

Join our  
**COMMUNITY**  
 CONVERSATION



Let's talk about...  
**The future of housing**

**Who should council housing be for and for how long?  
 The Lettings Review**

Southwark Council is one of the largest landlords in the country, but not everyone who wants council housing can get it. There is very high housing demand with over 20,555 people on the council's housing register (the list of people applying to live in council homes or to transfer council properties). Around 3,000 council and housing association homes become available for letting each year, including specialist properties for older people, those with disabilities etc.

Due to an increase in Southwark's population the waiting time on the housing list is likely to get longer if all other factors remain the same. Therefore the council wants to hear your views on the following questions, which will help shape the future of housing in Southwark.

Last year a Lettings Review was set up to look at changes to the council's lettings policy (rules on who can apply to live in social housing in Southwark). The Lettings Review Group included residents, councillors and housing experts in the borough. The group was asked to think about 'Who should council housing be for and for how long?'.

The survey asks you to consider the recommendations of the lettings review group and let us know whether or not we should make changes to our existing lettings policy. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey, your response is confidential and will help feed into the lettings policy and the council's future housing policy.

The information you provide will be used fairly and lawfully and Southwark Council will not knowingly do anything which may lead to a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998.

There are more than 20,555 people on the housing register (the waiting list of people wanting to live in social housing). What are called “bands” are used to make sure those in most need are given housing first. There are four bands, band one is the highest priority and band four is the lowest.

- **Band one**
  - Under occupiers - people exchanging bigger properties for smaller ones
  - Council tenants who need to move so that new homes can be built or old ones repaired
  - Council tenants affected by fire and flood
  - Social services nominations (families)
  - Statutory obligation – those who we have to house by law
- **Band two**
  - Urgent medical priority - people with a severe illness or disability that is made significantly worse by their current housing
  - People who need to move because of serious harassment
  - Multiple need - people with more than one reason to move, for example, overcrowding and medical priority
  - Social services nominations (care leavers)
- **Band Three**
  - Homeless families with children or vulnerable homeless people
  - People living in overcrowded housing
  - Medical Priority - people who need to move because of their illness
  - Council tenants whose relationship has broken down
  - People who have no inside toilet, kitchen or bathroom
  - People with no electricity or hot water
- **Band Four**
  - Everyone else.

The lettings review group suggested that band four be abolished as applicants in this band have very little prospect of ever being re-housed, given the high demand for housing from those registered in higher priority bands.

**Q1 Do you think the housing register should only include residents who have a chance of being allocated council housing?**

- No, I think everyone should be allowed to be the register regardless of whether they will get a property or not .....
- Yes, only residents with a chance of being allocated a council home should be included on the housing register. ....
- I do not know .....

To be considered for housing in Southwark you need to have a “local connection” for at least six months in order to join the housing register.

“Local connection” normally means you live or work in Southwark.

**Q2 How long do you think that applicants for council housing should demonstrate a “local connection”?**

- 6 months .....
- 1 year .....
- 2 years.....
- 5 years.....
- Do not know.....

The council has a special policy for residents in council housing who have to move so that regeneration or major works (rebuilding or major repairs) can take place.

These residents are given top priority on 'Homesearch' and entitled to a newly built home if one is available. The lettings review recommends that this policy is unchanged.

Homesearch means that every week we advertise all the properties available (whether they are from the council, housing associations or even other boroughs) on our website and people on the waiting list bid for them.

**Q3** What do you think we should do for residents who have to move to allow regeneration?

\_\_\_\_\_

The council's lettings policy says that all children aged 16 or over should have their own bedroom. The government's overcrowding standard says that only children over 21 years of age should have their own bedroom. Because of the shortage of larger homes in Southwark, we are considering changing the age at which young people should have their own room, and raising the age limit to 21.

**Q4** At what age do you think a young person should be guaranteed their own bedroom?

- 16 and over .....
- 18 and over .....
- 21 and over .....
- Do not know .....

The Localism Act lets councils give priority for housing to people who make a community contribution.

Community contribution can mean people who do voluntary work, foster carers, members of the armed forces etc. (Community contribution can also mean people who are working.)

**Q5** To what extent do you agree that individuals who make a community contribution should be given priority on the housing register?

- Strongly agree* .....
- Agree* .....
- Neither agree nor disagree* .....
- Disagree* .....
- Strongly disagree* .....

**Q6** [If yes] Who do you think should be given priority for homes in Southwark because they make a community contribution?

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

- Volunteers in the community* .....
- People fostering children carers* .....
- People caring for sick or disabled relatives etc* .....
- Key workers (such as nurses, teachers, police etc)* .....
- Member of the armed forces* .....
- Those who are working* .....
- Other* .....

If Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

The money that we spend on looking after council housing mainly comes from the rents we collect from the people who live in it. However, about 60% of people get some housing benefit.

Central government has set what is called a 'formula' or 'target' rent for what it thinks our rents should be and wants all social housing providers to use this to set their rents. Central government expects our rents to be the same as the 'formula' or 'target' rent level by 2015/2016. This is called 'convergence'. At present our average rent is about £96 a week, the government's 'formula' rent is about £105 a week.

However, using annual rent affordability limits (what people who live in our housing can afford to pay), Southwark won't 'converge' until 2021/22

By not converging in time, Southwark will lose money through lost income

This could be speeded up if, for example, all new housing applicants went straight to formula rent (not existing tenants or transfers)

**Q7** Should the council charge new tenants (not existing ones) higher levels of rent in order to raise more money to invest in council housing?

- Yes, new tenants should be charged the government's recommended rate. ....*
- No, all tenants should pay the same amount .....*
- Do not know .....*

Sheltered housing is housing that has been specially adapted for older or some disabled people who are 55 or over to allow them to carry on living independently. It is designed so residents can be comfortable, have the companionship of other residents, and be provided with extra security. The council lets people apply for sheltered housing if they are over the age of 60, or 55 if they have a disability.

**Q8** Thinking about residents with disabilities or other special needs, at what age do you think residents should be allowed to apply for sheltered housing?

- 50.....*
- 55.....*
- 60.....*
- 65 and above.....*
- Do not know .....*

**Q9** Now thinking specifically of residents who do not have a disability or any other special needs, at what age should such individuals be allowed to apply for sheltered housing?

- 55.....*
- 60.....*
- 65 and above.....*
- Do not know .....*

Most council tenants are called secure tenants; this means that as long as a council home is their only and main home, we cannot make them leave without a court order. This means that unless they do something wrong they can keep their tenancy for life.

From 2003 the council brought in what are called introductory tenancies for new tenants. These last for 12 months after which they automatically become secure tenancies unless the council has started legal action to repossess the property.

- Q10 To what extent do you agree that tenancies should be for life?**
- Strongly agree*.....
  - Agree* .....
  - Neither agree nor disagree*.....
  - Disagree*.....
  - Strongly disagree*.....

- Q11 If you do not agree that tenancies should be for life, what do you think is the minimum length a tenancy period should be for tenants (without a disability, or special needs, or older people’s housing)?**
- 5 years*.....
  - 10 years*.....
  - 15 years*.....
  - 20 years*.....
  - Do not know* .....

**Q12 Do you have any additional comments on who should be able to live in council housing?**

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## About you

- Q13 Are you a resident of the borough?**
- Yes*.....
  - No*.....
  - Prefer not to say* .....

- Q14 [IF A RESIDENT] How would you best describe your housing tenure?**
- I am a council tenant*.....
  - I am a council leaseholder*.....
  - I own a property in the borough*.....
  - I rent privately*.....
  - I rent from a housing association* .....
  - I am living in temporary accommodation*.....
  - I prefer not to say* .....

- Q15 What is your gender?**
- Male* .....
  - Female*.....
  - Prefer not to say* .....

- Q16 Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?**
- White*.....
  - Mixed/dual heritage* .....
  - Asian or Asian British* .....
  - Black or Black British* .....
  - Latin American* .....
  - Arab* .....
  - Chinese* .....
  - Other* .....
  - Prefer not to say* .....

**Q17**      **And lastly, which age group you belong to?**

- 16 to 24 .....
- 25 to 34.....
- 35 to 44.....
- 45 to 50.....
- 51 to 59.....
- 60 and above .....
- Prefer not to say .....

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**

**If you would like to be kept up to date with information about this consultation or future community conversations please provide us with the following information.**

**Q18**      First name \_\_\_\_\_

                 Surname \_\_\_\_\_

                 Address 1 \_\_\_\_\_

                 Address 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

                 Email address \_\_\_\_\_