification:
 - a. The household must not have more or less members than the number specified on the property label,
 - b. The applicant must satisfy the age requirement on the property label where applicable,
 - c. The applicant must satisfy the mobility level specified on the property label:
DSL1- suitable for a permanent wheelchair user - inside and outside the home
DSL2 – suitable for people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair for part of the day or outside the home
DSL3 - suitable for applicants who have some mobility needs, e.g. can only manage one or two steps or stairs
6. Only 3 bids can be made per bidding cycle.
7. Applicants cannot bid for properties larger than they are assessed as needing (apart from some under occupiers who are giving up large family homes – where confirmed by our Room2Move team))

8.2.3: Ineligibility:

After bids have been placed, each household's details are checked to determine that bids placed are eligible and that the household's circumstances also render them eligible to be offered accommodation through the scheme.

Bids are classed as ineligible and are not considered in the following circumstances:

1. Where a household is found to have sufficient financial resources available to meet own housing need. This includes:
 - a. Households who the Council considers to have sufficient financial resources to obtain accommodation for themselves in the private sector.
 - b. Council tenants who have a current application to buy their dwelling or for a home purchase grant such as Homebuy.
2. Behaviour which affects the household's suitability to be a tenant – e.g. where any member of the household is involved in anti social behaviour.
3. Households who have over 4 weeks rental charge arrears.
4. Households which have previously accrued rent arrears or any other debt with the council and have not set up and stuck to a payment plan to repay the debt for over 12 months prior to their most recent bid on a property.
5. Households whose circumstances are found to have changed since their last assessment, such as:
 - a. The household is not eligible to join the housing register – e.g. their immigration or EU worker status has changed, rendering them ineligible.
 - b. The household has not responded to requests for information, council visits or other contact from the council.
 - c. Upon checking the households circumstances, the households priority band or priority date are or should be reduced to that used to place the bid.
 - Upon checking the household has more members than the maximum allowed for the property advertised.

8.3 Selection and Verification:

When the advert period has closed and bidding has ended, the process of determining which household may be offered a given property begins. To make sure that the Council's housing resources are allocated fairly and in line with its own policies, the Council shortlists the applicants in order of priority and then re-checks their eligibility and all background information as well as carrying out visits to the household as part of these checks.

8.3.1 Short-listing eligible bidders:

Once bidding has closed, all households that placed a bid and are eligible for that property are placed into priority band and date order in the following order:

1. Band
2. Date order within that band
3. Registration date.

This is called the shortlist.

If a property has been advertised with preference for a specific group of applicants, bids from these households will be prioritised above all other bands. Bids placed from households within the specific priority group will still be shortlisted according to their band and priority date as above.

8.3.2 Verification Checks:

Every household joining the housing register is checked at the point of joining to determine their entitlement to be on the register. Before properties are let another round of checks is carried out to ensure that applicant households remain eligible and properties are being fairly and correctly allocated.

When checks are carried out and a household is found to be ineligible either for the housing register or for a specific property they have bid on their application may be amended, cancelled, or suspended pending further investigations and any bids made which are ineligible will be discounted.

Verification checks include, but are not limited to:

1. Checking information held by the Council (e.g. benefits information, electoral roll, council tax records)
2. Checking with our community safety unit for evidence of any untenantlike behaviour
3. Checking information held by other local authorities, landlords or registered providers
4. Land Registry and credit history reference checks;
5. Making checks with neighbours, employers, health care providers, children's schools, social workers and any other relevant support workers.

Where necessary we may ask the household to show us documents and evidence relating to their application for us to re-check. This is most likely in cases where people have been subject to immigration control, but is not restricted to this group.

In these cases it is the responsibility of the applicant household to provide all the information we have asked for within 24 hours of our request. If a household does not provide the information we ask for within this timescale their bids will be discounted and the household will be removed from the shortlist for that property.

In the majority of cases the council will also carry out unannounced visits to check the details provided about all the household members and their residence at the accommodation.

Where a visit is carried out if the applicant or a member of their household is not available at the time of the visit to speak with council staff or admit them to the home we will leave a card requesting that the household contacts us to rearrange the visit. It is the applicant's responsibility to contact us within 24 hours to rearrange the visit. If the visit is not rearranged and carried out within 48 hours the bid will be discounted and the household will be removed from the shortlist for that property.

If a household does not allow the council officer visiting to enter the property and does not provide the information we ask for, their bids will be discounted and the household will be removed from the shortlist for that property.

A verification visit will be carried out in all transfer cases. Households will not be verified if the visit highlights that the property has not been well maintained both internally and externally. Excessive internal or external dilapidations and garden rubbish will warrant households being not verified.

8.4 Allocation of Accommodation:

The applicants at the top of the shortlist for a property are contacted by the housing provider and offered an appointment to view the property. To keep the amount of time each property stands empty to a minimum the landlord will arrange for up to the top 10 households to view the property. At the viewing the applicants have chance to look around the property and ask any questions of the landlord.

8.4.1 Making an offer:

At the viewing, the landlord will find out which households are interested in the property, and will rank these according to their priority order on the shortlist. Verification checks will be completed on the top households on this shortlist, and the top household which is eligible for an allocation will be offered the property.

If the household offered the property accepts it, they are formally invited to sign for the tenancy and the letting is completed.

If the household offered the property refuses the property it is offered to the next household until such time as the property is accepted. If no one on the shortlist within the priority bands (Band A-C) accepts the property, the property is withdrawn and will be re-advertised or used as a direct allocation.

8.4.2 Refusal of an offer/failure to actively utilise the choice based lettings system:

Households who do not attend viewings which match their household type as assessed will have their priority date reduced by one calendar month for each viewing not attended.

Households living in temporary accommodation who do not make use of the CBL system to obtain a suitable property within the average time taken to obtain a property of that size in a low demand area in Hillingdon will be made 1 x direct offer of a property. If this property is refused or the viewing is not attended the council will discharge its duty under part VII of the housing act and withdraw any temporary accommodation provided.

In some circumstances a household may have a valid reason for not attending a viewing. Examples of these circumstances are:

1. Where a property is greater than 2 bus journeys away from children's schools and the family do not have a car.
2. Where the family has an agreed defined need to be in or avoid a certain area and the property does not comply with this.
3. Where the children are regularly cared for by a relative/friend to enable the parent to go to work, and the property location would prevent this from continuing.
4. Other reasons linked to work, training or affordability of the property.
5. The applicant had a critical appointment at the same time as the viewing which could not be rearranged.
6. The applicant was not aware of the viewing schedule
7. There was some other emergency which prevented the applicant from attending the viewing.

8.4.3 Offers outside of CBL(direct allocations):

Direct allocations (lettings outside of the choice based lettings scheme) can only be authorised by the designated senior officer. Direct allocations may be made in the following circumstances:

1. If a nomination is required to enable best use of housing stock.
2. If the Council agrees that a household has been unfairly bypassed for a previous property.
3. Where a recommendation has been received from the police, social services or other professional agency that a specific type of accommodation or area is needed.
4. A direct allocation in exceptional or emergency circumstances for effective management of social housing stock as determined by the designated senior officer in conjunction with Hillingdon Housing services or a Registered Provider.
5. Households which have succeeded to a tenancy but are under-occupying or do not need adaptations or specialised accommodation.
6. Time limited cases in Band A where a successful bid has not been achieved.
7. To make a suitable offer of accommodation to a homeless household in order to fulfill the Council's obligations under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).
8. Homeless households owed the full duty under part VI of the housing act 1996 that have not exercised choice or have unreasonably refused properties.
9. Ex-service tenants who have highly specific requirements or who have failed to exercise choice by bidding for properties.
10. Existing Hillingdon tenants who need to move temporarily to another address will be offered a transit property. If the offer is refused possession proceedings will be commenced.
11. Existing tenants who are accepted as needing an urgent management transfers who fail to make a successful bid for alternative accommodation within set timescales will be made one suitable offer. If the offer is refused possession proceedings will be commenced. These cases will be authorised by Hillingdon Housing Services.
12. Existing tenants that the Council needs to move permanently who fail to make a successful bid for alternative accommodation within the set timescale will be made one suitable offer. If the offer is refused possession proceedings will be commenced. These cases will be authorised by Hillingdon Housing services.
13. Unauthorised occupants who have failed to make use of the choice based lettings system.
14. Young persons who are in the Leaving Care and Move-On Quota, who have very specific requirements for housing and have been unable to bid for suitable accommodation.
15. A direct allocation of an applicant's temporary home into a permanent tenancy where agreed by both the tenant and the Council.

8.5: Information about lettings:

Details of every property let in Hillingdon are available at www.locata.org . The website shows the number of households that bid for each property, as well as the priority band, date and registration date of the household that was offered each property.