



City of Westminster

# Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	19 July 2023
<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Process for Allocating Social Housing
<b>Report of:</b>	Neil Wightman, Director of Housing
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Councillor Liza Begum, Cabinet Member for Housing Services
<b>Wards Involved:</b>	All
<b>Policy Context:</b>	A review of the allocation of available social housing during 2022/23 in line with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme
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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 All Local Authorities are legally required to publish their Housing Allocations Scheme which sets out how they prioritise and allocate social housing to those with a priority need. Westminster council is about to undertake a wider review of the current Allocations Scheme and work on this will commence shortly. The review of the Housing Allocations Scheme will require a full and broad consultation, will identify the impact of any changes on households currently waiting for social housing and ensure the new scheme is implemented fairly.
- 1.2 Each year the council publishes a Supply and Allocation of Social Housing Report which projects the proportion of lets that are estimated to each of the

c. 30 groups (c. 4,300 households) with priority for social housing, taking into account the likely supply for that year and the Council's legal duties and strategic priorities. The annual report is part of the Allocations Scheme and the 2023/24 report is currently being developed.

## **2. Policy Context**

2.1 The Housing Allocations Scheme sets out who is eligible for social housing and how properties are allocated, either through Choice Based Lettings (CBL) or via a direct offer.

2.2 The Allocations Scheme must be read in conjunction with the annual Supply and Allocation of Social Housing Report which sets out, for the year ahead, the proportion of lets that are projected to each of the different groups in need of social housing.

2.3 The aim of this approach is to enable some lets across most of the 30 different groups, instead of having a purely priority-based approach, where only those with the highest needs are successful. It also enables flexibility and for the Council to respond to different priorities on an annual basis.

2.4 There are three main groups;

- Homeless households where the council has statutory rehousing responsibilities.
- Existing Council tenants needing to transfer because they are overcrowded for example and for other reasons.
- Other applicants (known as the housing register and usually people living in the private sector that need to move for health/welfare reasons).

2.5 Within each group, there are subgroups (approximately 30 in total) making up the different housing lists.

2.6 In deciding the proportion of lets to all groups the following factors are taken into account:

- a) the Council's statutory obligations
- b) the Council's strategic priorities
- c) the varying and competing demands for social housing (increasing the proportion of lets to one group inevitably impacts on others).

2.7 The Council has a legal duty to assess and register households that meet certain criteria known as 'reasonable preference' groups. However, the Localism Act 2011 also gives local authorities flexibility in prioritising those groups according to local supply and demand issues. There is no requirement for one group to have priority over another, although the council must have regard to the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that allocations are fair and not disproportionate.

2.8 The Scheme was recently updated to include those being assisted under the Relief Duty of the Homeless Reduction Act.

### **3. Points**

3.1 The Scheme also sets out the number of points each of the priority groups for social housing are awarded.

3.2 Highest priority is given to those living in Renewal areas and need to be decanted elsewhere in order for the development to progress. Second priority is to those living in properties too large for their need (under-occupiers). The council gives a cash incentive to those moving to a smaller property in order to free up much needed family sized homes. Money is offered for each bedroom released ie those moving from a 3-bed to a 2-bed will release one bedroom.

3.3 In general, an applicant's position on the list will be determined by the number of points they have and how long they have been waiting on the list (the date they registered for that priority group).

3.4 Additional points for some eligible groups include;

- **Residence** - Applicants with a ten-year residency connection to Westminster at the time of approach receive an additional 50 points and is discussed with all applicants at this point.
- **Employment** - Applicants currently employed and working a minimum of 16 hours per week for the last two years receive an additional 50 points.

3.5 For overcrowded applicants with all adults in their household, 10 points will be deducted from their application. This is because we recognise the challenges faced by overcrowded families and we want to prioritise those with children.

3.6 Appendix A provides a full breakdown of the points for each priority group. There are two tables, one for those that require family sized accommodation and another for those that require studio or 1-bedroom accommodation. The main difference between the two tables is that those registered for a studio or 1-bed property are not subject to the employment or residence points. This is because most applicants registered for this property size are either older or vulnerable in some way. In addition, we have a better supply of this property size.

#### 4. Mobility Category

4.1 In addition to points and length of time waiting to determine an applicant's position on the list, each household (and property) is given a mobility category which reflects the type of property required.

##### Mobility Category - Applicants

Category 1	Applicants who have been assessed by a NHS doctor as having a diagnosis which requires them permanently to use a wheelchair all the time
Category 2	Applicants who have been assessed by a NHS doctor as having a diagnosis which requires them permanently to need a home which is wheelchair accessible but may not need to use it inside the home
Category 3	Applicants with severe mobility problems who require a ground floor or lifted property with level access and no internal stairs
Category 4	All other applicants

##### Mobility Category - Properties

Category 1	Property is fully wheelchair accessible
Category 2	Property is suitable for a person who needs a wheelchair outside the home but can manage in the home without a wheelchair.
Category 3	Property with no more than 3 steps to access property and no internal stairs. May be lifted.
Category 4	All other properties

4.2 Those who require a level access property (mob cat 3) will be prioritised for a mob cat 3 property ahead of those who are assessed as needing a mob cat 4 property, even if the mob cat 4 applicant has more points or has waited longer. This is to ensure that properties are allocated to those who need them the most.

4.3 Properties suitable for wheelchair users are not advertised via Choice Based Lettings (CBL), instead they are allocated via a direct offer. This is because households requiring this type of property have specific needs.

## 5. Choice Based Lettings

5.1 Applicants participating in Choice Based Lettings must place bids via the CBL website (managed by Home Connections). Bidding opens every Wednesday and applicants have until midnight the following Sunday to place their interest in a property. It doesn't matter when households bid during the week as their position will be determined by their points, date registered and where applicable, their mobility category, as described above.

5.2 Applicants with rent arrears will be unable to bid.

5.3 During the year some lists will be suspended from bidding to allow other groups the opportunity of bidding successfully and to deliver the target projections for the year.

5.4 Once bidding closes, HSS will shortlist the top 3-5 households and invite them to view the property later that week. Viewings for properties managed by Registered Providers may take place at a later date. Properties are offered to the highest placed applicant that accepts the property. If the applicant in position one refuses the property, it is offered to the next applicant down. This process is repeated until an applicant accepts the property.

## 6. Demand

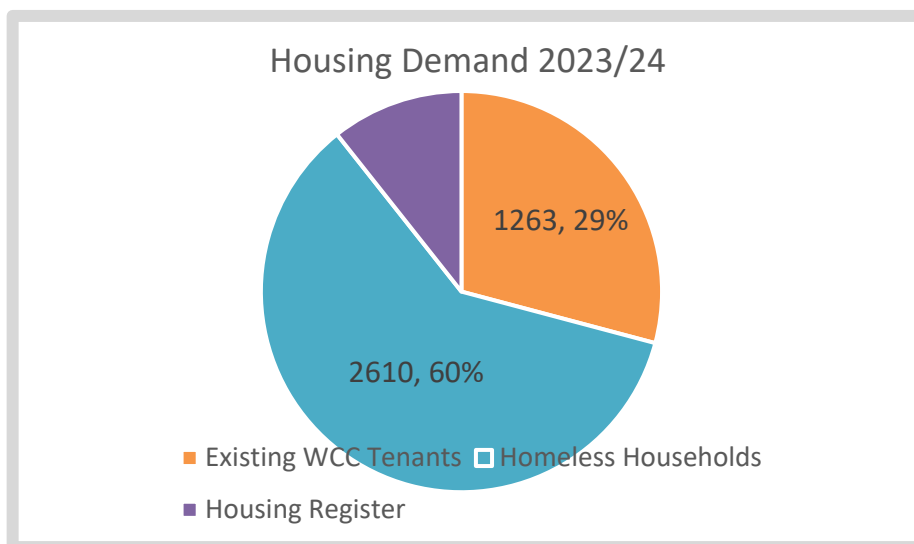
6.1 There are currently 4,336 households registered for social housing, of which 97% require a general needs property and 3% require Community Supportive Housing (CSH) for older people.

<b>Demand 31.03.23</b>	<b>Studio</b>	<b>1-Bed</b>	<b>2-Bed</b>	<b>3-Bed</b>	<b>4+ Bed</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Homeless	235	11	1222	889	253	2610	60%
WCC Tenants	56	264	397	424	122	1263	29%
Housing Register	293	43	50	43	34	463	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>1669</b>	<b>1356</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>4336</b>	
%	14%	7%	39%	31%	9%		

6.2 The highest demand is for 2-bedroom properties (40%, 1,668), followed by 3-bedroom properties (32%, 1,356). Of the 4,336 households registered for

social housing, 3% (117) require a property suitable for a wheelchair user. The main groups registered are;

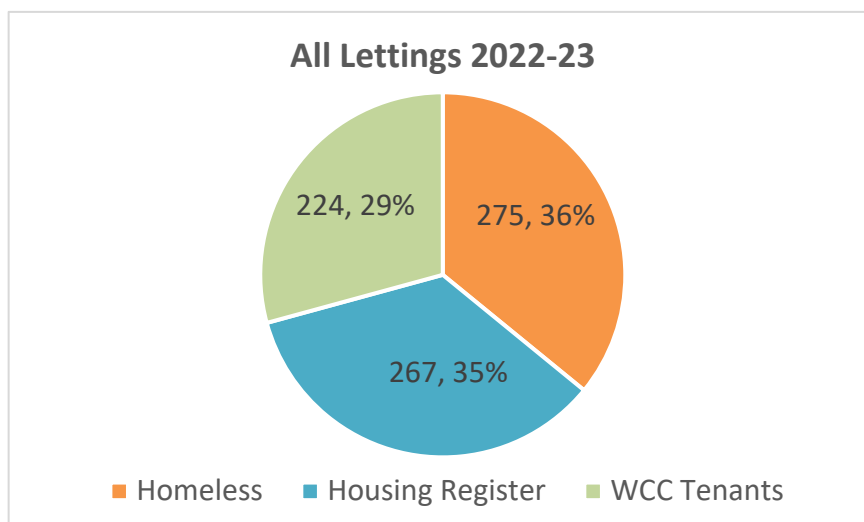
- Homeless households - 60% (2,610)
- WCC council tenants - 29% (1,263)
- Housing Register applicants - 11% (462)



## 7. Lettings 2022/23

- 7.1 The council achieved 766 lettings in 2022/23 across all priority need groups. Of the 766 lettings, 36% (275) were to homeless households. Appendix B sets out the total lettings by each of the priority groups. This illustrates in particular the low level of availability of lettings of 2 and 3 bedroom properties when compared to the demand set out in paragraph 6.1.
- 7.2 11% (31) of studio and 1 bed general needs properties were let to young people leaving care reflecting the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and who are assessed by Children's Services as being ready to manage a tenancy.
- 7.3 In addition, 89 units at Grace House, a CSH scheme managed by Central & Cecil Housing Trust (CCHT), became available for those eligible for sheltered housing.

<b>Lettings 2022-23</b>	<b>Studio</b>	<b>1-Bed</b>	<b>2-Bed</b>	<b>3-Bed</b>	<b>4+ Bed</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Homeless	57	82	85	43	8	275	36%
Housing Register	104	142	13	8		267	35%
WCC Tenants	11	106	60	36	11	224	29%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>766</b>	



## 8. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 8.2 The Committee is asked whether they think the balance between homeless lettings and other priority groups in 2022/23 was reasonable (note that increasing lets to one group means they are reduced for another)?
- 8.3 The Committee is also asked to consider the points weighting between the different groups?
- 8.4 How would the Committee like to be involved in the review of the Allocation Scheme?

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Sally Nott**

[sanott@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:sanott@westminster.gov.uk)

**Appendix A:**

Tables 1 & 2 below are subject to the exceptions to be found within this scheme

<b>Table 1 - Points for Family Sized Accommodation</b>									
				<b>Additional Points</b>					<b>Points Deducted</b>
<b>Priority Group</b>		<b>Priority List</b>	<b>Priority Points</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>Stage 2 Lease End</b>	<b>Armed Forces</b>	<b>Local Connection Criteria on Renewal Estates</b>	<b>All Adult Household</b>
<b>Renewal Tenants*</b>		Returning Tenants	605	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Renewal Tenants (Permanent) with high local connection	600	-	-	-	-	4	-
		Renewal Tenants (Temporary) with high local connection	600	-	-	-	-	3	-
		Renewal Tenants (Permanent) with medium local connection	600	-	-	-	-	2	-
		Renewal Tenants (Temporary) with medium local connection	600	-	-	-	-	1	-
<b>Under-occupation</b> (including flexible tenancies)	Transfer List	Cash Incentive and under-occupying flexible tenants	550	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pressing Housing Need</b>	Transfer List	Management Transfer, Decants/Major Works, Community Care Nominations and Children Act Panel	450	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Waiting List	Succession/Assignment, RP Decants, Discretionary Lessee Renewal Tenants, Reciprocal, Community Care Nominations and Children Act Panel	400	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Learning Disabilities	400	-	-	-	10	-	-
<b>Medical</b> (people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to disability)	Transfer List	Category A Medical	250	50	50	-	-	-	-
	Waiting List	Category A Medical	200	50	50	-	10	-	-
<b>Overcrowding</b> (People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions)	Waiting List	Registered Provider Quota	300	-	-	-	-	-	-
		HHSRS band A Hazard or Part X Housing Act 1985	250	50	50	-	10	-	-10
	Transfer List	HHSRS band A Hazard or Part X Housing Act 1985	300	50	50	-	-	-	-10
		Lacking 3 bedrooms	300	50	50	-	-	-	-10
		Lacking 2 bedrooms	200	50	50	-	-	-	-10
	Lacking 1 bedroom	100	50	50	-	-	-	-10	
<b>Homeless</b> (Main Housing Duty)			150	50	50	200	10	-	-
<b>Homeless</b> (Others)			20	50	50	-	10	-	-

\*includes tenants of Huguenot House, see Cabinet Member Report January 2022



**Table 2 - Points for Studio and 1-Bedroom Accommodation**

			Additional Points				
	Priority List	Priority Points	Stage 2 Lease End	Subject to LHA Cap	Armed Forces	Local Connection Criteria on Renewal Estates	High Priority Medical/Welfare Points
<b>General Needs</b>	Returning Tenants*	605	-	-	-	-	-
	Renewal Tenants (Permanent) with high local connection*	600	-	-	-	4	-
	Renewal Tenants (Temporary) with high local connection*	600	-	-	-	3	-
	Renewal Tenants (Permanent) with medium local connection*	600	-	-	-	2	-
	Renewal Tenants (Temporary) with medium local connection*	600	-	-	-	1	-
	Under-occupying Flexible Tenants and Cash Incentives	550	-	-	-	-	-
	Decants/Major Works, Management Transfers	450	-	-	-	-	-
	Social Services Nominations (Tenants) including Community Care Nominations, Children Act Panel and Children Leaving Care	450	-	-	-	-	-
	Social Services Nominations (Waiting List) including Community Care Nominations, Children Act Panel and Children Leaving Care	400	-	-	-	-	-
	Learning Disabilities Quota	400	-	-	10	-	-
	RP Decant and Discretionary Lessee Renewal Tenants	400	-	-	-	-	-
	Reciprocals	400	-	-	-	-	-
	Succession/Assignment	400	-	-	-	-	-
	Medical (Transfers)	250	-	-	-	-	-
	Medical (Waiting List)	200	-	-	10	-	-
	Homeless (Main Housing Duty)	150	200	-	10	-	-
	Pathway Housings	150	-	-	10	-	-
	Tenants (Studio to 1-bed)	100	-	-	-	-	-
Mental Health Hostel Move-On Quota	150	-	-	10	-	-	
Hostel Move-On/Street Homeless/Drug Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)	150	-	-	10	-	-	
Homeless (Other)	20	-	-	10	-	-	
<b>Community Supportive Housing (CSH)</b>	Cash Incentive	550	-	-	-	-	50
	Decants (Tenants)	450	-	-	-	-	50
	RP Decants and Discretionary Lessee Renewal Tenants	400	-	-	-	-	50
	Succession/Assignment	400	-	-	-	-	50
	Council Tenants	200	-	-	-	-	50
	Homeless (Main Housing Duty)	150	200	-	10	-	50
	Hostel Move-On	150	-	-	10	-	50
	Pathway Housings	150	-	-	10	-	50
	Waiting List Applicants	50	-	50	10	-	50
	Incoming Nominations	50	-	-	-	-	50
	Homeless (Other)	20	-	50	10	-	50

\*includes tenants of Huguenot House, see Cabinet Member Report January 2022

## Appendix B: All Lettings 2022-23

Lettings 2022-23	Studio	1-Bed	2-Bed	3-Bed	4+ Bed	Total
<b>Homeless incl CSH</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Housing Register</b>						
Category A Medical Priority	2	5	9	3		19
Vulnerable Singles Quota (incl Hostel Move-On, CSH, Pathways)	12	11				23
Social Services Quotas	23	8	1			32
Community Supportive Housing	59	84	1			144
Succession/Assignment		23	1	2		26
Other, incl Overcrowded	8	11	1	3		23
<b>Housing Register Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>267</b>
<b>WCC Tenants</b>						
Under-occupiers (Cash Incentive), incl CSH		12	13	4		29
Category A Medical	1	6	9	13		29
Children's Act CAAP			1			1
Community Supportive Housing (CSH)	6	41	1			48
Decant incl Renewal Decants and Returners		5	6	3	2	16
Overcrowded		1	23	16	9	49
Management Transfer	4	6	7			17
Studio to One-Beds		35				35
<b>WCC Tenants Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>766</b>