Open Agenda

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 5 October 2026
6.30 pm
Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

# Supplemental Agenda No. 2

List of Contents


| Item No. | Title | Page No. |
|---|---|---|
| 7. | **Scrutiny Call-in : Housing Allocation Scheme Review**<br>To consider the call-in of the Executive decision of 15 September 2026 in relation to Housing Allocations Scheme Review. | 1 - 165 |



**Contact**

Amit Alva on e-mail: amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Webpage: www.southwark.gov.uk


Date: 30 September 2026

Agenda Item 7

| | |
|---|---|
| **Meeting Name:** | Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| **Date:** | 5 October 2026 |
| **Report title:** | Scrutiny Call-in: Housing Allocations Scheme Review<br><br>(Executive, 15 September 2026) |
| **Ward(s) or groups affected:** | All |
| **Classification:** | Open |
| **Reason for lateness (if applicable):** | Yes (to meet constitutional requirements – see paragraph 15 and 16) |
| **From:** | Head of Scrutiny |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the scrutiny call-in of the executive decision in respect of 'Housing Allocations Scheme Review'.

2. That having considered the call-in, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee decide on the appropriate course of action as outlined in paragraph 12 of the report (Potential outcomes available to the call-in meeting).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. On 15 September 2026, the Executive considered the report 'Housing Allocations Scheme Review'.

   The Executive:

   1. Approved the new Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2026 for implementation, including the following key changes:

      - removing "working in the borough" as an automatic qualification criterion;

      - introducing a five-band structure, with homeless households without additional preference placed in Band D and a new Band E created for households with low housing need;

      - allowing Band E applicants to bid for advertised accommodation, while recognising their lower priority;

      - removing additional priority within bands via the priority stars system;

      - confirming the levels of overcrowding that apply within each priority

band;

- increasing priority for Southwark care leavers;
- raising the ceiling age for same-sex siblings sharing a bedroom to 20 years; and
- confirming the use of Local Lettings Plans and an Annual Lettings Plan alongside priority banding to support the fair and effective allocation of social housing.
- the implementation of the new Management Transfer Policy, as set out at Appendix C, to operate alongside the revised Housing Allocations Scheme. The policy will provide a clear and consistent framework for managing urgent and essential management moves, supporting tenant safety, effective housing management, and the best use of available stock.

2. Agreed that a review of the new Scheme be carried out after 12 months of operation and reported to the Lead Member.

3. Noted the associated resource implications and costs of implementing the new scheme.

**KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

4. A request for a 'call-in' can be made in relation to an executive decision which has been made but not yet implemented by the following:

a) the executive
b) an individual member of the executive
c) a committee of the executive
d) an executive decision taken by an individual member
e) a key decision made by an officer with delegated authority.

5. This enables the overview and scrutiny committee to consider whether the decision is appropriate.

6. It is for the overview and scrutiny committee to decide what evidence to consider and take into account when considering the call-in. The committee should however be mindful of the grounds for call-in and the specific decision(s) the call-in relates to when considering whether the decision is appropriate.

7. The committee should also be mindful of the provisions contained in the Council constitution which enable interested parties to make representations to a decision maker ahead of a decision and the onus on the decision maker to have regard to representations received when taking a decision. The committee should therefore as far as practicable not introduce new issues or rehearse points that have previously been made to the decision maker.

**Call-in request**

8. A request for call-in was received from Councillors Evelyn Akoto, Stephanie Cryan, Sarah King, Victoria Mills, and Bill Williams.

   The grounds and concerns identified in the call-in request relate to:

   - consultation in relation to the raising of the ceiling age for same sex siblings to share a bedroom from 15 in the previous policy up to the age 20 in the new policy, and there being no question on this change as part of the consultation process, noting it was a significant change;
   - the response rate to the consultation;
   - consultation provision for residents who struggle to access digital services;
   - whether the equality implications were adequately considered in relation to disability and residents living with medical conditions.

9. Full detail in respect of the call-in request is contained in Appendix 1 of the report.

**Comments of the Head of Scrutiny**

10. In requesting the call-in of a decision, the requesters of the call-in are required to indicate and give reasons why they believe the principles of decision making set out in Article 1.3 of the constitution have failed to be applied.

11. The call-in meeting provides the opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore whether the grounds for call-in are valid, and consider appropriate next steps based on the options available to the committee as detailed in paragraph 13 below.

12. The consideration of a call-in is an important part of the council's governance and assurance arrangements. It enables the committee to test the decision-making process openly, consider the information and advice relevant to the specified grounds for call-in, and determine whether any further action is required. The process can therefore provide assurance to the council and the public about the transparency and robustness of the decision, irrespective of the outcome reached by the committee.

**Potential outcomes available to the call-in meeting**

13. If, having considered the decision and all relevant advice, the committee is still concerned about it then it may either:

    a) refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns, or

    b) refer the matter to council assembly if the decision is

deemed to be outside the policy and budget framework (not applicable in this case), or

c) not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body but decide to undertake a subsequent review of a policy or service issue, which shall not affect the implementation of the decision, or

d) not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body.

14. In the event of outcomes c) and d) above, the decision shall take effect on the date of the scrutiny meeting. Notice of the decision will be issued to all councillors and published on the council's website.

**REASONS FOR LATENESS**

15. The processing of the call-in request took place after the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda had been published.

**REASONS FOR URGENCY**

16. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules 18.3(a) the called-in decision shall be referred to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, if that meeting is within ten clear working days of the receipt of the call-in request.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

| Background Papers | Held At | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| Executive report – (attached as an Appendix) | | |

**APPENDICES**

| No. | Title |
|---|---|
| Appendix 1 | Scrutiny call-in request form |
| Appendix 2 | Executive report, Housing Allocations Scheme Review |

**AUDIT TRAIL**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Lead Officer** | Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny | |
| **Report Author** | Everton Roberts | |
| **Version** | Final | |
| **Dated** | 30 September 2026 | |
| **Key Decision?** | No | |
| **CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER** | | |
| **Officer Title** | **Comments Sought** | **Comments Included** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Director of Law and Governance | No | No |
| Strategic Director, Resources | No | No |
| **Executive Member** | No | No |
| **Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team** | | 30 September 2026 |

Overview and Scrutiny

# Scrutiny call-in request form

This form is to be used when requesting a call-in. It has been created to elicit the required information, and to provide an audit trail of the process.

## Requesting a call-in

To request a call-in, please complete section 1 and arrange for the form to be countersigned by four other members of the council and email to scrutinyteam2@southwark.gov.uk before the end of the scrutiny call-in period indicated on the decision notification issued by the constitutional team.

**SECTION 1**

**1. Title of decision to be called in, and decision taker**

| **Decision title:** | **Decision taker:** |
|---|---|
| Housing Allocations Scheme Review | Executive |

**2. Have you [applicable to all councillors requesting the call-in] participated in taking the decision?**

(Yes/No): No

**Note:** A member who participates in taking an executive decision shall not sign a call-in request on the same decision (thus avoiding any conflict of interests).

**3. Does the request for call-in relate to a single recommendation in the report or the whole report?**

Please specify: Whole report

**4. Which of the principles of decision making in Article 1.3 of the constitution have failed to be applied? (see scrutiny call-in guidance for explanation)**

Mark all that you believe have failed to be applied and state reasons:

| **Decision making principle:** | **Failed to be applied? (mark with an X)** |
|---|---|
| (a) The link between strategy and implementation must be maintained<br><br>**Reason:** | |
| (b) Decision making generally, whether by individual officers, individual executive members or the executive collectively, should have reference to the policy framework<br><br>**Reason:** | |
| (c) Respect for human rights, law, probity and the constitution<br><br>**Reason:** | |
| (d) reasonable and proportionate consultation<br><br>**Reason:**<br><br>One of the most controversial aspects of this decision is the raising of the ceiling age for same sex siblings to share a bedroom from 15 in the previous policy up to the age 20 in this policy.<br><br>No question in the consultation was asked on this issue.<br><br>The only respondent to the consultation who mentioned this issue voiced concern and disagreed with the proposal to make this change. | X |

| | |
|---|---|
| It cannot be considered a fair and proper consultation if one of the most significant and controversial changes to the existing policy is not mentioned in the consultation questions.<br><br>Furthermore, residents have rightly raised concerns at the breath of the consultation. The report repeatedly refers to the 23,000 people on the housing list who would be impacted by this policy change, yet only 668 people responded to the consultation online and an additional 482 via email.<br><br>There was no consultation provision for residents who struggle to access digital services – many of whom would be most impacted by the changes proposed.<br><br>Therefore this report should be called-in for scrutiny. | |
| (e) the taking of reasonable and appropriate professional advice from officers<br><br>**Reason:** | |
| (f) proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome)<br><br>**Reason:** | |
| (g) a presumption in favour of openness<br><br>**Reason:** | |
| (h) clarity of aims and desired outcomes, including of the options considered | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Reason:** | |
| i) consideration of the likely climate consequences and the likely equality (including socio-economic disadvantage and health inequality) consequences of the relevant decision and therefore reports for decision should include advice from officers of the likely climate and equality impacts of the decision<br><br>**Reason:**<br><br>There are significant concerns with how this policy approaches disability and residents living with medical issues.<br><br>Disability is only mentioned 5 times in the whole report.<br><br>The proposed 'opt-in' automated bidding requires significant digital understanding and therefore additional support which is not outlined in this decision.<br><br>Similarly, Band B removes adults with learning disability wanting to live independently, with no consideration for this change made in the equality impact assessment. This is despite the equality impact assessment identifying that the second most common reason for long-term support being provided to 5,650 Southwark Adult Social Care users is those with a learning disability.<br><br>It therefore cannot be accepted that the equalities impact has been correctly considered in taking this decision and scrutiny is therefore required. | X |

**5. Is the decision believed to be outside the policy or budget framework**

(Yes / No): No

| **Signatures of those members requesting the call-in of the decision:**<br><br>**Note:** each member must insert his or her name in the table below. A separate email from the member communicating support for the call-in is sufficient but should be evidenced upon submission of the form. |
|---|
| 1) Councillor Victoria Mills<br>2) Councillor Bill Williams<br>3) Councillor Sarah King<br>4) Councillor Stephanie Cryan<br>5) Councillor Evelyn Akoto |

**Section 2**

To be completed by Head of Scrutiny (or officer of the scrutiny team)

| **6. Does the request meet the Call-in threshold?**<br><br>(All must apply for threshold to be met): | **Mark with an X** |
|---|---|
| (a) Five members of the council have requested the decision be called-in[1]. | X |
| (b) A member who has participated in taking the executive decision has not signed a call-in request on the same decision. | X |

[1]This can include education representatives (for the purpose of education decisions only)

| | |
|---|---|
| (c) Evidence that the decision maker did not take the decision in accordance with the principles of decision making as set out in Article 1.3 of the constitution has been provided. | X |
| (d) The request has stated whether the members believe that the decision is outside the policy or budget framework. | X |

**7. Request for call-in considered valid?**

(Yes / No): Yes

**Reasons:**

In respect of D – Reasonable and Proportionate Consultation

For the reasons set out in the call-in request. A call-in will enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore whether the raising of the ceiling age for same sex siblings sharing a bedroom should have been a consultation question given the implications of the change in policy.

The call-in will also enable the committee to consider whether the consultation response rate was adequate.

In respect of J – Likely equality implications

For the reasons set out in the call-in request. The call-in will enable the committee to explore whether the equalities impact has been correctly considered.

Signed: Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny

Date: 28 September 2026

**Note:** If the call-in is considered to be valid, the scrutiny officer shall notify the decision taker and the relevant chief officer, who shall suspend implementation of the decision. The scrutiny officer shall a) refer the called-in decision to the next meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee, if that meeting is within ten clear working days of the receipt of the call-in request, or b) call an extraordinary meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee to consider the called-in decision, to take place as soon as possible and in any case within ten clear working days of the call-in request, or c) if appropriate arrange an extraordinary meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee to consider

the matter outside the normal timetable, unless in the view of the monitoring officer and/or the chief finance officer, in consultation with the relevant chief officer, the matter cannot wait and in which case it shall be considered in accordance with the timescale set out above.

Invalid Call-in Request

Where a call-in has been ruled invalid by the scrutiny officer, a request can be made by those requesting call-in for the monitoring officer to review the ruling. The request shall be made by 4pm on the second working day after the day of the notification of the decision by the scrutiny officer.

In the event of dispute, the decision of the monitoring officer shall be final.

**Request for review of scrutiny officer ruling. Please send this form to John Scarborough, Monitoring Officer by 4pm, @ date**

(**Email:** john.scarborough@southwark.gov.uk)

**Section 3**

**To be completed by the monitoring officer upon receipt of request for review**

I have reviewed the grounds for call-in and reasons given for an invalid request and conclude that the request for call-in is (Valid / Invalid)

**Reasons:**

**John Scarborough, Monitoring Officer**

**Dated:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Meeting Name:** | Executive |
| **Date:** | 15 September 2026 |
| **Report title:** | Housing Allocations Scheme Review |
| **Executive Member:** | Councillor Reginald Popoola, Executive Member for Council Homes |
| **Ward(s) or groups affected:** | All wards |
| **Classification:** | Open |
| **Reason for lateness (if applicable):** | Not applicable |

**FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR REGINALD POOPLA, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES**

This report comes before the Executive at a pivotal moment for housing in Southwark. With more than 20,000 households on our housing waiting list, the housing pressures facing Southwark are more acute, more complex, and more urgent than at any point in recent years. Rising homelessness, the continuing shortage of genuinely affordable homes, increasing demand for temporary accommodation, and sustained pressure on council finances have combined to create a system that is too often difficult for residents to understand and too stretched for officers to administer with the consistency, clarity and pace that applicants rightly expect. At the same time, the Council must respond to a changed legal, regulatory and policy environment, including new statutory guidance, recent reforms to the private rented sector, and the clear concerns raised by the Regulator of Social Housing in its November 2024 judgement.

The current scheme was introduced in 2013. Since then, the housing landscape has changed drastically. Housing pressures have intensified, homelessness has increased, and expectations around transparency, accountability and regulatory compliance have rightly become stronger. The adoption of a new Housing Allocations Scheme is therefore a necessary and significant step in rebuilding confidence in how Southwark allocates its scarce social housing, ensuring that the Council meets its legal duties, and providing a clearer, fairer and more transparent framework for some of the borough's most vulnerable residents.

This report sets out the case for change and recommends the adoption of a revised Housing Allocations Scheme following extensive development, engagement and consultation over a two-year period. The new scheme has been shaped by changes in legislation, external scrutiny, legal challenges, feedback from residents, applicants, tenants, housing associations and internal services, and the practical experience of administering the housing allocations current system. It seeks to simplify the rules, improve clarity for applicants, support better decision-making, and ensure that limited social housing is allocated in a way that better reflects statutory duties, reasonable preference, local priorities and the urgent need to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation.

The challenge before us is a difficult one. Behind every application is a resident or family seeking the security, stability and opportunity that a safe and affordable home provides. No allocations scheme can, on its own, resolve the structural shortage of affordable housing. However, the Executive has a responsibility to ensure that the system we operate is fair, lawful, transparent and capable of commanding the confidence of residents at a time when every available social home counts.

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

### Recommendation(s) for the Executive

1. To approve the new Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2026 for implementation, including the following key changes:

2. removing “working in the borough” as an automatic qualification criterion;

3. introducing a five-band structure, with homeless households without additional preference placed in Band D and a new Band E created for households with low housing need;

4. allowing Band E applicants to bid for advertised accommodation, while recognising their lower priority;

5. Removing additional priority within bands via the priority stars system;

6. confirming the levels of overcrowding that apply within each priority band;

7. increasing priority for Southwark care leavers;

8. raising the ceiling age for same-sex siblings sharing a bedroom to 20 years; and

9. confirming the use of Local Lettings Plans and an Annual Lettings Plan alongside priority banding to support the fair and effective allocation of social housing.

10. To approve the implementation of the new Management Transfer Policy, as set out at Appendix C, to operate alongside the revised Housing Allocations Scheme. The policy will provide a clear and consistent framework for managing urgent and essential management moves, supporting tenant safety, effective housing management, and the best use of available stock.

11. To agree that a review of the new Scheme be carried out after 12 months of operation and reported to the Lead Member.

12. To note the associated resource implications and costs of implementing the new scheme.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

13. As a local housing authority, the Council is legally required to have a housing allocations scheme under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) (the Act), setting out how social housing is allocated in its borough.

14. These recommendations will enable compliance with regulations and clarity for applicants applying for an allocation of social housing in Southwark.

15. Adopting a new Housing Allocations Scheme is a key priority within the Good Landlord Plan (Housing Improvement Plan) as a result of November 2024 Judgement of the Regulator of Social Housing (the Regulator) on the Council's Landlord Services, citing the lack of an up-to-date Allocations Scheme as one of the reasons for the C3 Grade. Southwark remains on the Gradings Under Review list and the Regulator has the power to downgrade Southwark to a C4, or initiate enforcement action if the Council fails to meet the outcomes of the Consumer Standards, which includes satisfying the Regulator that we are allocating our homes in a far and transparent manner.

16. The revised Housing Allocations Scheme aligns with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness, supporting prevention, fair access to social housing, and improved move-on from temporary accommodation.

17. The proposed Housing Allocations Scheme sits alongside recent reforms to the private rented sector, including the Renters' Rights Act, supporting homelessness prevention by encouraging more stable private rented housing while maintaining access to the housing register for those who need it.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

18. This policy has been developed over a two-year period through extensive consultation with both internal and external stakeholders, including tenants, housing applicants, and residents of Southwark. As a result, a wide range of alternative approaches for each element of the scheme, where decisions are at the discretion of local elected members rather than mandated by statute have been carefully considered.

19. Options explored included reverting to a points-based system, removing the choice-based lettings system approach, and retaining the use of 'priority stars' to give additional priority within Bands.

20. These options have not been recommended due to the complexity and potential lack of clarity they impose on the housing allocations rules and administration, which should benefit from clarity and simplification for both applicants and officers administering the scheme.

21. The option to retain four bands rather than five has also been considered. This has not been taken forward as it is considered necessary for the proposed new scheme to have five bands to clearly express the reasonable preference and additional preference categories.

## POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

22. The new Housing Allocations Scheme (the Scheme) will be implemented as set out from paragraph 113 below, with additional resources allocated to support the implementation of the scheme in particular but not limited to integration of IT systems and quality assuring the households that will be eligible and qualify to access housing.

23. A working group led by the Housing Transformation team, reporting to a project board chaired by the Director of Housing Needs and Support, is managing the implementation process, including IT changes, communications, new procedures, staff training and application reviews.

24. IT and Temporary Accommodation Allocations staff will complete a structured review of the housing register to quality-assure application data and confirm eligibility, priority banding, and bidding status ahead of implementation of the new Scheme.

25. It is anticipated that the scheme will go live shortly following Executive approval.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

26. Every local authority must have a social housing allocations scheme, setting out the rules for allocating social housing in the area and explaining how decisions are made, to comply with the Housing Act 1996 (the Act) and the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England, 2012 (last updated June 2024) (the Code of Guidance).

27. The Council must publish a clear and understandable summary of the scheme to demonstrate that the process of allocating social housing is fair, consistent, and transparent. The current published Southwark Housing Allocations scheme 2013 includes provisions arising from the Localism Act 2011.

28. While there is no statutory timeframe for reviewing an allocations scheme, it is considered good practice to review the scheme at least every two years and the scheme in use must be updated to ensure compliance with any regulatory changes, such as the 2022 Statutory Guidance: Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse and the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

29. An updated housing allocations scheme was presented to Cabinet in 2020 and approved for consultation, which took place during 2021. Following significant increases in homelessness and other related matters, the 2020 draft was withdrawn, and work on a new draft began in 2023.

30. The new draft scheme has been informed by changes in legislation, further increases in homelessness and the related cost of temporary accommodation, budgetary pressure in the Housing Revenue Account along with external scrutiny and legal challenges of the existing scheme.

31. Proposed changes to key elements of the scheme, including qualification, choice and priority, have been developed with the support of internal partners and Housing Associations (HAs) during pre-consultation engagement, which began in February 2023 supported by specialist housing allocations consultants Neil Morland and Co. to help formulate the new scheme.

32. The consultants advised that the current 2013 Housing Allocations scheme is vulnerable to legal challenge in a number of respects, which became evident following issues the service has faced relating to statutory overcrowding and disabled adapted accommodation.

## NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT: HOMELESSNESS

33. In December 2025, the Government published **A National Plan to End Homelessness**, setting out a cross-government strategy for England with the long-term ambition that homelessness becomes rare, brief, and non-recurring. The Plan places a strong emphasis on prevention, earlier intervention, and

reducing reliance on unsuitable temporary accommodation, while ensuring social housing is allocated in a fair, transparent, and needs-led way.

34. The National Plan identifies social housing allocations as a critical lever in preventing homelessness and reducing repeat homelessness, including improving access for households with the highest levels of need, strengthening pathways out of temporary accommodation, and ensuring that allocation policies are simple, understandable, and compliant with statutory guidance. The Plan also signals the Government's intention to update national guidance on allocations to address barriers to fair access to social housing.

35. The proposed Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme directly supports the objectives of the National Plan by prioritising households experiencing homelessness and severe housing need, simplifying the prioritisation framework, and strengthening transparency and consistency in decision-making. In particular, the revised banding structure and removal of non-housing related priority align with the National Plan's focus on allocating scarce social housing resources based on housing need, while managing expectations for applicants who are unlikely to receive an allocation.

    The National Plan also highlights the need to improve temporary accommodation pathways and reduce prolonged stays, including a national ambition to eliminate the routine use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families and to improve the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation. By strengthening the allocation of social housing to homeless households and improving move- on from temporary accommodation, the proposed scheme supports these national objectives and the Council's wider Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

**CONSUMER STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING**

36. As part of the new inspection regime for the Regulator of Social Housing (the Regulator) to test against the Consumer Standards for social housing, the Regulator carried out a planned inspection of the Southwark Landlord Service in August 2024.

37. These Consumer Standards were introduced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and apply to all HAs. These Standards include the Tenancy Standard, which states that HAs must allocate and let their homes in a fair and transparent way taking the needs of tenants and prospective tenants into account.

38. Specific expectations set out in the Tenancy Standard require that HAs must seek to allocate homes that are designated, designed, or adapted to meet specific needs in a way that is compatible with the purpose of the housing. This includes general needs homes, family homes, adapted homes for households with a disabled family member, and sheltered housing.

39. The Tenancy Standard also requires that HAs must develop and deliver services that seek to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their homes, focus on the needs of tenants, take action to prevent and tackle tenancy fraud, and have a simple and accessible appeals process for allocation decisions. These requirements all relate to an HAs adopted housing allocations scheme, among other areas of a landlord's services.

40. Following the inspection Southwark received a C3 grading from the Regulator in November 2024. In its supporting published judgement, the Regulator was highly critical of the lack of an updated housing allocations scheme.

41. The Regulator noted the proactive steps being taken to develop a modern scheme, and this is now a key action within the Good Landlord Plan (Housing Improvement Plan), which is regularly reviewed by the Regulator.

## SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME REQUIREMENTS

42. Prescribed information for the scheme includes:

    **a.** Eligibility criteria, based on immigration status and habitual residence.

    **b.** The applicant's right to a review of any decision made within the scheme and the process for doing so.

43. The Act also requires that schemes provide for 'reasonable preference', or priority, be given to certain categories of person in housing need. These categories are:

    **a.** People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (owed the full homelessness duty by Southwark)).

    **b.** People who are owed a homelessness duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985 or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3).

    **c.** People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.

    **d.** People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.

    **e.** People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.

    **f.** People who are suffering, escaping or recovering from domestic abuse.

44. This does not mean that applicants who fall into these groups must be allocated a social rented home, but they are entitled to be given a reasonable preference within the scheme.

45. A scheme must also give additional preference to former members of the armed forces, their families (essentially their partners and children) and reservists, who fall into any of the above reasonable preference categories.

46. While housing allocations law and guidance must be followed, there is some provision for councils to tailor their schemes to reflect local housing pressures and priorities, The criteria that may include some locally defined elements include:

    **a.** The criteria for qualifying to join the housing register for an allocation of social rented housing, such as residency requirements, behaviour requirements, or income thresholds, as well as which groups of

applicants may be lawfully excluded form qualifying, for example those with no local connection.

**b.** The size and type of accommodation that an applicant's household can be offered.

**c.** How applicants can express preferences, or choice, for certain types of property or locations within the borough.

**d.** The method of allocation, setting out the prioritisation system to be used, and how applicants will be shortlisted and matched to properties.

**e.** How all scheme decisions are made.

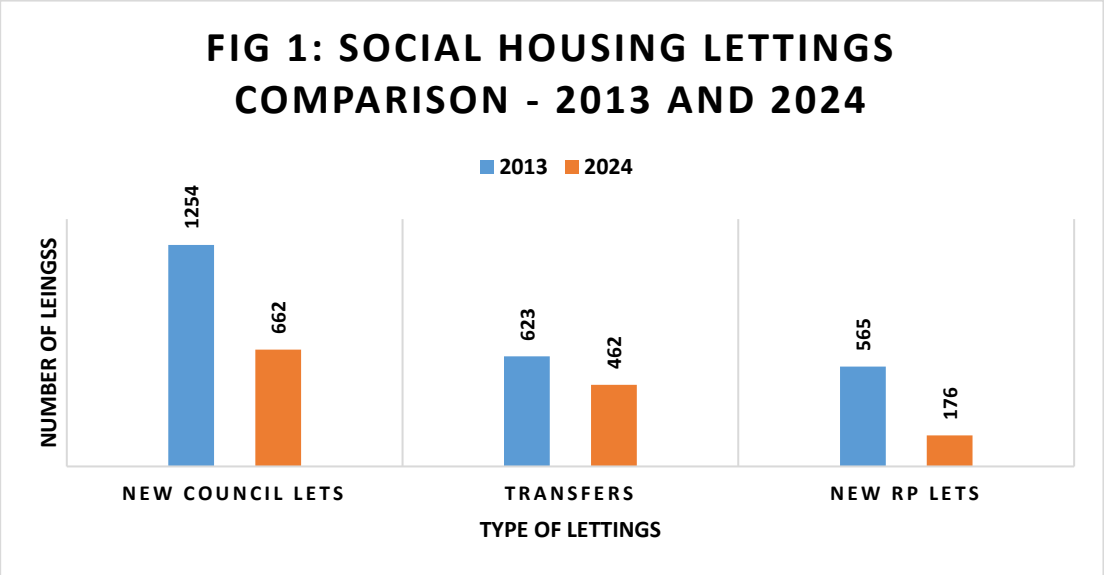
**f.** How nominations are made to other providers of social housing (housing associations) in the borough.

## SOUTHWARK HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

47. The significant demand for social housing in Southwark, and across London, is well documented. The council, like, most local housing authorities in England, has been unable to meet the housing needs of the majority of applicants on the housing register for many years, despite one of the strongest programmes of building and facilitating new social rented housing nationally through its housebuilding and enabling programmes.

48. Since the current housing allocations scheme was introduced more than 10 years ago, pressures on social housing and associated housing services have increased considerably and continue to do so. The number of households with applications on the Southwark Housing Register is now more than 22,000, and 4,200 households living in temporary accommodation.

49. These pressures are significantly exacerbated by the reduction in the number of social rented homes available to let each year. In 2013 there were 2442 social rented homes let to households on the Southwark Housing Register, of which 623 were transfers to current Southwark tenants and 525 were nominations to Housing Associations (HAs) compared with 1217 lets during 2024/25, of which 462 were transfers and 176 were nominations to HAs.

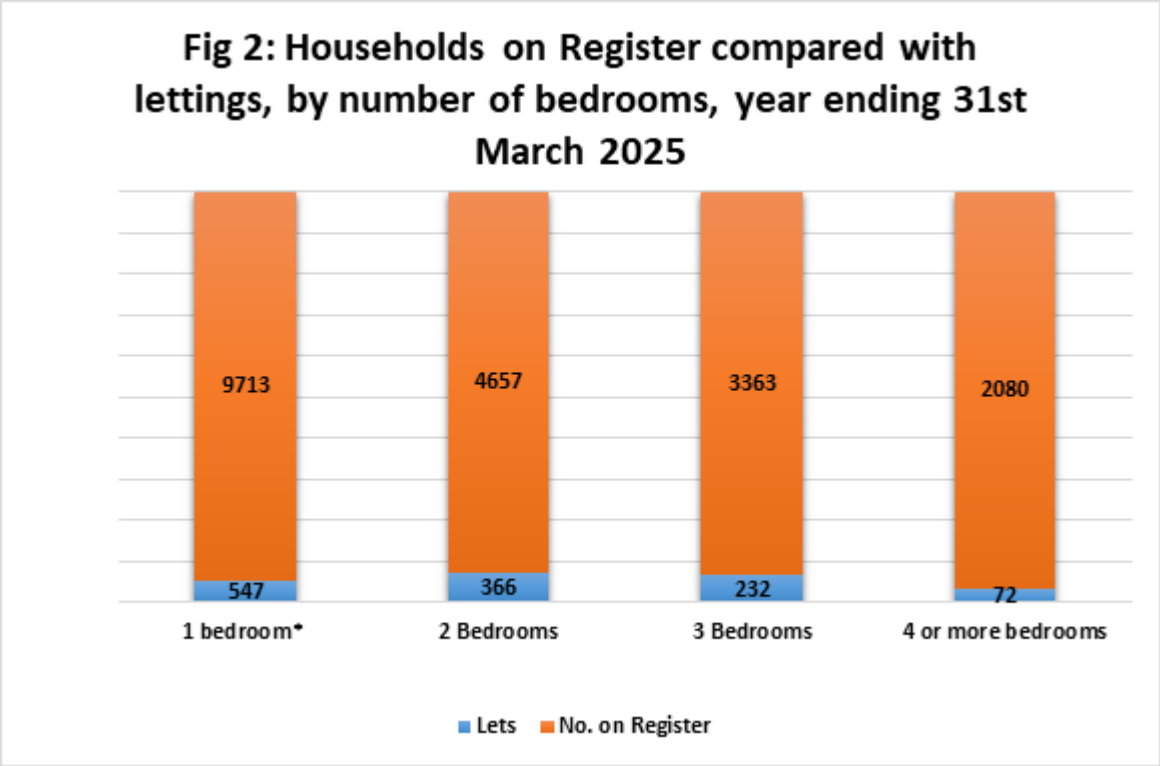



*Source: Social housing lettings in England, 2022/23: COntinuous REcording (CORE) data*.

50. As the number of people applying for social housing far exceeds the number of homes that become available to let each year, social housing is unfortunately not a realistic housing option for most applicants, with only 6% of those registered being allocated a social rented home in Southwark in the year ending 31st March 2026. It is therefore essential that the housing allocations scheme be framed to ensure that the majority of social housing in the borough is allocated to those who need it the most.

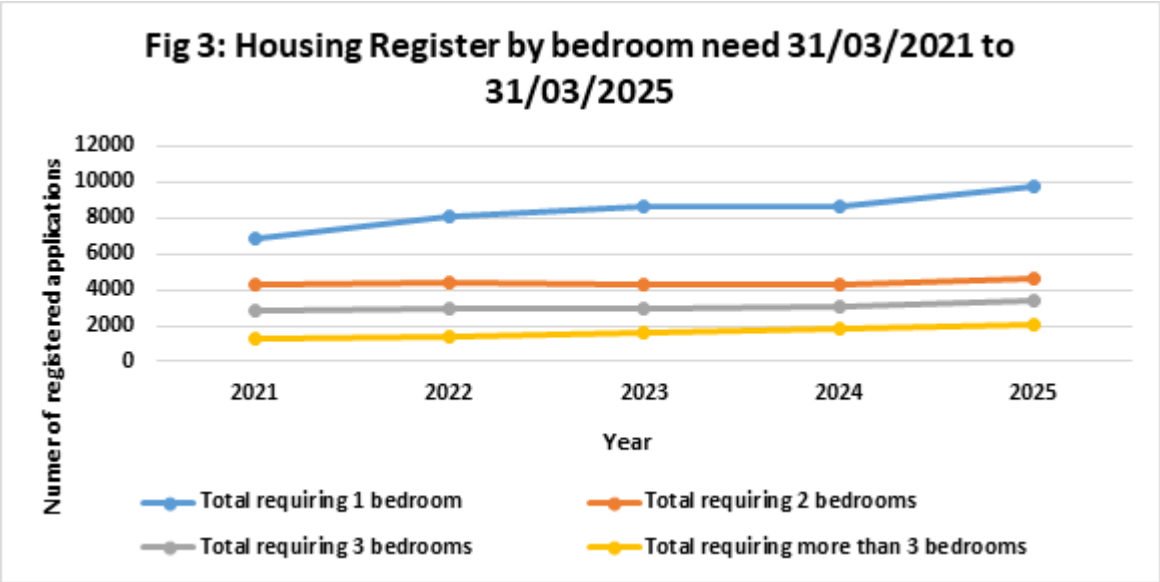
51. The type and size of social rented homes that become available is also an important factor, as almost 34% of Council homes in the Borough are one bedroom or studio homes, designed for single people or couples, which is reflected in the homes that become available to rent with the largest proportion of lettings being almost 45% to one bedroom* homes.

52. Housing Register analysis also shows that one bedroom or studio homes are in the greatest demand, as seen at Fig 2, with just under 50% of applicants having a one bedroom need.



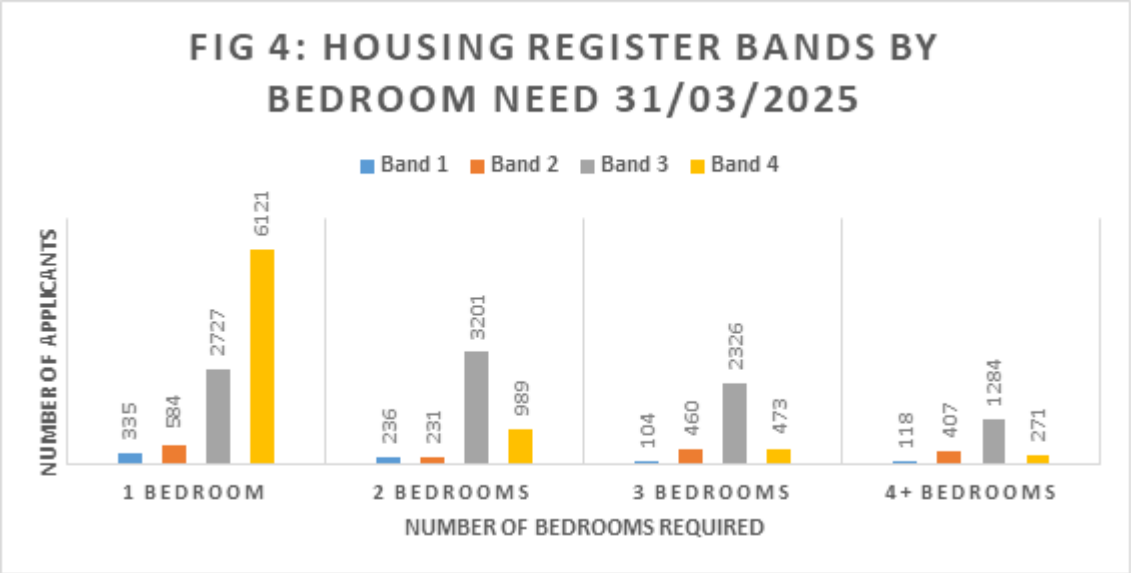

Source: Southwark Housing Register and Allocations data 2024/25
**This number also includes studio flats and sheltered housing.*

53. As evidenced in Fig 3. above, the growth in the need for one-bedroom homes is far greater than for any other property size, rising from 6868 registered households in 2021 to 9713 in 2025. All other property size need increased at a much slower rate.




**Source: Southwark Housing Register Data 2021 to 2025.*

However, it is essential to understand when considering this scheme, as well as when planning new affordable housing provision in the Borough, these numbers alone do not determine the level of priority need to be addressed. Fig 4 shows the breakdown of priority Band by bedroom need at 31st March 2025, clearly showing that more than 30% of applications on the register, are those in Band 4 with the least priority, seeking one bedroom or studio accommodation.
Source: Southwark Housing Register Data 31st March 2025




*Source: Southwark Housing Register Data 31st March 2025*

54. By comparison, the allocations for 2024/25 show that the greatest proportion of available social homes for each property size were let to applicants in Band 3.

55. There are often challenges of suitability faced by households in Band 1, for example where the home is not accessible for the households, and there will be some change to this with the proposed scheme with, for example care leavers currently included within the Band 2 being given greater priority and moved up to the highest priority, Band A. However the mismatch between the level of need and the size of the available homes means that those with the lowest need could be the most likely to be offered a social home. With such limitations to the efforts to meet housing need and it is essential that the Scheme is clear and understandable for all and effectively communicated to applicants, and those 94% of households who will unfortunately not benefit from being allocated a social rented home and will need to secure an alternative housing option.

## KEY PROPOSED CHANGES

56. The full detail of the proposed changes to the scheme, following the analysis of the consultation and engagement responses and Equalities Impact and Need Assessment, are included within the accompanying appendices. The key changes are set out below.

### Eligibility and Qualification

57. Applicants who meet the prescribed eligibility criteria will then need to meet qualification criteria. To qualify for an allocation of social housing within the current scheme an applicant must be 16 or over and capable of holding a tenancy. With the exception of some Armed and Reserve Forces personnel, they must also have a local connection to Southwark from having lived in the borough for the last five years, or work in Southwark and have a housing need, or want to live near a close relative to provide or receive care and support. There is also provision for those with specific medical or social needs to be excluded from needed a local connection.

58. For the proposed new Scheme, the criterion of local connection due to working in the Borough is being removed as an automatic reason for qualifying to join the housing register, with the exception of social housing tenants in England applying under the Right to Move Statutory Guidance.

59. In addition, qualification under the Scheme will include households who are residing outside of the borough where this is the result of an offer of private rented sector accommodation secured to discharge the Council's duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (including discharge of the prevention duty, relief duty, or following acceptance of the main homelessness duty). This ensures that households are not disadvantaged in accessing the housing register solely because they have accepted suitable private rented accommodation outside the borough, and supports homelessness prevention and move-on from temporary accommodation.

**Priority Bands and additional priority**

60. The current 2013 scheme is structured around four priority bands, with Band 1 representing the highest level of housing need and Band 4 the lowest. Applicants may be placed in Band 4 either due to a lower assessed need or as a result of a temporary downgrade in priority, for example following the refusal of three suitable offers of accommodation.

61. In addition to the above, additional priority is provided to some applicants within the Bands by way of Priority Stars. These Stars are 'awarded' for homeless applicants in Band 4, and applicants who can evidence that they are working or volunteering. Southwark social housing tenants not in breach of their tenancy agreement are given additional priority through the Good Tenant Award. Both the Priority stars and Good Tenant Award will be removed in the proposed scheme to ensure that the scheme is as simple and transparent as possible and based only on the housing needs of the household.

62. The proposed new scheme is very similar in the priority given for each set of circumstances, with the changes being five Bands, A to E, providing an additional Band to ensure we can give reasonable preference to homeless applicants not owed a Part VII duty, as required by the Act. Those applicants currently in Band 4 who meet this criterion will remain in the 4$^{th}$ Band D, and all other applicants with low housing need that do not meet any of the criteria in Bands A to D, as well as social housing tenants seeking a move but with on housing need, will be moved down to the new Band E.

63. Applicants with a right of succession and those who are Southwark tenants seeking a management transfer will be managed by Landlord Services under policies separate to the allocations scheme, and Emergency Landlord Transfer criteria will be removed.

64. Band A includes the requirements of the Code of Guidance in regard to severe property conditions, Care Leavers, single homeless applicants approved for the Councils Housing First scheme, and applicants with severe medical, disability or welfare including terminal or life-threatening health condition contributed to by the current housing or to give or receive care will be moved up to Band A.

65. Band B removes applicants in adapted home no longer required, applicants subject to multi-agency public protection agreement (MAPPA), adults with learning disability wanting to live independently, and Southwark Council or Housing Association tenants for 5+ years at property with no tenancy breach.

66. Under the new Housing Allocations Scheme, overcrowding will be assessed in a clearer and simpler way. The Council will look at whether a household is legally overcrowded, or overcrowded under the Council's bedroom standard. Households living in very overcrowded conditions will continue to be given the highest priority for rehousing. For other households, overcrowding will be assessed using updated bedroom rules, including allowing children of the same sex to share a bedroom until the age of 20. This brings Southwark in line with many other London councils and helps make decisions more consistent and easier to understand.

67. Those with applications moved to Band E will be able to bid on advertised homes, following consultation feedback on the draft proposals. While they are unlikely to be rehoused because of their lower priority, allowing bidding supports transparency and inclusion within the scheme.

**Choice**

68. Social homes will still be allocated mainly through a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme where approved applicants are able to express their interest in an advertised home through bidding, and new properties will be added when they are ready for bidding on, rather than weekly to help reduce void periods.

69. Most applicants will be able to bid on one home at any time and will still be suspended for a 12-month period on refusal of three suitable offers but not demoted to the lowest band during that period.

70. The Council will still use Direct Letting from time to time, for example when a homeless household living in temporary accommodation does not bid on any available home, where suitable homes have been advertised. All direct lettings will be approved by the Director of Housing Needs and Support.

**Other Changes**

71. New council homes will still be allocated through a local lettings policy which will include a proportion of the homes to be let to current tenants, but this will be on a site-by-site basis at between 0% and 100%, no longer restricted to 50%.

72. A separate management transfer policy that will work alongside the main Allocations Scheme will be developed with Area Managers to improve the process of urgent and essential management moves. This should help reduce the time taken for these moves and reduce void periods.

73. The Council will make use of an annual lettings plan, as specified within the new scheme document, to provide flexibility to respond to changes in housing need within the borough.

74. An Accessible Housing Register will be established with support from colleagues in Asset Management to determine whether a property is adapted or adaptable, at the point of advertising. Following a legal challenge during 2023/24 this has been identified as an area for improvement. This will not physically be a separate register, but rather, improved coding on the Council's property database when a home becomes void, and on the application of the households in need of an adapted or adaptable home. This will provide the potential to more effectively match adapted homes to applicants who need them.

75. The current scheme requires applicants to inform the Council of any changes in circumstances but there is no provision for an annual review of housing circumstances. Such reviews are good practice, as many applicants shortlisted for accommodation have not provided up to date information and this leads to disappointment for the applicant if they cannot be offered the property, and additional administration for officers. To ensure the application is always as up to date as possible rolling annual reviews will be introduced within the proposed scheme, through a simple annual request for the applicant to review their application and either confirm and evidence any changes or confirm that there are none.

76. The current scheme uses the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) bedroom criteria to assess non-statutory overcrowding and inform the number of bedrooms an applicant needs. These criteria include a ceiling age for same sex siblings to share a bedroom up to the age of 15, with those 16 and over entitled to their own bedroom. In line with the bedroom standard, the new scheme proposes raising that ceiling age to 20, meaning that children of the same sex can be expected to share a bedroom up to the age of 20 unless there is evidence that a separate bedroom is required on medical or welfare grounds.

77. Full details and impact of all proposed changes between the current 2013 scheme and the proposed new scheme are summarised scope of Changes (Appendix D).

**CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

78. The Council followed good practice and carried out public consultation on the new proposed scheme for a 12-week period from 10th March 2025, and wrote to notify all council tenants and housing applicants, as well as RPs, partner agencies, support groups and other interested parties to encourage them to have their say on the new scheme proposals.

79. The online consultation asked specific questions on proposed changes and made provision for any and all comments and suggestions regarding any aspect of the proposed scheme.

80. The Consultation Results Report at Appendix B presents the anonymised results from the survey and engagement activity including online and face to face workshops. Organisations representing people with protective characteristics were engaged to encourage their clients that might be considered vulnerable or marginalised to participate.

81. There was an excellent response to the consultation survey through our online engagement website with over 600 responses.

82. In addition, the Council received 482 responses by email. Of these, 480 were submitted using a substantially identical template response coordinated by Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth (HASL), representing the views of individual members of the organisation. The response commented on all ten consultation questions and also raised additional concerns regarding overcrowding, bedroom sharing criteria, Local Lettings Plans, Annual Lettings Plans and the prioritisation of homeless households.

83. Whilst many of these email responses repeated the same substantive points, each response has been recorded and considered as part of the consultation

process. The key themes arising from the HASL submissions are reflected within the Consultation Results Report and have informed amendments and clarifications made to the final draft Housing Allocations Scheme where appropriate.

84. The information provided through these email responses has been fully considered alongside the online survey responses, workshop feedback and stakeholder engagement activity as part of the development of the final recommendations.

85. The information provided from these emails has been included within the consultation results report.

86. In addition to the survey, we have run a series of workshops for staff, community groups and partners, and received a number of helpful comments, views and suggestions.

## KEY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

87. The full anonymised online survey results have been made available in the consultation page of our website for full transparency, and key headline results are set out below.

88. Southwark Housing and other Services within the council have assisted in the development of this proposed allocations scheme, through engagement and consultation, including the Community Safety team, Adult's and Children's Social Services, Housing allocations, Supported Housing Service as well as homelessness and resident services officers, and we carried out engagement sessions with external agencies, including housing support and advice agencies.

### Qualification

89. More than 60.7% of respondents of the online survey questionnaire agree that working in the borough should be removed as an automatic qualification criterion, while the collective response from the housing action group members expressed concern about this making local connection rules stricter and consider that the current rules should in fact be relaxed. This proposal is recommended due to the scarcity of social housing in the borough and there are safeguards for those in living in other boroughs that need to move to Southwark for work prevent severe hardship, for example.

### Priority Stars

90. Just under half of online survey respondents agree with the proposal to remove non-housing related priority. The housing action group members agree with this proposal and agree that removing priority stars will make the system fairer and easier for applicants to understand.

### Housing First

91. 47.9% of respondents who agreed with applicants in the Southwark Housing First support programme being given Band A priority, and 34% disagreed, and the majority agreed with allowing homeless applicants to retain their priority if they take a private rented sector tenancy while waiting for an allocation of social

housing.

**Suitability for allocation**

92. Almost 60% of online respondents agree that applicants who are no longer suitable to be a social housing tenant should be removed from the register for at least a 12-month period. The housing action group members have expressed concerns that many applicants are in rent arrears because of benefit problems and they should be supported by the council and not penalised. There are safeguards in place in the new scheme, with specific circumstances for removing an application set out and the procedure to be followed in such circumstances as well as help within the council for those in rent arrears in most circumstances.

**Limiting the number of offers**

93. 54.2% of respondents agree to limiting the number of offers of accommodation made to each applicant, and the housing action group members response supports this, suggesting that two refusals should be allowed for all applicants including those who are living in temporary accommodation, to ensure fairness.

94. Most respondents agree that applicants refusing three offers should be ‘suspended for a 12-month period, rather than being removed from the housing register and being made to really in twelve months.

**Preventing Band E from Bidding**

95. The original proposal within the draft scheme was that applicants placed in Band E, reflecting a low level of housing need, would not be permitted to bid for social housing through the choice-based lettings system.

96. However, consultation feedback highlighted clear concerns regarding this approach. The majority of respondents disagreed with preventing Band E applicants from bidding, with many expressing that this could be perceived as unfair and lacking transparency, even where the likelihood of rehousing is very limited.

97. In light of this feedback, the Council has reviewed its position and amended the policy. Applicants in Band E will now be allowed to participate in the choice-based lettings system and place bids on advertised properties.

98. While households in Band E are unlikely to be rehoused due to their low priority, allowing access to bidding supports a more transparent and inclusive system. It also enables the Council to better understand demand from this cohort and monitor outcomes, which can inform future policy development.

99. The Council will ensure that Band E applicants receive clear and accessible information about their realistic housing prospects, alongside advice on alternative housing options such as private rented accommodation, mutual exchange, and other routes. This will help manage expectations while maintaining engagement with the scheme.

**Annual Review**

100. Almost three quarters of online respondents agreed that applicants should be required to confirm their housing circumstances on an annual basis to remain on

the housing register. Conversely, the housing action group consider that the current system in place is sufficient. Their concerns are detailed in the Consultation Results Report (Appendix B) and these have been considered, but the proposals are being made because the current system of change of circumstances and checks at allocations stage are not in fact working effectively, and many applications are found to contain incomplete or incorrect information.

**Penalty for not bidding**

101. More than half of those responding to the online survey agree that applicants should be removed from the register if they do not place any bids for a suitable advertised property during a 12-month period. The Housing action group members disagree and consider this a punishment for not bidding. Again, the group members have other concerns about some applicants needing support to bid, and these do need to be addressed within the operation of the new scheme, alongside clear communications about the circumstances, and rights of review, of any decision to remove the applicant.

102. To mitigate any unintended impact on vulnerable residents, the Council will put in place additional support to help applicants to participate in choice-based lettings, including the option of an assisted or 'auto-bidding' function where appropriate. This will be offered on an opt-in basis, with the applicant's consent (or via an agreed support arrangement), and will be targeted at residents who are digitally excluded, have a disability, or otherwise require support to engage with the bidding process. Appropriate safeguards will be applied, including clear suitability parameters (for example, property type, size and location preferences), audit trails, and officer oversight, to ensure that auto-bidding supports informed choice and does not remove applicants' rights to review or appeal decisions.

**Other comments and concerns**

103. The scheme document was provided to consultees, who were encouraged to review the document and make any further comments or suggestions outside of the survey questions. The following sections cover the areas of concern raised.

**Local and Annual Lettings Plans**

104. The housing action group members expressed concern that the policy of Local Lettings Plans including a flexible quota system for new build social housing are not necessary and all homes should go to those bidding, who have the highest need. They consider the potential for 100% of new homes on any scheme being offered first to current social housing tenants gives the council more power, allows for social housing tenants to 'queue jump', causes confusion and provides less transparency for applicants.

105. The council does have the power, through the Act and the Code of Guidance, to offer its homes to current tenants first using local lettings plans, and these are normally advertised through the choice-based lettings system clearly stating that the homes are part of a LLP and only current tenants can bid in the first instances, so is clear and transparent by nature. Tenants, other than those offered urgent management transfers, are also applicants and each tenant accepting a new social home releases their current social home to also be advertised to applicants on the register.

106. The Housing Action Group raised concerns about the potential impact of Annual Lettings Plans (ALPs) on transparency and understanding of how homes are allocated, particularly where lettings do not take place through standard choice-based lettings and priority bands. In response, the Council will set out clearly how and why ALPs may be used, including the circumstances in which targeted approaches such as restricted bidding or direct lets may be applied. Details of the intended use of ALPs, including any proposed quotas and delivery methods, will be transparently presented within an Executive report.

107. The ALP is integrated into the proposed Scheme as it is in the current Housing Allocations Scheme, as an adaptable tool to help effectively respond to the objectives of the Scheme and the changing housing needs within the borough. The Act provides for councils to include provision within a scheme regarding the allocation of particular housing accommodation to persons of a particular description. This is usual practice in housing allocation schemes, and aims to achieve specific objectives, for example, to reduce pressures on temporary accommodation by allocating a set proportion of social housing lettings to homeless households, or setting quotas for nominations from other statutory services, such as Adult Social Services or key workers.

108. Lettings outcomes for both annual and local plans will be monitored, analysed and published each year, and housing needs reassessed, to determine any thresholds or quota for applicant groups to be set for the year ahead to meet identified need. The quota may cover homes advertised through the CBL system and direct lettings.

**Overcrowding**

109. The housing action group members expressed concern about changes to overcrowding reducing the priority of families on the register as they feel the Council are proposing a stricter overcrowding test for the top Band as the proposed policy explains statutory overcrowding as lacking three or more bedrooms. In addition, they are requesting the removal of the ‘deliberate act clause’ which is there to prevent households from, for example, moving in friends and family members only for the purposes of being given priority for overcrowding.

110. The Council is not proposing stricter criteria for statutory overcrowding in the highest priority Band but sought to provide a simpler explanation. As the action group correctly clarify this does not explain statutory overcrowding in every circumstance as on occasion some properties have rooms of a size that result in statutory overcrowding while lacking two bedrooms, for example. We have amended the final draft scheme document to clarify that statutory overcrowding includes reference to the definition in Part X of the Housing Act 1985.

111. The Group agree with our proposals for Band B for overcrowding defined as lacking two bedrooms as this band reflects their high housing need, but do not agree with our proposal to change the third priority Band overcrowding definition from ‘overcrowding’ to ‘lacking one bedroom’ as they consider this new definition to be a stricter test for applicants occupying housing with shared facilities. However mitigation is not considered necessary for single people and couples sharing facilities with other adults, as there are safeguards regarding property condition and overcrowding within the Council’s licencing scheme, and other overcrowding is prioritised as set out within the Scheme.

**Bedroom Criteria**

112. The new Scheme removes the use of the Local Housing Allowance Bedroom Criteria, increasing the ceiling age for sharing a room with a same sex sibling from 15 to 20. This aligns with the bedroom standard and with the *Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England*, which supports the use of recognised measures of overcrowding and household composition. It provides a clear, consistent and legally robust framework for determining housing need and helps ensure decisions are transparent, easier to explain and defensible. The approach also aligns Southwark with established practice across local authorities and wider housing and welfare frameworks.

113. The revised approach removes this provision, bringing the policy into line with the standard definition of overcrowding. Importantly, the policy retains flexibility where individual circumstances require a separate bedroom, with provision for exceptions on medical or welfare grounds where supported by evidence. Benchmarking indicates that this approach reflects current practice across local authorities.

114. The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and has not identified any adverse impacts on protected groups. Overall, the change supports better use of scarce housing stock, strengthens consistency and fairness in decision making, improves transparency for applicants, and helps ensure the scheme remains deliverable within severe supply constraints.

Homelessness

115. Comments were received about moving applicants living in insecure housing to new Band C, alongside accepted homeless households, including those in temporary accommodation. The housing action group members felt that removing the homelessness star, and giving other groups such as Housing First applicants, greater priority, would further reduce priority for households with a main homelessness duty living in temporary accommodation arranged by the Council stating ‘It is totally unjustifiable that in the biggest homeless crisis in generations the council would implement policies to demote homeless households on the housing waiting list.’ While these concerns are understood, the aim of this proposal is in fact to work towards preventing and reducing homelessness and the need for temporary accommodation and will be clear for applicants to understand.

116. The proposed Scheme includes provisions to support homelessness prevention by allowing households who move into the private rented sector outside of the borough under the prevention duty, relief duty, or following acceptance of the main homelessness duty, to retain their ability to remain on the housing register. This approach recognises that private rented accommodation can provide a suitable and stable housing solution for some households while they continue to seek longer-term options. By retaining access to the register, the Scheme removes a disincentive to accepting private rented accommodation and supports earlier move-on from homelessness and temporary accommodation. This helps encourage residents to consider alternative rehousing options where appropriate, while maintaining a clear focus on allocating scarce social housing to those with the highest levels of housing need.

117. In conclusion, the changes are largely positively received with most respondents agreeing with the proposed changes. Some amendments have been made to the

draft scheme following the consultation, as set out above, and the scheme presented at Appendix A includes these. Full details of the consultation are at Appendix D.

MANAGEMENT TRANSFER POLICY

118. The Management Transfer Policy sets out a clear framework for managing urgent and essential transfers for existing council tenants where a move is required to address serious housing management, safety, or welfare concerns. This includes situations such as significant risk to household members, severe property related issues, or circumstances where remaining in the current home is no longer safe or sustainable. The policy operates separately from the main Housing Allocations Scheme, ensuring that management transfers are prioritised appropriately without competing directly with applicants on the housing register.

119. Operating the Management Transfer Policy alongside the revised Housing Allocations Scheme provides greater clarity, consistency, and transparency for residents and officers. It ensures that the most urgent cases can be dealt with swiftly and proportionately, supports effective tenancy management, and helps make best use of available housing stock. By clearly distinguishing management moves from general allocations, the Council can better balance tenant safety, operational efficiency, and fairness across the wider system.

120. The introduction of a standalone Management Transfer Policy was referenced within the consultation documentation, as set out under section 2.1, and forms part of the wider package of reforms to modernise and strengthen the Council's approach to housing allocations. Feedback received through consultation has informed the final policy, which is included at Appendix B and proposed for implementation alongside the new Housing Allocations Scheme.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

121. All relevant staff, but in particular the Housing Needs and Support Division, will be given comprehensive training with new procedures on the day-to-day management of the new scheme. The IT system workflow will be fully utilised by service managers to support the aim of reducing application processing time, and a reduction in chasing emails and calls, and other complaints from applicants.

122. The Communications team will support the Housing Allocations officers in promoting the new scheme via social media and local press and encouraging applicants to respond to any contact from the Housing Allocations Team as quickly as possible, while explaining that there may be lags and issues while the new systems are embedding.

123. Technology and Digital Services have engaged a specialist housing IT consultant to work with Allocations officers to build the system around the new scheme as simply as possible while developing maximum automated capabilities. The system will be tested by officers and applicants during the test phase.

124. A migration exercise matching priorities from the current system to the new will take place for each application on the housing register, and the applicant will receive notification of their new priority Band. All applicants will be invited to provide any additional information about their circumstances and informed of their right to request a review of the new decision.

125. Much of this migration will be automated, however additional staff will be required for a limited period to help manage the migration, mitigate any technical challenges and respond effectively to the expected additional queries or complaints from applicants. There will also need to be a strong face to face and telephone presence to help applicants manage the transition to the new online system as well as effective support for vulnerable and/or digitally excluded applicants on an ongoing basis.

126. The new choice-based lettings system will necessarily be integrated to go live at the same time as the new scheme, to ensure a smooth transition to the new online CBL system and integrated application providing a seamless service for applicants at the front end.

**Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

**Community impact statement**

127. The proposed new allocations scheme will benefit some of our local communities by prioritising some groups as well as simplifying the process for applying for social housing and assessing the likelihood of a household being offered a social rented home. Alongside the Homelessness Strategy the improved collection and use of data to enhance the level of intelligence used for the Councils social housing new build programme, enabling of new social housing with housing association partners and annual and local lettings policies will also positively benefit the community.

**Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

128. Section 149 of the Equality Act sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when developing and delivering policy and operations, and to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The council's Approach to Equality commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day-to-day business.

129. The proposed scheme seeks to advance equality of opportunity by prioritising certain applicants with protected characteristics, such as young care leavers, while also making most effective use of local housing stock. Applicants with protected characteristics are represented across the priority Bands within the new scheme.

130. An equalities impact and need assessment was completed at the start of the review process and has now been updated to include consultation and engagement feedback and up to date equalities and socio-economic data. The assessment of the impact of scheme proposals on those on the housing waiting list revealed key findings, which are set out in Appendix E.

**Health impact statement**

131. We will ensure our strategy promotes healthy outcomes for our residents and staff.

**Climate change implications**

132. The proposals set out in this report relate to the Council's policy and process for allocating existing social housing and do not in themselves have any direct, material impact on carbon emissions. However, the revised Scheme supports the more efficient use of existing housing stock, including through facilitating downsizing where appropriate and improving the matching of households to suitable accommodation, which can contribute indirectly to reduced under-occupation and better use of the existing built environment. In addition, by supporting homelessness prevention and improved move-on from temporary accommodation, the Scheme may help reduce the use of nightly-paid accommodation and associated operational impacts. Implementation will be primarily delivered through digital communications and system changes and will be progressed in line with the Council's climate change commitments.

**Resource implications**

**Financial implications**

133. The principal financial implication of agreeing the revised Housing Allocations Scheme is the requirement for time-limited implementation resource to manage the forecast increase in enquiries, statutory review requests and associated casework during the July – December 2026 period. Approval is therefore sought for funding of up to £143,000 to secure temporary capacity equivalent to five officers for six months, delivered through a blended staffing model (fixed-term recruitment, agency staff where appropriate, internal secondments, overtime and administrative support), alongside the use of AI-enabled triage tools to improve productivity.

134. This investment is intended to reduce financial risk and support cost avoidance by preventing escalation of complaints, compensation and legal challenge costs, and by protecting wider service performance from diversion of staff from core duties. Expenditure will be managed within the approved funding envelope and monitored through weekly volume and performance reporting, with monthly updates provided to the Budget Recovery Board.

Staffing issues

135. Much of the preparation work is underway, as part of the Housing Improvement programme; our Technological and digital services have employed a specialist Housing IT consultant to undertake the changes to the NEC housing register system and a working group to develop this is being led by the Housing Transformation Team.

136. Where possible a system match will be created to enable transition from the current scheme to the new scheme with as little officer input as possible, however this will not be possible in 100% of applications.

137. The service redesign will highlight any staff implications that require the involvement of the Unions.

## Policy implications

138. The proposed policy takes account of existing overarching Council policies and other documents:

- To help meet the Southwark 2030 strategy ambition *Decent Homes for All*
- Contribute to the delivery of the Council's Fairer Future Promises,
- To help ensure the council is able to deliver commitments as set out in the Housing Strategy 2013 – 2043
- To align and support Southwark's Temporary Accommodation policy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2030
- To align and enhance the Council's commitments of Southwark Stands Together to ensure systemic inequality experienced by our Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents is addressed.
- The Councils Tenancy Strategy, and
- GLA London Housing Strategy

139. The Council's Older Persons Housing Strategy, agreed by Cabinet in 2026, provides the strategic framework for supporting residents to age well in their communities, including by improving access to safe, suitable and appropriately sized homes. The Downsizing Guarantee supports delivery of this strategy by giving older residents confidence that, where they choose to move to a smaller home that better meets their needs, they will be supported to do so and will not be disadvantaged through the allocations process. In turn, this can help maintain independence and wellbeing, while making best use of the borough's limited social housing stock by releasing larger family homes for households who need them.

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND RISK

140. The Council has a statutory obligation under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) to adopt and operate a housing allocations scheme which:

141. Determines the priorities for an allocation of social housing, including nominations to registered providers for a tenancy.

142. Sets out the basis on which existing council tenants may be allocated alternative accommodation by way of a transfer.

143. Describes the procedures to be followed in allocating the available supply of social housing.

144. When preparing or modifying the scheme regard must be had to the council's homelessness strategy, current tenancy strategy and, as a London Borough, the London Housing Strategy.

145. The relevant legal provisions are contained within the main body of the Housing Allocations Scheme, which has been drafted in accordance with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and the Statutory Code of Guidance issued by the Secretary

of State. Failure to comply with statutory requirements or adher to the published scheme may have serious consequences for the council, including exposure to legal challenge by housing applicants or representative bodies. Decisions taken under the scheme and in the provisions of the scheme itself may be subject to challenge by way of judicial review. Such challenges fall to be determined by the court in accordance with established public law principles. Potential outcomes can include:

146. The quashing of an allocation decision

147. A declaration that part of the scheme is unlawful

148. An order requiring the authority to reconsider the application and

149. Adverse costs consequences and reputational damage for the council

150. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman may investigate complaints concerning unfair, unreasonable, or unlawful housing allocation practices. Where maladministration is found, the Ombudsman may recommend that the Council.

151. issues an apology

152. Reconsiders the application or decision and/or

153. Makes a compensatory payment

154. In extreme cases of persistent or systematic failure, the Secretary of State may exercise intervention powers under the Local Government Act 1999 where a council is failing to secure best value in the delivery of its functions. While such intervention is exceptional, noncompliance with statutory housing duties may contribute to wider findings of service failure.

155. Any failure to evidence compliance with the consumer standards for social housing may result in regulatory scrutiny and a downgrade of the council's consumer grade, with associated reputational and operational consequences.

156. Section 166A(13) of the Housing Act 1996 requires the council to consult with registered providers with whom they have a nomination agreement before adopting or altering its Housing Allocation Scheme reflecting a major change in policy. Statutory Guidance states that a "major change of policy" includes, for example, changes affecting the relative priority of large numbers of applicants, or significant alterations to procedures.

157. In accordance with the Council's usual practice housing register applicants, council tenants, residents and other interested parties have been invited to review the proposed amendments and provide feedback as part of the consultation process.

158. While there is no statutory requirement to review housing allocation schemes at fixed intervals, it is recognised good practice to do so periodically to ensure continued legal compliance and alignment with emerging good practice. The new Scheme will therefore be subject to a programmed annual review, undertaken concurrently with the annual lettings plan.

## SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

### Head of Procurement

159. No comments required

### Director of Law & Governance Ref: DG/30.06.2026

160. The report recommends that the Executive approve both the appended new Allocation Scheme and Management Transfer Policy.

161. The relevant legal considerations are addressed within the body of the report, in particular the section headed Legal Requirements and Risk.

162. In summary, Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires the Council, as a local housing authority, to publish and operate an allocation scheme for determining priorities and the procedure to be followed in allocating social housing accommodation. For these purposes, “procedure” is interpreted broadly and encompasses all aspects of the allocation process, including the identification of the persons or categories of persons by whom allocation decisions are made.

163. The statutory framework also prescribes matters to which the authority must have regard when framing its scheme and provides that, subject to limited exceptions, the Council must not allocate social housing accommodation other than in accordance with its published allocation scheme. The Council’s current allocation scheme is operated to ensure compliance with these statutory requirements.

164. The Council’s allocation scheme was last substantively revised in 2013. Since that time, there have been legal developments and wider social and economic changes. These have been considered in the formulation of the proposed revised scheme, as detailed in the report.

165. A consultation exercise has been undertaken in respect of the proposed scheme. The legal requirements for lawful consultation are well established and can be summarised as follows:

166. Consultation must take place at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;

167. Sufficient information must be provided to enable consultees to give informed responses;

168. Adequate time must be allowed for consideration and response; and

169. Responses must be conscientiously considered by the decision-maker prior to reaching a final decision.

170. The report sets out the nature and outcome of the consultation undertaken and consideration given to it. Executive member’s attention is drawn to the consultation section and the consultation results document appended to this report. The content should be carefully considered when determining whether to approve the recommendations in this report.

171. Members must also give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty ("PSED") under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when exercising their decision-making functions, including in relation to the approval of revised policies. This duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:

172. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;

173. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and

174. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

175. The protected characteristics to which this duty applies are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The duty also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to the need to eliminate discrimination.

176. In considering the recommendations in this report, Members should actively consider the implications of the proposals for those with protected characteristics, with reference to the Community Impact Statement and the Equality Impact Assessment appended to the report.

177. The Council is also required to have regard to its homelessness strategy, tenancy strategy, and the London Housing Strategy. The report confirms that regard has been had to these strategies in the development of the proposed scheme.

178. In relation to the proposed Management Transfer Policy, transfers made for housing management purposes (commonly referred to as "management transfers"), for example to address risks to tenant safety, serious anti-social behaviour, or other exceptional housing management issues, will generally fall outside the scope of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

179. This is because, pursuant to section 159(4A)–(4B) of the 1996 Act, the statutory allocation scheme does not apply to transfers of existing social housing tenants unless the transfer is made at the tenant's request and the authority is satisfied that the tenant is entitled to reasonable preference. Management transfers, initiated by the landlord rather than the tenant are not therefore subject to the requirements of Part 6 of the Act.

180. Accordingly, it is lawful for the Council to operate a separate Management Transfer Policy outside of its main allocation scheme, provided that the policy is applied consistently and in accordance with public law principles (including fairness, reasonableness, transparency, and equality duties), and that it is not exercised in a manner which improperly circumvents the authority's allocation scheme or the statutory reasonable preference requirements.

181. The Management Transfer policy is capable of being operated lawfully on this basis. However, care should be taken in its application to ensure that, in each case, the Council identifies whether the transfer falls within or outside Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and applies the relevant legal framework accordingly.

182. The Housing Department has worked closely with Legal Services in the development of the proposed Allocation Scheme. The Director of Law and Governance is not aware of any legal impediment to the Executive approving the

recommendations set out in this report. Any potential for legal challenge is more likely to arise from how the policy is implemented and operated in practice.

**Strategic Director, Resources (PFS-Housing 26/23)**

183. There are no direct, ongoing financial implications associated with adopting the revised Housing Allocations Scheme at this stage, other than the time-limited implementation costs outlined in the financial implications section. However, there may be indirect financial impacts over time, given the scale of housing demand and the potential effects on temporary accommodation. These will be closely monitored as the scheme is implemented and becomes fully embedded.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

| Background Papers | Held At | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| Allocations of Accommodation Code of guidance 2012 (updated 2023) | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/645e0e766539660011bd3e0c/Allocation_of_accommodation_guidance_31_Jan_2023_to_14_May_2023.pdf | Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government |
| Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2013 | https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s41248/Appendix%202%20Housing%20Allocations%20scheme.doc | Ricky.Bellot@southwark.gov.uk |
| Annual lettings plan 2024 | https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s119859/Report%20Annual%20Lettings%20Plan%202024-25.pdf | Ricky.Bellot@southwark.gov.uk |
| Housing Act 1996 | https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents | N/A |
| Consumer Standards for Social Housing | Regulatory standards for landlords - GOV.UK | Regulator of Social Housing |

## APPENDICES

| No. | Title |
|---|---|
| Appendix A | Housing Allocations Scheme Document |
| Appendix B | Consultation Results Report |
| Appendix C | Management Transfer policy 2026 |
| Appendix D | Housing Allocations Scheme 2026 Scope of Changes |
| Appendix E | Equalities Impact and Needs Assessment |

**AUDIT TRAIL**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Executive Member** | Councillor Reginal Popoola, Executive Member for Council Homes |
| **Lead Officer** | Hakeem Osinaike, Strategic Director of Housing |
| **Report Author** | Ricky Bellot, Housing Choice and Supply Manager |
| **Version** | Final |
| **Dated** | 2 September 2026 |
| **Key Decision?** | Yes |

| **CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Officer Title** | **Comments Sought** | **Comments Included** |
| Strategic Director of Resources | Yes | Yes |
| Director of Law and Governance | Yes | |
| **Executive Member** | Yes | Yes |
| **Date final report sent to Constitutional Team** | | 2 September 2026 |

Appendix A

# Southwark Council's housing allocation scheme

Rules for allocating social rented housing

September 2026

# Contents


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1.0.** | **Allocation of social rented housing** | 3 |
| **2.0.** | **Other rules outside this scheme** | 6 |
| **3.0.** | **Eligibility** | 7 |
| **4.0** | **Qualifying persons** | 9 |
| **5.0.** | **Housing register** | 16 |
| **6.0.** | **Operation of the housing register** | 18 |
| **7.0** | **Decisions and reviews** | 20 |
| **8.0** | **Review procedure** | 22 |
| **9.0** | **Applications and information** | 23 |
| **10.0** | **Allocations** | 28 |
| **11.0** | **Information about this allocation scheme** | 44 |
| **12.0** | **Co-operation with private registered providers** | 45 |
| **13.0** | **Guidance** | 46 |
| **14.0** | **False statements and withholding information** | 50 |
| **15.0** | **Elected members** | 51 |

# 1.0. Allocation of social rented housing

*This chapter explains Southwark Council's policy for allocating social rented housing*

1.1. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing following the policy and procedure set out in this Scheme including any supporting Annual Lettings Plans or Local Lettings Plans. Decisions about the allocation of social rented housing shall be taken by officers acting under delegated decision-making provisions in the Council's Constitution and the Housing Scheme of Management.

1.2. Southwark Council is a provider of social rented housing. Information on Southwark Council's social rented housing stock and rents can be viewed on the Council's website.

1.3. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing, which is low-cost rental accommodation, and make it available for rent at below the market rate, to people whose housing needs are not adequately served by the commercial housing market.

1.4. Southwark Council shall allocate the following types of social rented housing –

a. General needs housing. This is the most common type of social rented housing. It can be allocated to any eligible person with a need for social rented housing, or
b. Supported housing/older persons housing. This type of social rented housing has special design facilities, or features, targeted at specific persons, including those requiring support, for example, housing designed for older people.

1.5. Southwark Council shall allocate social housing to be let at the following rent rates –

a. Social housing, let at a social rent rate. This is the most common type of rent rate. It is set in accordance with a national formula that takes account of relative local earnings, and the relative value for the property and the number of bedrooms it has, or
b. Social housing, let at an affordable rent rate. Where the rent to be paid by tenants can be no more than 80% of the market value of the property, or
C. Social housing, let at an intermediate rent. Often part of a specific named scheme, such as the key worker scheme approved by Southwark Council. Intermediate rent must not exceed 80% of current market rate,

1.6. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing by:

a. Selecting a household on Southwark Council's housing register, to be a secure or introductory tenant of social rented housing owned by Southwark Council, including when Southwark Council decides an existing tenant or licensee shall become a secure tenant, or

b. Nominating a household on Southwark Council's housing register, to be an assured tenant of social rented housing held by a private registered provider of social housing.

1.7. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing to tenants seeking a transfer of social rented housing, in line with the rules of this Scheme (with the exception of emergency management transfers, which are governed by the separate Management Transfer policy). Tenants in Southwark who under-occupy their social rented housing that seek a transfer to downsize to a smaller home that meets their bed size need, shall be given priority for an allocation of social rented housing and may be exempt from some disqualification rules relating to outstanding rent or service charge arrears and earnings and savings.

1.8. Southwark Council shall make objective decisions about the allocation of social rented housing. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing as quickly as possible, to minimise void periods and reduce waiting times.

1.9. Southwark Council carries out an analysis of its housing register and the lettings of social rented housing it makes (and lettings made by private registered providers that own and or manage stock in Southwark), to make sure the needs of tenants, and households on the housing register, inform the rules for allocating social rented housing.

1.10. Southwark Council want to make sure tenancies are sustainable and communities are settled, viable and inclusive. Southwark Council will, in general, give people choice over social rented housing they are allocated, while ensuring the primary purpose of the stock, which is to meet housing need. When allocating social rented housing, Southwark Council shall, in general, offer households on the housing register, an opportunity to express their preference on the types of property they might be allocated. Southwark Council reserves the right to make a direct let to manage or for other management reasons assessed on a case by case basis. A direct let is when a person is not offered a choice of accommodation.

1.11. An advertising system is incorporated into this Scheme. People on the housing register will be able to make a bid for advertised homes that meet their needs. Southwark Council shall take preferences of households on the housing register into account when allocating social rented housing (see chapter 10 Allocation).

1.12. Alongside this, Southwark Council will support tenants, households on the housing register and prospective applicants to choose the housing option which is best for them. They shall include promoting a wide range of options within Southwark and elsewhere (such as, low-cost homeownership, mutual exchange, the private rented

sector). Information shall be provided about staying put options, such as aids and adaptations, and mobility schemes (see chapter 09 Applications and Information).

1.13. Southwark Council shall seek to make best use of its social rented housing stock. Social rented housing that is intended for households with specific needs (e.g. accessible housing, older persons housing, etc) will be allocated to households that have a need for such housing, such as a household which includes a wheelchair user who requires a specially adapted home. Southwark Council's rules for allocating social rented housing play a part in its broader strategic approach to housing, by helping to make best use of existing housing and enabling housing needs to be met.

1.14. This Scheme sets out how households can apply to join Southwark Council's housing register (see chapter 05 Housing register and chapter 06 Operation of the housing register), how decisions will be made about applications (see chapter 07 Decisions and rights to review), and the procedure to be followed when a review of a decision is requested (see chapter 08 Procedure on a review).

## 2.0. Other rules outside of this Scheme

*This chapter explains Southwark Council policies to decide which tenants occupy its social rented housing, that are not covered by this Scheme.*

2.1. Transfer of tenancies instigated by Southwark Council for management reasons (known as management transfers), for example, due to stock investment or asset management reasons, or tenancy and estate management reasons, are not covered by this Scheme.

2.3. Opportunities for Southwark Council tenants to exchange their tenancy with another tenant, known as mutual exchange, are not covered by this scheme.

2.4. Decisions made by Southwark Council, about introductory and secure tenancies, relating to succession, devolution or assignment of a tenancy following the death of a tenant, assignment by exchange of a tenancy, transfer of a tenancy from one tenant to another or court orders requiring a transfer of a tenancy, are not covered by this scheme.

# 3.0. Eligibility

*This chapter explains Southwark Council's procedure to decide if a person is eligible for an allocation of social rented housing. Eligibility is subject to legislation by central government, which can change, and the provisions below are intended only as a general guide. Reference should always be made to the legislation.*

3.1. Southwark Council shall not allocate social rented housing to persons from abroad, who are not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing. Joint tenancies shall not be offered to any persons who are persons from abroad.

3.2. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing to persons from abroad only when the law allows.

3.3. Southwark Council shall not allocate social rented housing to persons from abroad who are not entitled to Universal Credit or Housing Benefit (regardless as to whether such persons would make a claim for Universal Credit or Housing Benefit).

3.4. Southwark Council shall not make decisions about the eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing for its tenants seeking a transfer of social rented housing, due to tenants being exempt from eligibility rules.

3.5. Southwark Council shall inform each person who applies to join the housing register, whether or not they are eligible for an allocation of social rented housing. When Southwark Council decide a person is not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, they will be provided with an explanation as to how this decision was made.

3.6. Southwark Council shall provide people with a written decision about their eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing. Southwark Council shall inform a person that a decision about their eligibility has been issued, by any means or method agreed, when a person initially makes an application to join the housing register.

3.7. Southwark Council shall make a decision about eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing, when any person who applies to join its housing register and, again when any person who is accepted to join the housing register are subsequently considered by Southwark Council for an allocation of social rented housing. When making a decision about whether or not a person is eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, Southwark Council shall assess (as relevant) a person's (and that of their family members):

a. Nationality.
b. Economic activity.
c. Compliance with worker registration schemes.
d. Immigration status.
e. Entitlement to public funds.

f. Where they usually live and where they are living when they make an application to join the housing register.

3.8. Southwark Council shall not make a decision about a person's eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing, if a person withdraws their application to join Southwark Council's housing register.

3.9. Southwark Council employees responsible for making decisions about eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing shall be provided with training about housing allocation law and practice.

3.10. Southwark Council shall make sure that language and interpreting assistance is available for people who have difficulty speaking or reading English.

3.11. Southwark Council shall inform persons who are from abroad but are nonetheless eligible for an allocation of social rented housing when they are accepted to join the housing register, that changes to their immigration status could affect their eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing.

3.12. Southwark Council shall inform persons who it is decided are ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing.

# 4.0 Qualifying persons

*This chapter explains Southwark Council's procedure to decide if a person qualifies to join the housing register.*

4.1. Southwark Council shall only allocate social rented housing to people who satisfy the qualifying criteria set out in this section.

4.2 Southwark Council have decided that to qualify for an allocation of social rented housing, people must be:

a. Capable of holding a tenancy; meet the tenancy conditions which they will agree to adhere to on signing their tenancy agreement; and
b. Not guilty of past unacceptable behaviour; and
c. Connected to the London Borough of Southwark according to specific criteria; and
d. Not have sufficient income or savings to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market.

4.3. At least one person must be a qualifying person to join the housing register when two or more people are making a joint application to be allocated social rented housing.

4.4 A person is not a qualifying person when they are incapable of holding a tenancy, due to being:

a. Aged under 18 years; or
b. Aged over 18 years and lack mental capacity.

4.5. Exceptions apply to people who are incapable of holding a tenancy agreement, when they are:

a. Aged 16/17 years or age, but have a suitable guarantor (e.g. Southwark Council's Children Services) that can hold a tenancy on their behalf until they are aged 18 years, or
b. Aged over 18 years lacking mental capacity but have a suitable guarantor (e.g. Southwark Council's Adults Social Care) who can hold a tenancy on their behalf.

4.6 A person (including anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) is not a qualifying person when they are not normally resident in the Borough of Southwark for a minimum of five consecutive years, by their own choice.

4.7 A person (including anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) is not a qualifying person when they do not have close family (defined

as adult children or parents) who are resident in the Borough of Southwark for a minimum of five consecutive years by their own choice.

4.8 A person is not a qualifying person when they (and/or anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) are guilty of past unacceptable behaviour that was serious enough that it could have been reasonable to allow Southwark Council to grant a possession order had the applicant been a tenant at the time the behaviour occurred (regardless of whether they were a tenant of Southwark Council when the unacceptable behaviour occurred), and the persons behaviour remains unacceptable. Unacceptable behaviour that makes an applicant unsuitable to be a tenant, includes:

a. Breaches of tenancy conditions, for example:
    i. Having outstanding rent or service charge arrears, or property related recharges connected to a tenancy (see exceptions below); or
    ii. Causing nuisance or annoyance (or allowing persons visiting them to cause nuisance or annoyance):
        a) to others living in or visiting the neighbourhood of their home,
        b) to employees (or contractors of) Southwark Council carrying out housing management functions, or
    iii. Having an unspent conviction for
        a) allowing their home to be used for immoral or illegal purposes; or
        b) an offence committed in their home or nearby to their home; or
    iv. Violence or threats of violence towards another person that caused them (an applicant) to leave the home they were living at together (with a perpetrator), with the intention of (an applicant) not returning; or
    v. Damaging or neglecting their home; or
    vi. Damaging or neglecting furniture in their home provided by their landlord; or
    vii. Deliberately making a false statement to be granted a tenancy by Southwark Council (or another landlord); or
    viii. Paying money or receiving money as part of a mutual exchange; or
    ix. Being guilty of conduct that makes it inappropriate to continue living in their home, due to the home being part of a building used for non-housing purposes (e.g. a property situated in the grounds of a school or a public park).
b. Having unspent convictions or having breached an injunction for serious anti-social behaviour, for example:
    i. Entry to a dwelling house that has been subject to a closure order; or
    ii. Noise nuisance and environmental legislation; or

iii. Violent offences; or
iv. Offences against property; or
v. Encouraging or assisting the causing of serious antisocial behaviour; or
vi. Conduct causing nuisance to the landlord.

4.9 Exceptions to outstanding rent or service charge arrears or property related recharges, connected to a tenancy with Southwark Council (or another landlord), apply for people who:

a) was/were not the tenant, when the outstanding arrears and/or recharges were accrued (e.g. the arrears or recharges were accrued after a person stopped being a tenant or were accrued by a former member of their household who was the tenant); or
b) has arrears and/or recharges that are no longer outstanding (e.g. they have been repaid or are legally ruled out due to being accrued more than 7 years ago and never being acknowledged by the debtor); or
c) have:
    i. agreed a repayment schedule for the outstanding arrears or recharges; and
    ii. made at least three consecutive repayments as per the repayment schedule; and
    iii. are up to-date with their repayment schedule at the date of application and at the date of any potential allocation; or
d) have outstanding arrears or recharges that do not relate to a tenancy (e.g. non-housing debts such as Council Tax arrears); or
e) are a social housing tenant under-occupying their current home (by the Local Housing Allowance size criteria) and intend to downsize to a smaller home that meets their bedroom size need; or
f) their arrears or recharges were as a result of them being a victim of domestic abuse (e.g. financial abuse); or
g) are a serving, or former member, of the regular Armed Forces, or their spouse or civil partner is/was, who has accrued mesne profit charges as a result of continuing to live in a home provided to them by the Armed Forces, following a relationship breakdown.

4.10 Exceptions to local connection requirements, apply to people who are:

a) Members of the Armed Forces community who are:
    i. Currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces, or were serving in the Regular Armed Forces at any time in the five years prior to making an application to join Southwark Council's housing register; or
    ii. Bereaved, spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Armed Forces, where:

- the bereaved, spouse or civil partner has recently ceased to be entitled to, or will cease to be entitled to, reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation, following the death of their service personnel spouse, or civil partner, and
- the death was wholly or partially attributable to the service; or

iii. existing or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to their service; or

iv. divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence; or

v. adult children of currently serving members of the Armed Forces who may no longer be able to remain the family home; or

b. escaping violence, harm or harassment; or

c. escaping domestic abuse, or are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the Borough of Southwark, having escaped domestic abuse; or

d. looked after children owed a duty by Southwark Council who were placed outside of Southwark who are ready to leave care; or

e. placed outside of the Borough of Southwark by, or on behalf of, Southwark Council in order to meet duties under the Care Act 2014 and/or section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, and who would otherwise have had a local connection to Southwark but for that placement; or

f. homeless, within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 section 175, and currently living in the Borough of Southwark and are not owed a homelessness duty by any other Council; or

g. owed a homelessness duty by Southwark Council, and were housed temporarily outside of the Borough of Southwark; or

h. needing to be nearer to special medical or support services which are available only in the Borough of Southwark; or

i. returning to the Borough of Southwark, where they previously lived for a considerable length of time, following a period of imprisonment or hospitalisation; or

j. intending to move into the Borough of Southwark because there is a need to live in the Borough to provide care to a relative or a need to receive care from a relative, that

i. would enable a relative to continue living independently and prevent the need for a relative to move into residential or specialist accommodation, or

ii. reduce the distance or travel time to the relative to whom they will be giving or receiving, support, and

iii. there is a need to give or receive support daily for at least one hour per day.

k. a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation in England, or an assured tenant of housing accommodation in England held by a private registered provider, who is intending to move into the Borough of Southwark because there is a need to live in the Borough because the person:
   i. works in the district of the local housing authority, or
   ii. has been offered work in the district of the local housing authority, and
   iii. the authority is satisfied that the relevant person has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work, and the work is not:
      - short-term or marginal in nature, or
      - ancillary to work in another district, or
      - voluntary work, and
   iv. the allocation involves a transfer of housing accommodation for that person from the district of another local housing authority in England.

l. A key worker in a profession or group specified by Southwark Council for an allocation of accommodation within a key worker housing scheme designated for key workers by Southwark Council.

4.11. A person is not a qualifying person when their earnings and/or saving and/or assets, together with those of the other main earner in the household, allow them to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market, as determined by the Council.

4.12 Exceptions to the earnings, savings and assets criteria, apply to people who –

a. have a home that they could not raise sufficient equity, including through sale of the home, to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation; or
b. are elderly, who cannot stay in their own home and need to move into sheltered accommodation, and they could not raise sufficient equity, including through sale of the home, to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation; or
c. are elderly, whose home is no longer suitable for them to continue to occupy, and they could not raise sufficient equity, including through sale of the home, to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation; or
d. have a home that is in poor condition of repair, and continued occupation of the home may endanger the health of a person (including anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) and there are no reasonable steps that can be taken by the person to prevent the danger or the person does not have the resources to rectify the problem and are not in control and will not financially benefit from the sale of the home;; or

e. have been deserted by the main wage earner following a relationship breakdown and may become homeless, and are not in control of and will not financially benefit from the sale of the home; or
f. it is probable that occupying the home will lead to abuse from someone currently living in the home or who previously lived with them in that home or elsewhere, and are not in control and will not financially benefit from the sale of the home; or
g. are Armed Forces personnel or their families, in relation to a lump sum compensation received for injury or disability sustained during active service with Regular or Reserve Forces; or
h. are a young person leaving care, or a former care leaver, who is in receipt of funds paid to them as a result of compensation relating to the reason why they were a looked after child and/or as a result of experiences while a looked after child.
i. foster carers and adopters, special guardians, and family and friend carers approved by Southwark Council (who have taken on the care of a child because their parents are unable to provide care); or
j. are a social housing tenant under-occupying their current home (by the local housing allowance size criteria) and intend to downsize to a smaller home suitable to their needs.

4.13 Southwark Council shall treat the following persons as qualifying, in the following circumstances –

a. Members of the Armed Forces community will be exempt from needing to have a connection to the London Borough of Southwark. Any lump sum compensation received for injury or disability sustained on active service will be disregarded when earnings and savings are taken account of. Any Mesne profit debt accrued from remaining in residence, following an expiry of notice to vacate armed forces accommodation, shall be disregarded when outstanding rent or service charge arrears or property related recharges are taken account of.
b. Escaping domestic abuse, including people who are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the London borough of Southwark, having escaped domestic abuse in another local authority area, will be exempt from needing to have a connection to the London Borough of Southwark.

4.14 Southwark Council may in exceptional circumstances choose to disapply the qualifying criteria, for example for people who are intimidated witnesses or protected persons who need to move quickly from another local authority area. Decisions in exceptional circumstances will be made by an Assistant Director or above.

4.15 Southwark Council shall notify people if they are not a qualifying person, explaining reasons for the decision. A decision about whether or not a person is a qualifying person, will be made at the time of initial application, and again when considering making an allocation.

4.16 People applying to join the housing register are required to provide appropriate documentary evidence that they are a qualifying person, within a reasonable period of time, typically 28 calendar days. Southwark Council shall verify all evidence provided by a person applying to join the housing register. Southwark Council shall on a case-by-case basis, taking account of UK data protection law, contact other people and organisations as necessary to assist in the verification of any evidence submitted by people applying to join the housing register. Examples of evidence include:

a. Employment contracts.
b. Wage/salary slips or bank statements.
c. Tax and benefits information.
d. Current tenancy.

4.17 A person whom Southwark Council has previously deemed to be ineligible or not qualifying, may make a fresh application if they consider they should no longer be treated as ineligible or not qualifying, it will be for the person to show that their circumstances have changed.

4.18 Where Southwark Council has secured accommodation for a household in the private rented sector in order to prevent homelessness, relieve homelessness, or to bring a homelessness duty to an end, that household shall be treated as a qualifying person for the purposes of joining and remaining on the housing register.

4.19 This includes households accommodated by Southwark Council under the prevention duty, the relief duty, or following acceptance and discharge of a homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

4.20 Households qualifying under this provision must continue to meet all other eligibility requirements of this Scheme. Qualification under this paragraph does not, in itself, confer any additional priority for an allocation of social rented housing.

# 5.0. Housing Register

*This chapter explains Southwark Councils' procedure for maintaining its housing register and the type of information that shall be kept on it.*

5.1. Southwark Council has established and maintains a housing register of persons who are eligible and qualifying for an allocation of social rented housing, known as the housing register.

5.2. Southwark Council keeps the housing register in an electronic format on a software system provided by a third-party organisation. People applying to join the housing register will be provided with an online individual user account, linked to a software system used by Southwark Council to administer the allocation of social rented housing.

5.3. Southwark Council maintains a single housing register for people applying for an allocation of social rented housing, including social housing tenants seeking to transfer the tenancy from their current home to another home. Entries on the housing register for people applying for an allocation of social rented housing, and for social housing tenants seeking to transfer their tenancy, can be distinguished.

5.4. Southwark Council's housing register contains information about each person's entry on it, such as –

a. the number of bedrooms required
b. qualifying criteria, including
    i. Grounds to establish a local connection
    ii. Amount of any rent arrears owed
c. any reasonable preference groups a person might be in, due to being:
    i. homeless
    ii. owed a homelessness duty
    iii. occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
    iv. needing to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
    v. needing to move to a particular locality in the Borough of Southwark, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)
d. any additional preference a person might be given, including due to being in a reasonable preference group and:
    i. having an urgent housing need
    ii. being a member of the Armed Forces community (either serving or having served)
e. choice based lettings activity

f. existing social housing tenants under-occupying their home who wish to downsize to a smaller home, including the amount of any rent arrears owed
g. accessible housing needs of disabled people

5.5. Southwark Council shall use information held on the housing register, when assessing the housing needs of the Borough, as part of its strategic approach to housing.

# 6.0. Operation of the housing register

*This chapter explains Southwark Council's procedure for administering applications to be put on the housing register, how the housing register may be amended, and how people may be removed from the housing register.*

6.1. Southwark Council shall put a person on the housing register if they apply to be put on it, they are eligible for an allocation of social rented housing and are a qualifying person.

6.2. Applications to join the housing register shall be made on a standard online form, which shall be accompanied by guidance that are easy to understand and in plain language.

6.3. Southwark Council shall notify a person when they have put them on the housing register.

6.4. Southwark Council shall amend a person's entry on the housing register, whenever there is a change in their circumstances, or when there is an alteration to Southwark Council rules for allocating social rented housing. Southwark Council shall review the housing register regularly to make sure information held about each person is up to date. Southwark Council shall operate an annual rolling review, contacting people on the housing register to provide them an opportunity to confirm whether or not their housing needs have changed and to see if they still wish to remain on the housing register. Southwark Council shall notify a person when their entry on the housing register is amended, explaining the reasons for any amendment.

6.5. Southwark Council shall remove a person from the housing register, in the following circumstances –

a. A person is no longer eligible or qualifying to be allocated social rented housing; or
b. A person requests to be removed from the housing register; or
c. A person dies; or
d. A person fails to respond to a first request and a follow-up request for a review of information held about them on the housing register, or other correspondence, within a reasonable period of time, typically 28 calendar days; or
e. A person fails to bid on a suitable property within a 12-month period; or
f. A person unreasonably refuses three suitable offers of accommodation; or
g. A person would no longer qualify for an allocation of social housing; or
h. A person has moved away or no longer needs or wants to be housed by Southwark Council.

6.6. Southwark Council shall notify a person when they are removed from the housing register, explaining the reasons for the removal. Southwark Council shall reinstate a person to the housing register, if they get back in contact within two months and are eligible and qualifying for an allocation of social housing, and the person shall not need to complete a new application form. Where an applicant is reinstated to the housing register under these circumstances, Southwark Council will retain the original application date, or the date of any subsequent change in circumstances that led to an increase in priority and placement in a higher band.

6.7. Southwark Council shall consider every application received to join the housing register, provided it is made in accordance with the rules of this Scheme.

6.8. A person applying to join Southwark Council's housing register is required to provide sufficient detail about their personal circumstances, to enable Southwark Council to assess their housing need, or to identify people whose circumstances suggest further investigation may be needed. Southwark Council shall liaise with other local authorities, other landlords and other agencies (e.g. adult social services, children services, NHS trusts, prisons and probation) to verify a person's circumstances and their housing needs. When carrying out this liaison, Southwark Council will do so in accordance with information sharing protocols. Southwark Council shall liaise with medical and welfare experts when assessing a person's application where it suggests they have a medical or welfare need.

# 7.0 Decisions and reviews

*This chapter explains the types of decisions Southwark Council shall issue and peoples' rights to request a review of a decision.*

7.1. Southwark Council shall notify a person of their decision and of the reason for it when:

a. a person applies to be put on the housing register, explaining if they are:
   i. Eligible or ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing, and/or
   ii. A qualifying or not a qualifying person; or
b. Southwark Council removes a person from the housing register, explaining:
   i. why they are now a person who is no longer eligible or qualifying to be allocated social rented housing; or
   ii. they have failed to respond to a first request and a follow-up request for a review of information held about them on the housing register, or other correspondence, within a reasonable period of time, typically 28 calendar days; or
   iii. they have moved away or no longer need or want to be housed by Southwark Council, and/or
   iv. otherwise being removed.
c. Southwark Council make any decision about the facts of a person's application, which are taken into account when considering whether to allocate a home to them.

7.2. Southwark Council shall, when notifying a person that they are ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing, explain whether this is because:

i. a person is subject to immigration control within the meaning of asylum and immigration law, or
ii. because of other legislation that stipulates specified persons from abroad are ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing.

7.3. Southwark Council shall, when notifying a person that they are not a qualifying person, explain whether this is because:

- they or a member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of Southwark Council and in the circumstances at the time that the application has been considered, they are unsuitable to be a tenant of Southwark Council due to that behaviour, or
- any other reasons why they are not a qualifying person.

7.4. A person can themself request to be removed from the housing register. They can do so by notifying Southwark Council. Southwark Council shall confirm receipt of such a notification and also confirm when the request has been acted on.

7.5. Southwark Council shall inform a person of their right to request a review of a decision:

a. not to put a person on the housing register who has applied to be put on it, due to them being:
    i. ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing, or
    ii. not a qualifying person, or
b. to remove a person from the housing register (for example, because they believe their application has been unreasonably cancelled).
c. on any other facts of their case which have been taken into account when considering whether to allocate social rented housing to them, including:
    i. the extent of choice they are entitled to
    ii. the priority awarded and whether or not this is a fair reflection of their housing needs,
    iii. they have been unfairly suspended or their application has been unreasonably cancelled.
    iv. the number of offers refused.
    v. offence related to information given or withheld by them
    vi. fraudulent or incorrect allocations

7.6 A person must make a request for a review before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which they are notified of Southwark Council's decision and reasons. Southwark Council, may, in exceptional circumstances, allow a person a longer period to make a request for a review.

7.7 A person cannot request a review of a decision reached on an earlier review.

7.8 Upon receipt of a review request, Southwark Council shall carry out a review of their decision.

7.9 Southwark Council shall notify a person when a review of a decision commences.

7.10 Southwark Council shall notify people of the formal complaints procedure that is in place, including service standards and time frames for the processing of complaints, so people know what to expect. People will be informed of their right to make a complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

# 8.0 Review procedure

*This chapter explains the procedure Southwark Council shall follow when carrying out a review of a decision.*

8.1. Southwark Council shall carry out a review of a decision as per the procedure set out below.

8.2. Southwark Council shall appoint an employee of the local authority of an appropriate seniority to that of the employee who made the original decision, who was not involved in the original decision, to carry out the review.

8.3. Southwark Council shall, at its discretion, allow a person an oral hearing and allow a person to be represented by a third-party of their choosing at any such hearing.

8.4. Southwark Council shall notify the person concerned of the decision on the review, in writing via their individual user account or any other appropriate means.

8.5. Southwark Council shall, when a review decision is to confirm the original decision, notify a person of the reasons for the review decision.

8.6. Southwark Council shall complete a review of a decision and notify a person of the decision, within 56 days of receiving the review request. Southwark Council may make an agreement with the person who requested the review to extend the period of time in which the review shall be completed.

# 9.0 Applications and information

*This chapter explains what happens when a person makes an application for an allocation of social rented housing, how applicants will be informed of their prospects for being rehoused, and how a person's information held on the housing register will be handled.*

Applications for an allocation of social rented housing

9.1 Southwark Council shall provide advice and information, free of charge, to people in the Borough of Southwark, about the right to make an application to join the housing register. This shall include information about:

a. Application procedures,
b. Qualification and prioritisation criteria,
c. How to apply for advertised vacancies,
d. How people on the housing register are selected for an allocation,
e. Advertising criteria (e.g. priority for adapted homes is given to people or those with disabilities.), and
f. Review procedures.

9.2 Southwark Council shall provide guidance that are easy to understand and in a plain language, to help a person complete their application to join the housing register. Southwark Council shall only request information and evidence needed to assess whether a person is eligible and qualifies to join the housing register and priority for housing. This list is not exhaustive but appropriate evidence could include:

a. A contract of employment
b. Wage/salary slips covering a certain period of time, or bank statements
c. Tax and benefits information, for example proof that a person is in receipt of welfare benefits.

9.3 Southwark Council shall provide any assistance necessary, free of charge, to people in the Borough of Southwark who are likely to have difficulty without assistance to make an application to join the housing register. Southwark Council shall obtain information from applications completed by people applying to join the housing register, to assess and determine if they are likely to have:

a. Priority under the rules of this scheme;
b. Difficulty in making an application or choosing their accommodation without assistance;
c. Disability access or support needs.

9.4 Southwark Council shall, when identifying such people, make further enquiries as to what assistance they might require. For example, assistance may be provided to people with physical or mental impairments, people who may have difficulty in living independently in the community without care and or support, etc.

9.5 Southwark Council shall work together with other relevant agencies and providers, to ensure people can make an application to join the housing register and consider support requirements at different stages of the allocation process. This extends to people who do not have access to, or are unable to, use a computer or the internet. Southwark Council, together with social services, prisons, probation and relevant health bodies and professionals, other housing providers, the voluntary sector, carers and user groups, shall identify people who are likely to require intensive support throughout the process, such as assistance to choose accommodation that is appropriate to their needs, and make sure that suitable assistance is available. Southwark Council shall provide assistance itself or rely on other organisations and individuals to provide assistance.

9.6 Southwark Council shall provide access to translation and interpreting services for people whose first language is not English. Where there is a significant number of speakers of a particular language, Southwark Council might publish information in that language.

9.7 Southwark Council shall provide information in other accessible formats for people with various communication needs, for example people with learning disabilities, people with literacy issues and people with a visual or hearing impairment. This might include large print, British Sign Language (BSL), braille or audio.

9.8 Southwark Council shall provide information to people who are likely to have difficulty accessing information, for example, via outreach work, home visits etc.

9.10 Southwark Council shall provide user-friendly information about its housing allocation scheme via the Council's website, and in printed hardcopy form upon request.

9.11 Southwark Council shall provide information to a person when they apply to join the housing register, explaining how their application will be treated, how much priority they might be given to be allocated a home and whether a home appropriate for their needs is likely to be made available to them and if so, how long it is likely to be before such a home becomes available for allocation to them.

9.12 Southwark Council shall make available general information about the profile of social rented housing stock in the Borough of Southwark. This might include the type, size and location of the stock, how old it is, and how frequently it is likely to become available.

9.13 Southwark Council shall provide information about appropriate housing options which might be available to people in the Borough of Southwark. This information shall be made available when people apply to join the housing register and more

generally via the housing allocation scheme website. This might include information about:

a. Private rented accommodation
b. Low-cost homeownership options
c. Mobility schemes, which enable people to move out of the Borough of Southwark
d. Home improvement scheme or aid and adaptation services which enable people to remain in their existing accommodation for longer

9.14 Southwark Council shall provide information to people when they first join the housing register, that a choice-based system is being used to help allocate homes, so they know how the system works and to assist them to participate successfully in bidding for homes being advertised as available to let.

9.15 Southwark Council shall provide generalised information, via the scheme website, about homes which have been allocated through its housing allocation scheme, to help people on the housing register make decisions about what sort of homes to bid for. This information might specify the number of bids received for a property and give an indication of the reason why the property was allocated to the successful person and the level of priority they had under the scheme (e.g. band and waiting time).

9.16 Southwark Council shall provide generalised information, via the scheme website, about the number of any direct lettings made.

9.17 Southwark Council shall provide information, via the scheme website, on estimated waiting times by area and property type.

9.18 Southwark Council shall provide people on the housing register, information about particular vacancies which are advertised. Along with vacancies being advertised for the scheme web pages, details of vacancies shall be sent in the post or provided over the telephone, to people who cannot use a website. As much as possible the scheme web pages shall be accessible for people who have visual impairment or learning disabilities. As much as possible, this information shall be provided using symbols and maps. This information shall also be provided in large print, braille, made in an audio format, and be translated upon request. This information shall help people to determine:

a. Whether they are entitled to bid for a property
b. Whether a property meets their needs and any other requirements
c. What their likelihood of success would be if they made a bid for a property
d. Basic details about a property such as:
    i. Location

ii. Type (e.g. flat, house, etc)
iii. Size (e.g. number of bedrooms)
iv. Floor, and whether or not it has a lift
v. Type of heating
vi. Whether it has a garden
vii. The amount of rent payable
viii. Type and level of adaptations
ix. Access to services
x. What type of applicant is entitled to bid, or excluded from bidding, for a property, or who will be given a preference for a property?

Information about the housing register

9.19 Southwark Council shall, upon request, allow a person to see the entry relating to themselves on the housing register and provide a copy of it free of charge.

9.20 Southwark Council shall not, without the consent of a person, share any information about them that is included on the housing register, other than as set out at 9.22. Southwark Council shall share information about a person (with their consent,) on the housing register, for example, to ensure that a person is properly assisted to participate in bidding for a home that is advertised by the scheme and that they are housed properly.

9.21 Southwark Council shall share personal information without consent if a lawful basis for this can be identified, for example if a person's safety is at risk. Southwark Council shall determine on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to share information regarding safeguarding concerns, including, but not limited to concerns about domestic abuse, with other agencies (such as private registered providers). Where there is a need to share data without consent, this shall be done in accordance with UK data protection law.

9.22 Southwark Council shall, when seeking references from a person's current and former landlords, only do so with a person's consent.

9.23 Southwark Council shall adopt information sharing protocols to make sure that it and other agencies are clear about the type of information which shall be shared, with whom and for what purposes. Southwark Council shall adopt information sharing protocols with organisations such as social services, other statutory agencies and voluntary agencies. Southwark Council shall when devising information sharing protocols, and when passing on information about individuals on the housing register, be mindful of responsibilities under data protection legislation.

9.24 Southwark Council shall inform people when they apply to join the housing register and when they join the housing register, of their right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, if they believe the data has been shared without their consent.

9.25 Southwark Council shall obtain from applications, information to monitor the fairness of allocations and compliance with equal opportunity requirements, including information about ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation.

9.26 Southwark Council shall inform people when they apply to join the housing register and again when they join the housing register, of their right to make a complaint to the Equality and Human Rights Commission if they believe they have been discriminated against when decisions about the allocation of social rented housing have been made.

9.27 Southwark Council shall, once an application is submitted, keep people informed about what happens next. This might include:

a. sending confirmation that the application has been received, when it will be verified and what checks will be made
b. asking for any information that has not been supplied by the person making the application and giving a clear timescale for providing it and making them aware of how it may affect their application if they fail to provide it.
c. advising people that they must inform Southwark Council about any changes in circumstances that could affect their application and level of priority
d. explaining Southwark Council will be in contact with them and the contacts they can expect throughout an allocation process

9.28 Southwark Council shall, once an application has been verified, inform the applicant about the outcome. When a decision is made that a person can join the housing register, that person shall be informed about the level of priority they have been awarded, and that they should notify Southwark Council about any changes in circumstances which could affect their application and their level of priority.

9.29 Southwark Council shall, once in receipt of all relevant information from the person applying to join the housing register, aim to verify applications within 56 working days.

9.30 People applying to join Southwark Council's housing register shall be asked to sign a declaration that the information they have provided is correct to their knowledge. People will be advised that Southwark Council shall raise action in the court for

recovery of possession where a tenancy has been given on the basis of false information supplied by the person.

9.31 Southwark Council shall carry out checks to verify an application.

# 10.0 Allocations

*This chapter explains the choice applicants are entitled to when a home is allocated to them, how applicants are prioritised and how annual and local lettings plans will be used by Southwark Council.*

**Choice**

10.1 Southwark Council shall prioritise people on the housing register, and allocate homes, following the procedure set out in this chapter. Decisions about allocations will be made by Southwark Council employees tasked with administering housing allocation functions.

10.2 Southwark Council shall offer people on the housing register a choice of a home that might be allocated to them. People will be able to apply (referred to as 'bidding') for particular homes which are advertised as vacant on the housing allocation scheme website. This will allow people to express their preference for a home they wish to be allocated. Southwark Council shall, whenever possible, take such preferences into account when allocating housing.

10.3 Southwark Council shall operate an 'open advertising' approach whereby all people on the housing register, and members of the wider population, can find out about vacancies which are advertised on the housing allocation scheme website.

10.4 Where housing designated for a specific purpose (e.g. housing for older people, accessible housing adapted for disabled people, housing for people sleeping rough, etc) is advertised alongside other homes, it will be made clear that only bids from those people with relevant housing and/or support needs will be accepted for it. This shall be done, for example, by making clear in the details of the advertisement, only certain categories of people will be considered for the homes.

10.5 Southwark Council shall work together with other relevant agencies and providers to ensure people can bid for homes. This extends to people who do not have access to or are unable to use a computer or the internet. People that may have difficulty in bidding for homes without assistance, for example due to physical or mental impairments, shall have access to necessary assistance to make a bid for a property.

10.6 Southwark Council reserves the right to reject a bid on grounds of risk. People shall be informed of the reasons for such decisions and be informed of the properties they can bid for. People who pose a risk to themselves, to other individuals, or are at risk from other individuals, for example due to sexual or violent offences, shall be restricted in the homes that they can bid for.

10.7 A Where a management transfer has been agreed in accordance with the Council's relevant policy, this will normally result in the direct allocation of suitable accommodation rather than allocation through the bidding process. This is to ensure that the move secures the intended benefit for the household, including where there is a need to move promptly or to a property of a particular type or location, and to support the Council in making best use of its housing stock. Any such direct allocation shall remain subject to the Council's approval and recording requirements.

10.8 Southwark Council shall make allocations through the bidding process wherever possible. Direct lets will be used only in exceptional and clearly justified circumstances where a direct offer is necessary, proportionate and consistent with the proper management of housing stock, the effective discharge of statutory duties, or the management of serious risk. Direct lets shall be kept to a minimum and must not be used as a routine alternative to choice based lettings. All direct lets must be approved by the Director of Housing Needs and Support before an offer is made. A direct let is when a person is not offered a choice of accommodation. Examples of when a direct let might be made include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. people whose home has been compulsory purchased (where Southwark Council is required to offer a specific property to meet legal requirements); or
b. people who are tenants, who need to leave their original home to facilitate an area regeneration scheme, who do not bid for any advertised homes that would be suitable for them to occupy; or
c. people owed a homelessness duty or
d. people seeking a move under a witness mobility scheme; or
e. people subject to multi-agency public protection arrangements (for assessing and managing the risks posed by certain offenders), who pose a very serious risk to the community (e.g. MAPPA level 1 and 2 cases).

10.9 Southwark Council uses a housing management IT system to generate a list of applicants who have made a bid, in descending order of priority. As a general rule homes which have been advertised shall be offered to an applicant who has bid for the property and:

a. has the highest priority under the scheme, and
b. has been at that level of priority the longest (either at the date when the applicant was first accepted to join the housing register or the date of any subsequent change in priority when a higher priority is awarded), and

c. matches the lettings criteria for that home (e.g. the type of home, its size and bedroom needs of the household, its location, etc), or
d. matches any quotas in place set out in an annual or local lettings plans.

10.10 A more restrictive letting criteria will usually be made when making first lets of homes in new housing, or due to a local letting plan being in operation.

10.11 Southwark Council shall reject a bid, which would otherwise have been successful, where the home would not be suitable for that person. There will be good reasons why the person at the top of the list is not offered a home and is bypassed on that occasion. Southwark Council shall not reject bids unless there are sound reasons for doing so. Where Southwark Council does pass over a person's bid, which would otherwise have been successful, they shall keep a record of reasons behind decisions. This information will help in monitoring the operation of the housing allocation scheme and make sure that there is no systematic disadvantaging of particular individuals or groups. Common reasons for bypassing a person on the housing register might include:

a. the home is ground floor and accessible and the person does not need those features and there is another person with high priority who does.
b. the person has already refused a very similar property and has said they're not interested in receiving a similar offer.
c. the home has been designed or adapted for people with particular needs and should be allocated to someone who needs a property of that type.

10.12 Southwark Council shall make sure that people receive sufficient information about homes which are advertised, to enable them to make an informed decision as to whether or not to bid for it. The following information will be made available (whenever possible) when a home is advertised:

a. provision type (e.g. general needs, supported housing/housing for older people, low-cost homeownership – i.e. leasehold, shared ownership, etc)
b. rent type and charge (e.g. social/affordable/intermediate rent, weekly rent and service charges and any other property related charges etc)
c. unit size (e.g. bedsit, number of bedrooms, non-self-contained or self-contained)
d. letting criteria restrictions (when applicable) (e.g. people over 55 years of age, under-occupiers prioritised, disabled people with accessibility need only, etc)
e. tenure type (e.g. secure tenancy, flexible tenancy etc)
f. location (e.g. by ward and/or postcode, etc)
g. accessibility (e.g. approach routes, ramps, steps, entrance doors, floor level, corridors and doors, lifts and stairs, gardens, adaptations already made to individual homes, etc)
h. Council Tax Band

10.13 Southwark Council may, at its discretion, apply automatic bidding functions within the choice-based lettings system to specified categories of applicants or properties. This may be used where it supports timely and effective allocation of housing, including where households may face barriers to active bidding or where delays would undermine efficient use of available stock. The use of automatic bidding assists the Council in managing demand, reducing prolonged waiting times, and ensuring that allocations are made in line with statutory requirements and the objectives of this Scheme.

Offers of a home and refusals

10.14 Southwark Council shall restrict the number of bids which an applicant can make at any particular time, to one bid per cycle. This may be subject to change from time to time and any change to this will be notified on the Choice Based Lettings website. This is to limit the number of refusals, and potential for delay associated with managing a large number of bids. Southwark Council shall provide people with appropriate advice and assistance to help them to bid effectively. The fact that an applicant has made a bid for a home should not be treated as meaning that Southwark Council has made a final decision to allocate it to them.

10.15 Southwark Council may, in genuinely exceptional circumstances, make an allocation outside the rules of this scheme. This power will be exercised rarely and only where there is a compelling and evidenced reason to depart from the usual bidding and prioritisation arrangements, for example because the person has an exceptional level of need that is not adequately reflected within the scheme, or because the circumstances are so extreme or unusual that strict application of the scheme would lead to an unreasonable outcome. Allocations made in this way shall be kept to a minimum. In every case, Southwark Council shall keep a clear audit trail, record the reasons for the decision, explain why the usual bidding process or scheme rules were not sufficient, and obtain prior authorisation from a senior officer in accordance with an approved authorisation process.

10.16 A To support consistent operation, any proposal for a direct let or an allocation outside the scheme shall be supported by a written record setting out the relevant facts, the risk or management issue being addressed, the alternative options considered, the reasons why a direct offer or exceptional allocation is necessary, and the approving officer. Southwark Council shall monitor the number and type of these cases, review their use periodically to ensure they remain exceptional, and use this information to promote transparency, accountability and continuous improvement in decision making.

10.17 Southwark Council shall make suitable and sustainable allocations where there is a good probability of providing a long-term and stable solution for a person on the housing register and surrounding neighbours. Southwark Council shall wherever possible make sure that allocations do not lead to housing management problems and instead will result in a sustainable tenancy. Southwark Council shall make use of sensitive allocations (sometimes known as sensitive lettings). Instead of automatically allocating a property to a person at the top of a list, careful consideration shall be given to the suitability of a person for a vacancy, based on the information about that person and knowledge of the property, it's location or neighbours. Southwark Council shall balance a range of factors including a person's housing need, their suitability for a home, and needs of prospective neighbours. For example, allocating a hard to let home which may exacerbate problems which led a person to become homeless previously, or placing a person with social or other problems in the same area, which can cause problems for both those from the area itself and for housing management, shall be kept in mind when allocating homes to any person on the housing register. Southwark Council shall only use a sensitive allocations approach where there are good reasons for doing so and shall keep a record of why decisions were made, to make sure the decisions are transparent and the decision maker is accountable. Southwark Council shall monitor the use of sensitive allocations.

10.18 Southwark Council shall allow people a reasonable period of time to make a decision about any home offered to them, providing them with an opportunity to view the home before making a decision. Southwark Council shall allow sufficient time for people who require additional assistance and/or support to arrange for an adviser or an advocate (who may be a friend or family member) to accompany them when viewing a home and to take advice in making their decision to accept or reject an offer.

10.19 Applicants shall be allowed to refuse up to three homes allocated to them within a 12 month period. After which, they shall be removed from the register for a period of 12 months and required to reapply after this period. This approach is designed to minimise the time loss in making offers that are not accepted. People on the housing register shall be reminded of the limit to the number of offers made, when an offer of housing is made to them. When Southwark Council makes initial contact with a person to see if they're interested in a particular home, if they are not, for example because they are currently unwell, or the property is too far from their child's school, Southwark Council might choose to bypass the person on such an occasion.

<u>People owed a homelessness duty</u>

10.20 People owed a homelessness duty needing advice and assistance to bid shall be provided with it. There will be a limit to the period during which they can bid, this will be based on the time it would normally take before an opportunity to bid on a

suitable home becomes available for someone with similar priority under the scheme.

10.21 An assessment will take place to examine why a person owed a homelessness duty, has failed to bid for a suitable home. If they were incapable of making a bid without advice and assistance, Southwark Council shall consider extending the period during which they can make a bid and shall arrange for any advice and assistance needed to help them bid. If Southwark Council decides a person will no longer be able to bid for properties, they will be made aware of this and of the fact that a direct let will be made or where appropriate inclusion of auto bidding

10.22 People who are owed a homelessness duty have the right to refuse a suitable housing allocation. If a person does refuse a suitable offer (within the meaning of the term set out Housing Act 1996 part 7 – Homelessness), Southwark Council shall make them aware that its duty of homelessness assistance has come to an end. People shall be allowed to remain on the housing register if they continue to be eligible and qualify, although they will no longer be given the same level of priority due to being owed a homelessness duty. Instead, their housing needs will be reassessed and any priority given will be based on their housing needs at this time.

Disabled people

10.23 Housing which has been designed or adapted to meet the needs of disabled people will be advertised via the scheme. It shall be prioritised for people who have access needs. This will be explained in the advertising criteria. Disabled people can bid for accessible vacancies, and for accommodation that does not currently meet their needs, when Southwark Council has assessed that it is reasonable and practical to adapt the home to meet those needs.

10.24 When an accessible property is advertised, the advertisement shall give sufficient information about the level of adaptations and/or accessibility features in the accommodation, so that people can make an informed decision on whether or not to bid for a particular property. Information shall be included about external access to the property (e.g. whether there is a ramp up to the property and whether there is accessible parking nearby).

10.24 Southwark Council shall develop and maintain a database of accessible Council properties within the Borough. Disabled people shall be informed about the time they are likely to wait for any type of property to become available. Such information shall be provided to assist disabled people to decide whether or not to bid for a particular home which is advertised.

10.25 Southwark Council shall provide disabled people with additional assistance and support, depending on the nature and degree of their disability, if required. Southwark Council shall advise individual disabled people when a suitable accessible property is about to be, or has been, advertised.

Restricting choice

10.26 Southwark Council shall attach advertising criteria to particular homes, specifying that only applicants that meet certain criteria may bid for that particular home, or that applicants that meet certain criteria will be given preference for that particular home. Advertising criteria will be used for:

a. when local lettings policies are being used to achieve housing management and other housing policy objectives; or
b. to match people with access needs to accessible accommodation, or
c. when there is an age restriction for the property, such as only households over 55 years of age.

10.27 Southwark Council shall not allow every person to express an interest in or be considered for any, and every, available home to let. People shall not be permitted to bid for homes, which would result in statutory overcrowding or under occupation (on a case-by-case basis, under occupancy might be allowed, for example where Southwark Council wishes to bring down the child density ratio on an estate). Therefore, couples and single people will not usually be permitted to bid for a home that has more than one bedroom. Southwark Council shall provide information when a property is advertised, to assist people in establishing whether they are entitled to express an interest in a particular home available to let. Southwark Council shall make the final decision on whether it is appropriate to allocate any particular home to any particular person. When doing so the following shall be taken into account:

a. provision type (e.g. a home is housing for older people and person has no need for such housing, or a home is general needs housing and a person has a need for supported housing or housing for older people, etc).
b. rent type and charge (e.g. a person cannot afford to pay the rent and/or all other property related charges for a home).
c. unit size (e.g. a person and their household would be overcrowded or would under-occupy a home).
d. letting criteria restrictions (e.g. a home must be allocated to disabled people with accessibility needs).
e. condition of the home (e.g. repairs and maintenance need to be carried out to a home and these cannot be completed while a home is occupied, or any repairs and maintenance required cannot be completed within a reasonable period of time after the person might otherwise have moved into a home).

f. accessibility (e.g. it is not possible to make necessary adaptations, either at all or within a reasonable period of time after a person might have otherwise moved into a home).
g. location (e.g. a home would result in a person or members of their household being at risk to or from others).

**Prioritisation**

10.28 Southwark Council shall when allocating homes, give a preference to people in the following order of bands, A, B, C, D and E with A being the highest priority and E the lowest. Where two or more households are within the same priority band, allocation priority will be determined by the qualification date applicable to that band.

10.29 People who might fall into more than one band shall be placed in the band that gives them the greatest priority.

10.30 Where an applicant does not fall specifically within the wording of Bands A to E, but does have a housing need, Southwark Council shall on occasions, use its discretion and make an allocation outside the rules of this scheme. Southwark Council does not expect to need to exercise this discretion on a regular basis. Southwark Council shall keep clear audit trails when discretion has been used and record the reasons for an allocation. There shall be a clear authorisation processes in place, with authorisation by a senior officer.

10.31 Southwark Council shall, when making decisions about prioritisation, disregard a persons' household members if such household members are ineligible for an allocation of social housing

Band A

1. People occupying insanitary or otherwise unsatisfactory housing conditions which, following assessment (including by an Environmental Health Officer where applicable), are determined to pose a significant risk to health and safety, and where the required remedial or repair works cannot be completed within a reasonable period of time, or the property cannot be made safe at all.

2. People occupying overcrowded housing where the household is statutorily overcrowded (within the meaning of Part X of the Housing Act 1985), or where

the household is not statutorily overcrowded but is overcrowded by three or more bedrooms under the Bedroom Standard

3. People (or someone from their household) with a particular need for settled accommodation on urgent medical or welfare grounds, due to:
    a. Condition is expected to be terminal and re-housing is required due to unsuitable accommodation or to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care; or
    b. Condition is life threatening and existing accommodation is a major contributory factor; or
    c. Planned discharge from hospital is imminent and there is no accommodation available that is reasonable to occupy.

4. People with a need for accommodation, who are a child leaving the care of Southwark Council.

5. People who are tenants of Southwark Council, or a private registered provider, and living in Southwark, under-occupying their home (by the local housing allowance size criteria) who wish to transfer to a smaller property suitable for their needs.

6. People who have lost their current home as a result of a disaster, such as a fire, flood or other emergency.

7. People who are social housing tenants in Southwark, accepted by Southwark Council as needing to leave their home to facilitate an area regeneration scheme.

8. People who are non-dependent adults, who normally live with social housing tenants in Southwark who have been accepted by Southwark Council as needing to leave their home to facilitate an area regeneration scheme, at the discretion of the Strategic Director of Housing.

9. People who have been accepted through internal, evidence-based assessment at the Housing Needs Service to benefit from a Housing First scheme (commissioned by Southwark Council)

10. People who are members of the Armed Forces community, will be given reasonable preference where they fall within the following groups:
    a. Former members of the Regular Armed Forces (including those who are close to leaving or have recently left the Regular Armed Forces; or
    b. Serving in the Regular Armed Forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness (including mental ill health) or disability which is wholly or

partially attributable to the person's service, including those who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation; or

c. Serving or have served in the reserve forces and suffering from a serious injury, illness (including mental ill health) or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to the person's service; or
d. Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Armed Forces where the bereaved spouses or civil partners have recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their partner whose death was attributable, wholly or partially to that service.

Band B

1. People who need to be rehoused as a result of domestic abuse, including those who have fled domestic abuse and are living in a refuge or other forms of safe accommodation in Southwark.

2. People who need to be rehoused as a result of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out, who are:
   a. Witnesses of crime, or victims of crime, who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained in their current home; or
   b. Escaping serious antisocial behaviour; or
   c. Hate incidents; or
   d. Harassment (e.g. racial, religious or sectarian, homophobic, transphobic, autistic people and people with a learning or physical disability)

3. People occupying insanitary, or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions, for example due to:
   a. Lacking bathroom or kitchen; or
   b. Lacking inside WC; or
   c. Permanently lacking cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or adequate heating; or
   d. Property in disrepair

4. People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability), due to:
   a. A mental illness or disorder (including serving members of the regular and reserve Armed Forces and veterans with mental ill health; or
   b. A physical or learning disability or sensory impairment; or
   c. Chronic or progressive medical conditions; or

d. Infirmity due to old age; or
e. The need to give or receive care; or
f. The need to recover from the effect of violence or threat of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse (e.g. victims of domestic abuse); or
g. The need to recover from the effects of racist incidents; or
h. Ability to fend for self, restricted for other reasons; or
i. Young people at risk (i.e. child(ren) in need, 16–17-year-olds, lone parents under 18); or
j. People with an assessed learning difficulty; or
k. Need for adapted housing and/or extra care facilities, bedroom or bathroom; or
l. Need improved heating (on medical grounds); or
m. Need sheltered housing (on medical grounds); or
n. Need ground floor accommodation (on medical grounds); or
o. Need to be near friends/relatives or medical facility (on medical grounds); or
p. The need to move, following hospitalisation or long-term care; or
q. Being ready to make a planned move from supported housing (commissioned by Southwark Council), where they are provided with care, support or supervision in;
    i. Resettlement accommodation; or
    ii. A managed property; or
    iii. A hostel for homeless people; or
r. Moving on from a drug or alcohol recovery programme; or
s. Being vulnerable (e.g. having learning disabilities) and not expected to be able to find their own accommodation, who wish to live independently in the community, with appropriate care and support.

5. People with a need for accommodation, who are foster carers and adopters, special guardians, and family and friend carers (who have taken on the care of a child because their parents are unable to provide care), who need a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child, approved by Southwark Council.

6. People who need to move to a particular locality in Borough of Southwark, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others), for example due to accessing specialised medical treatment.

<u>Band C</u>

1. People who are owed a homelessness duty (by Southwark Council) under section 193(2), duty owed to persons with priority need who are not

intentionally homeless, to ensure accommodation is available for occupation by the person.

2. Households accommodated in the private rented sector following an offer made by Southwark Council to prevent homelessness, relieve homelessness, or to bring to an end a homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.).

3. People occupying overcrowded housing, by one bedroom (by the Bedroom Standard at s.10.32 unless statutorily overcrowded).

4. People who are members of the Armed Forces community, who are:
    a. Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Regular Armed Forces service personnel, who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence; or
    b. Adult children of Regular Armed Forces service personnel, who may no longer be able to remain in the family home.

5. People occupying housing which is temporary or occupied on insecure terms, who have unmet housing needs that cannot be met by any other housing options that are available, for example due to:
    e. Family or friends being able to accommodate only for a temporary period; or
    f. Social or private rented tenancy coming to an end; or
    g. Non-violent relationship breakdown; or
    h. Required to leave asylum support accommodation.

6. People who are former care leavers who have unmet housing needs that cannot be met by any other housing options that are available.

<u>Band D</u>

1. People who are owed a homelessness duty (by Southwark Council) under section:
    a. 189(B)(2), initial (relief) duty (by Southwark Council); or,
    b. 190(2), duty owed to persons becoming intentionally homeless, to ensure that accommodation is available for occupation for a reasonable period while a person finds accommodation to live in; or
    c. 195(2), duty in cases of threatened homelessness, to take reasonable steps to help a person to ensure their accommodation does not cease to be available for their occupation.**)**

2. People who are experiencing homelessness (within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 Part 7 Homelessness) within the Borough of Southwark, including those that have either not made an application for homelessness assistance, have

withdrawn their application for homelessness assistance, or any homelessness duty of assistance owed has ended, including:

a. No fixed abode; or
b. Living with friends; or
c. Rough sleeping; or
d. Homeless upon departure from prison.

Band E

Applicants placed in Band E will be able to bid for properties advertised through Choice Based Lettings. However, as Band E is the lowest priority band and reflects low housing need, it is unlikely that households in this band will be rehoused.

1. People who are secure tenants of Southwark Council seeking a transfer, who are not entitled to a reasonable preference for an allocation of social rented housing (i.e. they would not be placed in any of the above bands).

2. Any other person who is eligible for an allocation of social rented housing and who qualifies to join the housing register.

Bedroom criteria

10.32 Southwark Council uses the rules set out below to calculate how many bedrooms a household is considered to need. This is known as the household's bedroom requirement and is used when assessing housing need, including overcrowding and under□occupation. The bedroom requirement is based on the size and make□up of the household, including the ages of household members and any relevant circumstances, and is calculated using the applicable standard explained below.

| Household member | How bedrooms are counted (1 bedroom for each of the below) |
|---|---|
| **Adult couple** | 1 bedroom |
| **Single adult aged 21 or over** | 1 bedroom |
| **Boys aged 10 to 20** | • Two boys aged 10 to 20 can share, or<br>• One boy aged 10 to 20 can share with one boy aged 9 or under<br>• One boy aged 10 to 20 gets their own bedroom if there is no younger boy to share with |
| **Girls aged 10 to 20** | • Two girls aged 10 to 20 can share, or<br>• One girl aged 10 to 20 can share with one girl aged 9 or under |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • One girl aged 10 to 20 gets their own bedroom if there is no younger girl to share with |
| **Children aged 9 or under** | • Two children aged 9 or under can share, regardless of sex<br>• Any remaining child aged 9 or under gets their own bedroom |

10.33 Where such tenants are releasing a larger property, they may bid for a home that is one bedroom above their assessed bedroom need, provided the property is still smaller than their current home. Southwark Council shall, when deciding if a person's household is under-occupied, make an assessment against the UK Government's Local Housing Allowance bedroom criteria, which allows a separate bedroom each for:

| Household member | How bedrooms are counted |
|---|---|
| **Adult couple** | 1 bedroom |
| **Any person aged 16 or over** | 1 bedroom |
| **Children aged 15 or under** | • Two children of the same sex aged 15 or under can share |
| **Children aged 9 or under** | • Two children aged 9 or under can share, regardless of sex |
| **Other children** | • A child gets their own bedroom if they cannot share under the rules above |
| **Disability or medical need** | • One additional bedroom may be allowed where a person cannot share due to a disability or medical condition |
| **Foster carers** | • One bedroom for a foster child, where the applicant is an approved foster carer |
| **Overnight carer** | • One bedroom allowed for a non□resident overnight carer, regardless of the number of carers |

10.34 Non-family members will not be considered within the household group. Extended family members and confirmed carers will be included if they need to live with the family to provide or receive medical care and support.

Quotas

10.35 Southwark Council shall from time to time set quotas in Annual or Local Lettings Plans to achieve a spread of allocations over various needs factors for example:

a. people who need to move to larger accommodation in order to foster or adopt a child, on the recommendation of Southwark Council's Children's Services,
b. to provide for a number or proportion of allocations to be made to applicants to whom the Council has accepted a homelessness duty under s193(2) HA 1996 and:
    i. are living in temporary accommodation arranged by the Council as part of this homelessness duty, or
    ii. will require temporary accommodation to be arranged by the Council as part of this homelessness duty, for a reasonable period,
c. to provide for a number or proportion of allocations to be made of properties to applicants who already occupy them by way of temporary accommodation,
d. Southwark social housing tenants under-occupying their home who wish to move to a smaller home suitable for their needs.

10.36 Quotas shall be based on information Southwark Council has gathered on housing need and demand in the Borough of Southwark based on the profile of people on the housing register. Southwark Council shall consider:
a. The size and composition of the housing register, including the housing needs people have, and
b. The type of stock and vacancies which are likely to become available.

10.37 Southwark Council shall operate an Annual Lettings Plan alongside this main scheme, to act as an additional set of circumstances which will be considered, or rules which will be applied. Decisions on the details of these circumstances and rules will be made by Elected Members of the Council. Southwark Council shall monitor who is being allocated properties and publish information on performance against quotas that have been set.

10.38 Southwark Council shall operate local lettings plans alongside this main scheme, to act as an additional set of circumstances which will be considered, or rules which will be applied. Decisions on the details of these circumstances and rules will be made by a Senior officer.

10.39 Local letting policies will be used to allocate particular homes to applicants of a particular description and achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives, for example:
a. To deal with concentrations of deprivation or create more mixed communities, by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for people who are in employment or to enable people to take up employment.
b. To deal sensitively with lettings on new development sites including giving priority to those with a local connection to the electoral ward area

c. To make sure that properties which are particularly suited to being made accessible (e.g. ground floor flats) are prioritised for those with access needs
d. To deal with allocations of designated key worker housing to specific types of key workers as specified by Southwark Council from time to time, through a distinct application process.

10.40 Southwark Council shall publish local lettings policies as separate policy documents, which may be revoked or revised by Southwark Council as appropriate.

10.41 Southwark Council shall monitor and review local lettings policies regularly, as to their effectiveness, and to determine if they are still appropriate and necessary.

Modifying and altering this scheme

10.42 Southwark Council shall, before modifying this scheme, have regard to:
a. Southwark Councils' Housing Strategy
b. Southwark Councils' current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
c. Southwark Councils' current Tenancy Strategy
d. The London Housing Strategy

10.43 Southwark Council shall, before making an alteration to this scheme which would be a major change of policy, send a copy of proposed alterations to every private registered provider, with which Southwark Council has a nomination arrangement and provide them with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.

# 11.0 Information about this allocation scheme

*This chapter explains how applicants can obtain a copy of the scheme and how they will be consulted when future amendments are made*

11.1 Southwark Council shall publish a summary of this housing allocation scheme and provide a copy of the summary free of charge to any person who requests one. A copy of the summary is available to download from the Council website. Copies of the scheme summary can also be requested by contacting Southwark Council's Housing Allocation service.

11.2 Southwark Council shall make available a copy of this scheme for inspection at our office, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH. Southwark Council shall, upon request from a person, and the payment of a reasonable fee to cover the cost of printing, provide a printed copy of the scheme.

11.3 Southwark Council shall, when making a significant change to the scheme, which would affect a large number of people on the housing register, notify them of the change. Southwark Council shall consult on significant changes to the scheme. Southwark Council shall engage with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. Adult Social Care, Children Services, health services, community justice services, voluntary organisations, etc), as well as people on the housing register, tenants, the general public, anyone who is affected by the way social housing shall be allocated and anyone who is affected by the way Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing. The approach taken to consult will depend on the nature and extent of the changes that are being proposed to be made. This might involve:

a. A small sounding board group of tenants and people on the housing register
b. A tenant scrutiny panel.
c. Surveys

# 12.0 Co-operation with private registered providers

*This chapter explains how Southwark Council shall work with private registered providers to nominate people from the housing register for a vacancy.*

12.1 Southwark Council shall work together with private register providers that own and manage stock in the borough of Southwark, to make best use of the available social housing in the local authority area. Southwark Council shall make requests to private registered providers, for them to offer an allocation of social housing to people on Southwark Council's housing register.

12.2 Southwark Council shall comply with requirements set out in a nomination agreement with a private registered provider, when making requests for social rented housing to be made available to persons from Southwark Council's housing register.

12.3 Nomination agreements shall set out the proportion of letting that will be made available by private register providers that own or manage stock in the Borough of Southwark, to Southwark Council. Nomination agreements shall set out any criteria which has been adopted for accepting or rejecting nominations and how any disputes shall be resolved. Southwark Council shall monitor and regularly review nomination agreements, to demonstrate that obligations are being met and to ensure they reflect changing needs and demand.

12.4 Southwark Council shall, when making nominations to a private registered provider, make sure the details of a nominated person are accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date and in particular provide information about any vulnerability, support needs and arrangements for support, where this information is available.

12.5 Southwark Council shall also agree information sharing protocols with private register providers who own or manage stock in the borough of Southwark, covering issues such as rent arrears, antisocial behaviour and support needs.

## 13.0 Guidance

*This chapter explains how Southwark Council shall make use of guidance on the allocation of social rented housing, published by the UK, when making decisions about social housing allocations.*

13.1 Southwark Council shall refer to statutory guidance published by the UK Government when reviewing and amending this housing allocation scheme, and when making decisions about policy and practice.

## 14.0 False statements and withholding information

*This chapter explains the consequences for people applying for an allocation of social rented housing, if they provide false statements and/or withhold information.*

14.1 Southwark Council shall consider, when a person knowingly makes a false statement on a housing register application or in response to a request for further information in support of an application (including during review proceedings), as a reason for disqualification from joining the housing register.

14.2 Southwark Council shall look at the circumstances of each person rather than applying a blanket approach about whether to institute criminal proceedings against a person who has given false information or withheld information.

## 15.0 Elected members

*This chapter explains the role of Southwark Council's elected members in allocating of social rented housing*

15.1 Elected members of Southwark Council shall not be part of a decision-making body at the time an allocation decision is made, when either the accommodation concerned is situated in their electoral ward or the person subject to the decision has their sole or main residence there.

15.2 Elected members shall be permitted to represent their constituents to any decision-making body, such as seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents and be permitted to participate in the decision-making bodies deliberations prior to a decision.

15.3 Elected members shall not attempt to confer an advantage on any person seeking an allocation of social rented housing. Elected members shall ensure compliance with

Southwark Council's Code of Conduct and shall consider whether they are required to declare an interest before participating in such deliberations. Elected members shall obtain advice from Southwark Council's Monitoring Officer, should there be any doubt.

15.4 Elected members shall be involved in policy decisions that affect the generality of social rented housing in their electoral ward.

15.5 Elected members shall be responsible for determining allocation policies and monitoring the implementation of Southwark Council's housing allocation scheme, to ensure the operation of the scheme is open and accountable and systems are compliant with Southwark Council's policy objectives.

APPENDIX B

# Housing Allocations Scheme Consultation Results – 2025

**Introduction**

This report sets out the results of the Housing Allocations Scheme 2025 consultation and should be read alongside the draft Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2025 Document, Housing Allocations Scheme Cabinet Report September 2025, and Equalities and Need Impact Assessment (EINA).

Services within Southwark Council have supported the development of this proposed allocations scheme through working groups, engagement and consultation, including the Community Safety team, Adult's and Children's Social Services, Housing allocations, Supported Housing Service as well as Homelessness and Resident Services officers.

The online consultation survey was made available for 12 weeks between 11th March to 6th June 2025. Promotion of the survey via a press release, social media, and engagement sessions with external agencies, including housing support and advice agencies, were also carried out during this period. The Survey also included the draft proposed scheme document and invited any additional comments on all aspects of the proposals.

All responses and additional comments have been considered when making the final recommendations for the new Housing Allocations Scheme.

This report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** Key findings
- **Section 2** Consultation responses and recommendations
- **Section 3** Demographic make-up of survey respondents.

# Section 1: Key findings

Findings from the consultation are summarised below, and results and recommendations set out in more detail at Section 2.

- We received 668 online responses to the consultation survey, mainly from residents living in Southwark. The Council also received 482 email responses, most of which were substantially identical template responses coordinated by Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth (HASL), representing individual submissions from members of the local housing action group. Responses were also received from Southwark Law Centre and others.
- There were also a large number of supporting comments which can be seen, anonymised online.
- These responses have been used to refine and clarify some areas of the proposed scheme.

**Qualification and suitability**

- The majority of respondents agree that the criterion: working in the borough, should be removed as an automatic qualification criterion, while some expressed concern that removing this criterion would make local connection rules too strict.
- More than half of online respondents agree that applicants who are no longer suitable to be a social housing tenant due to certain behaviours, such as anti-social behaviour or accruing substantial rent arrears without making a payment arrangement, should be removed from the register for at least a 12-month period, while others disagreed, expressing concern about applicants in rent arrears due to benefit problems.

**Priority**

- The proposal to remove non-housing related priority is supported by the majority of respondents as is removing priority stars to make the system fairer and easier for applicants to understand.
- The criteria of Southwark Housing First support programme being given Band A priority and allowing homeless applicants to retain their priority if they take a private rented sector tenancy while waiting for an allocation of social housing, are both supported by most respondents.

**Bidding and offers**

- Most respondents agree to limiting the number of offers of accommodation made to each applicant, with those refusing three offers being suspended for a 12-month period
- More than half agree that applicants should be removed from the register if they do not place any bids for a suitable advertised property during a 12-month period.

Although some consider this a punishment for not bidding, citing concerns about some applicants needing support to bid.

- The majority of respondents disagree with preventing applicants in Band E from bidding for an allocation of social housing.

**Annual Review**

- Almost three quarters agree that applicants should be required to confirm their housing circumstances on an annual basis, with some raising concerns about applicants who need support to apply.

**Overcrowding and bedroom need**

- The wording of proposed Band A Statutory Overcrowding criterion was highlighted as needing to be clarified so as not to appear to reduce the priority for those households who are statutorily overcrowded.
- HASL disagree with the proposal for the new scheme to follow good practice and guidance and use the Bedroom Standard for determining the number of bedrooms a household requires, raising the ceiling age for sharing a room with a same sex sibling from 15 to 20.

**Local and Annual Lettings Plans**

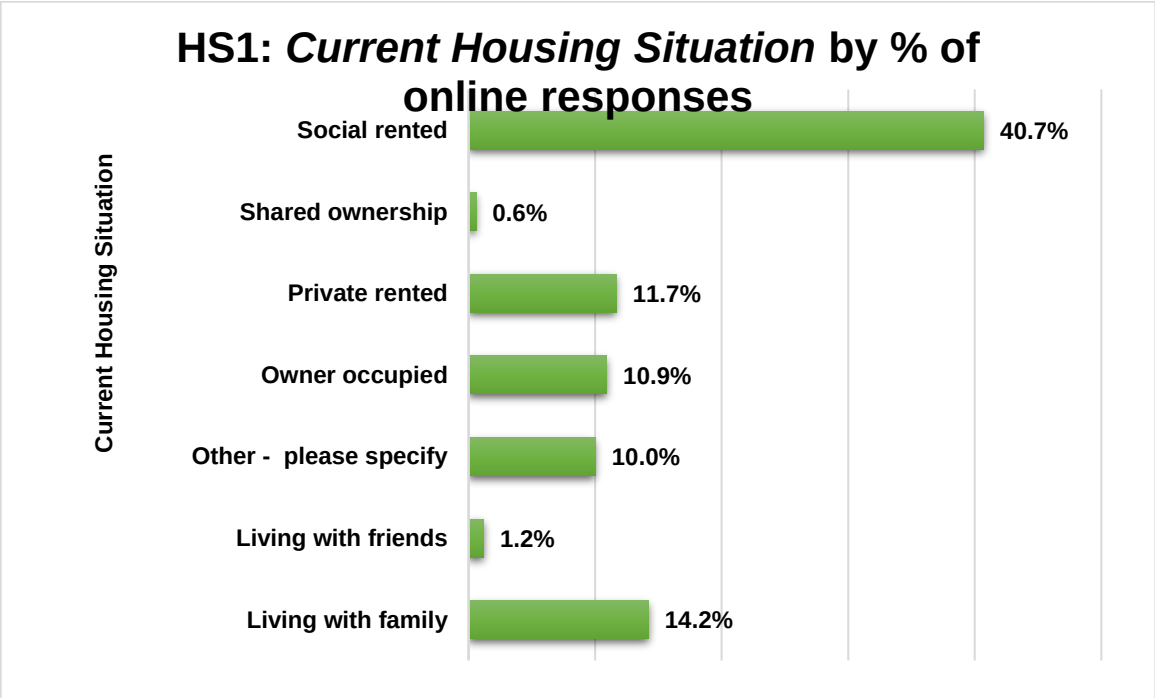
- The proposal to change the current 50% quota for new build social housing to be offered to current tenants to a more flexible quota system was highlighted by the HASL, who commented that they do not consider such quotas necessary as all available homes should be advertised and allocated to those who have the highest need, regardless of current tenure.
- The group also expressed concerns that the proposed Annual Lettings Plan (ALP) would make the housing register more confusing and make it difficult to understanding how housing is allocated.

Full detail of responses and recommendations are set out in Section 2 below.

# Section 2: Consultation responses and recommendations

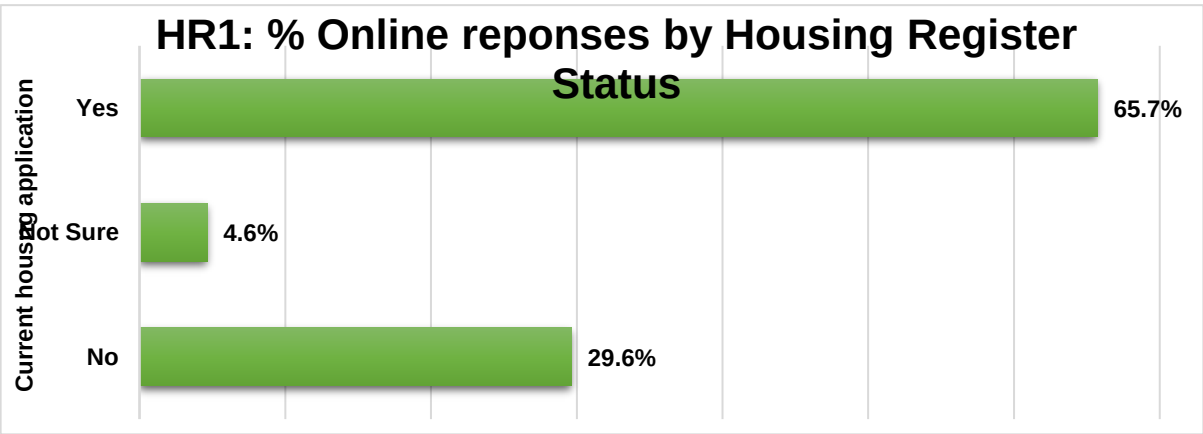
## 2.1 Current housing situation

597 online respondents answered this question with 272 of these confirming they are social housing tenants. 95 respondents live with family, 78 are privately renting and 73 are owner-occupiers.



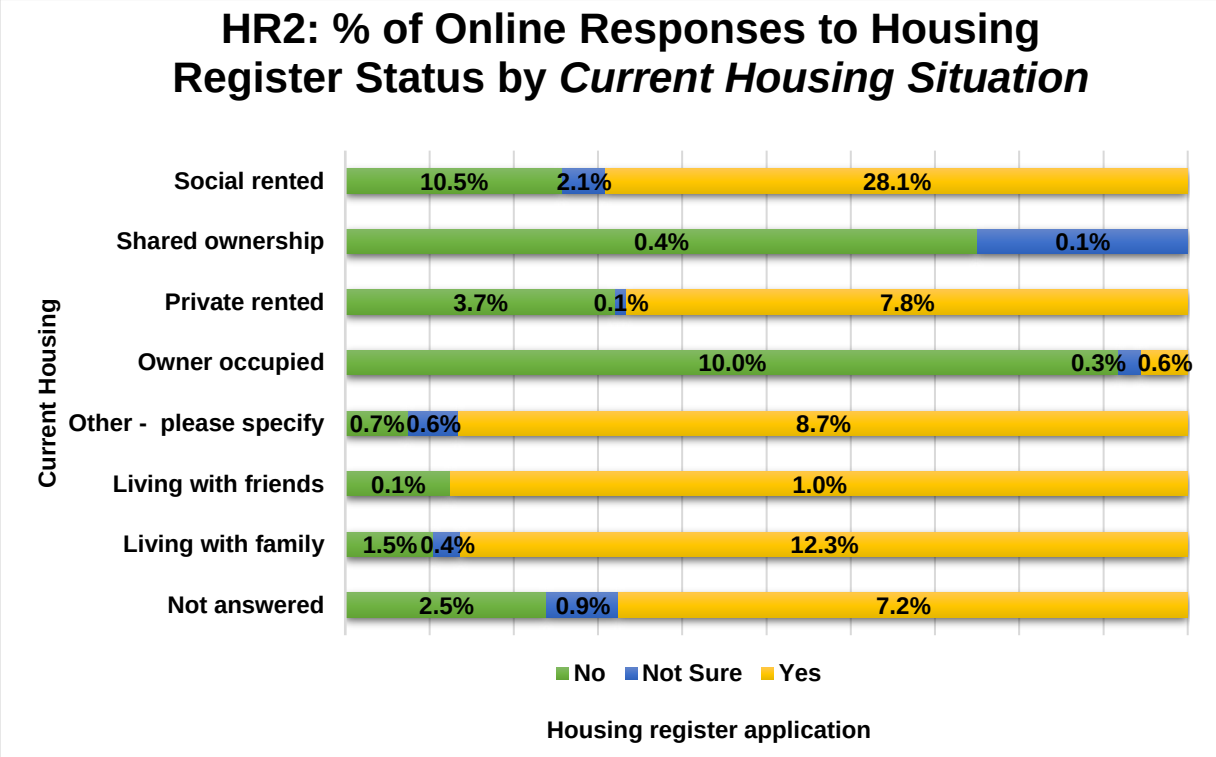

## 2.2 **Question1:** Do you have a current housing register application?

Of the 668 respondents to the online survey, 439 confirmed they have a current application on the housing register, with a further 31 unsure if they have an application at this time.



## 2.3 Current living situation by application status

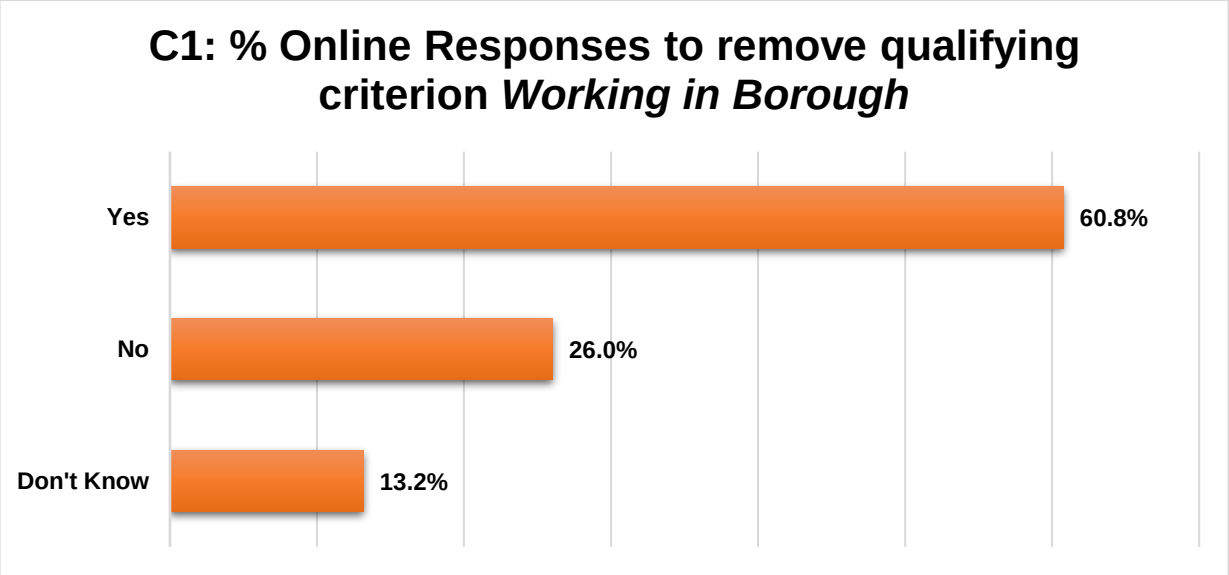
Of those who confirmed they have a current housing register application,188 are living in social rented homes, with 52 living in privately rented housing and 89 with family or friends. Of those not registered for a social housing allocation 70 are living in social rented homes and 67 are owner occupiers. 4 Owner occupiers have applications on the register.



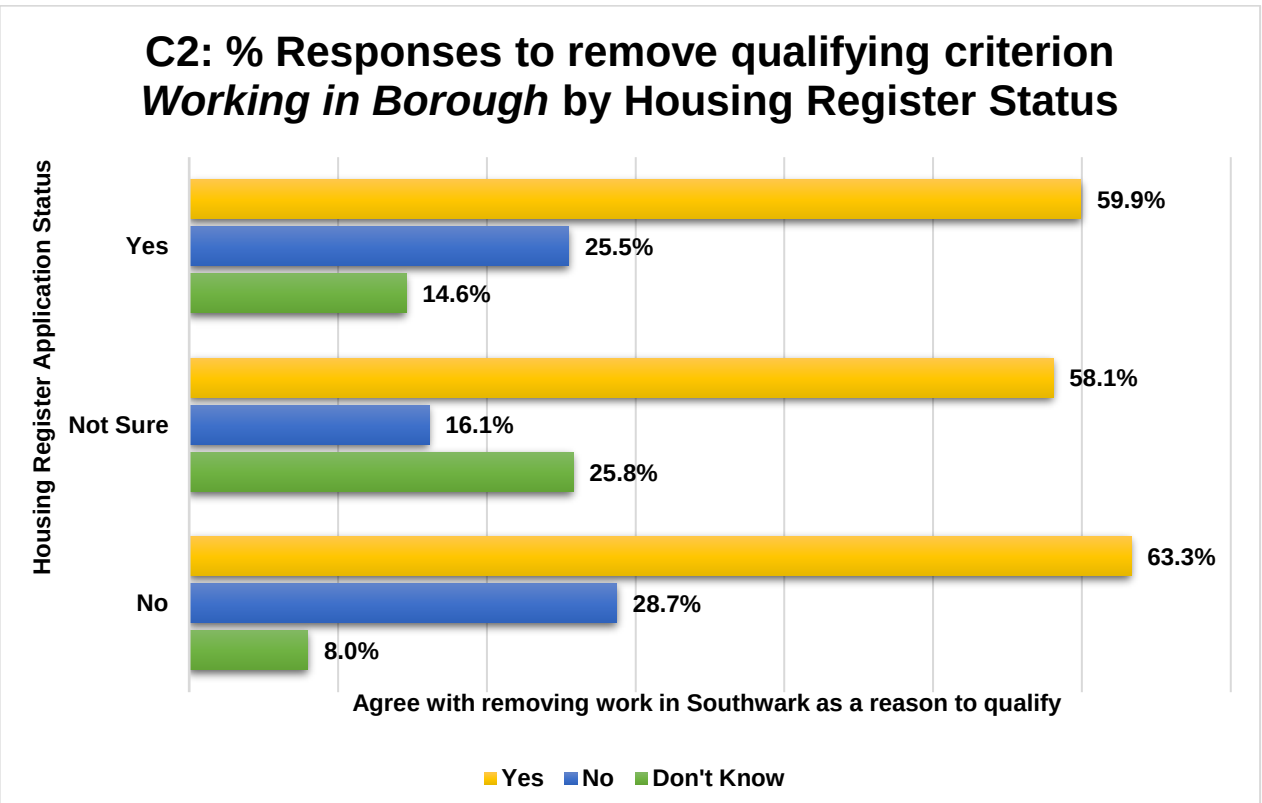

## 2.4 Question 1: *Do you agree with removing Working in The Borough as a reason for qualifying to join the housing register*?

**Survey results: 61% Agree - 26% Disagree – 13% Don't know**

More than 400 respondents to this proposal agree with removing *Working in The Borough* as a reason for qualifying to join the housing register, and 174 disagree.




Of the respondents with a housing register application, 263 (59.9%) agree with removing working in the borough as a qualifying criterion, and 112 (25.5%) do not. 119 (63.3%) of those who do not have an application agree with removing working in the borough as a criterion, 54 (28.7%) do not. Of the 13.2% of those who answered 'don't know' to this question, 64 (14,6%) have an application, 15 (25.8%) do not and 8 (8%) are not sure.



170 (25.4%) of those agreeing are social housing tenants while 47 (7%) are renting privately. 48 (7.2%) of those agreeing are owner occupiers, while 52 (7.8% live with family.

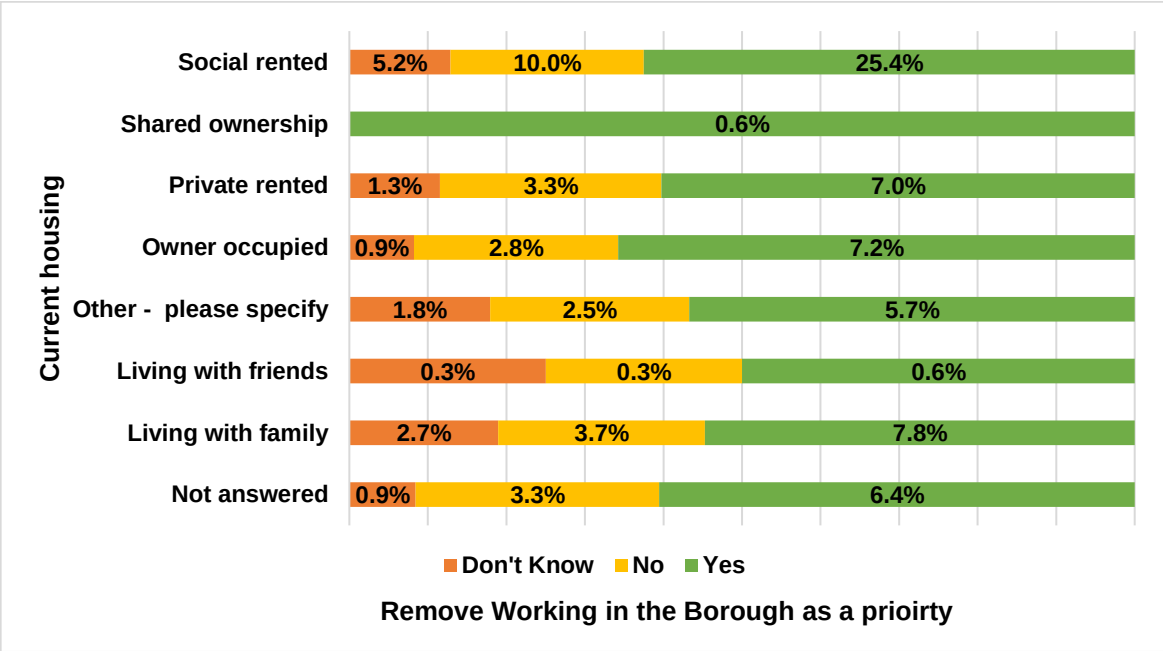



**Figure 5: Removing *Working in The Borough* by current housing situation**

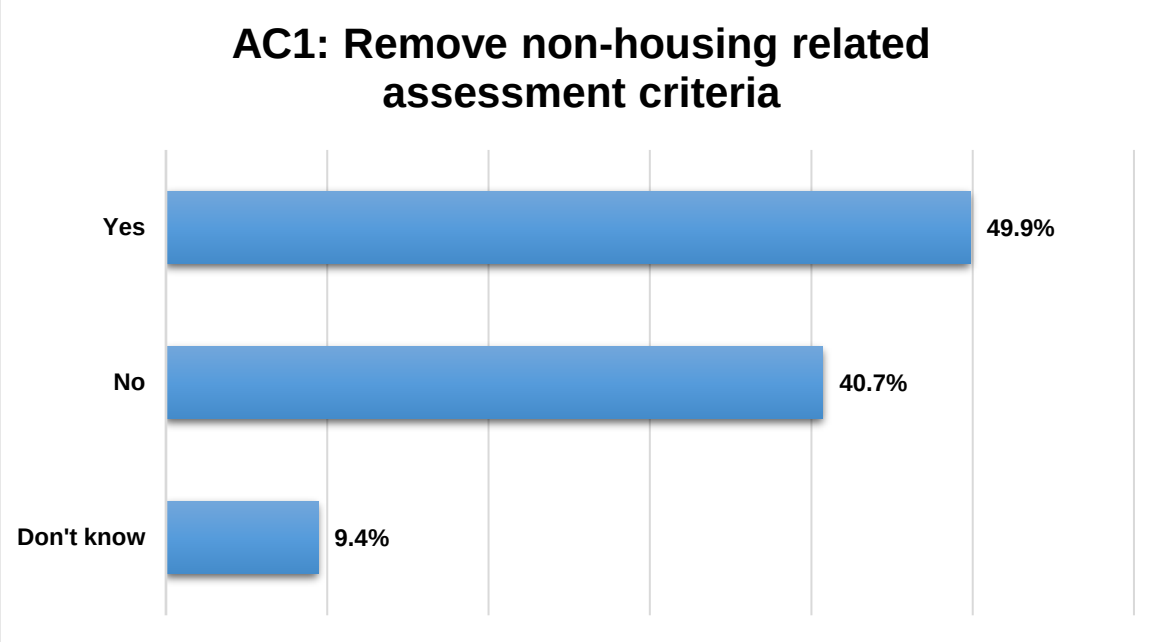
A large proportion of people who work in Southwark travel to the area form various locations and by various means and do not seek housing in the borough, although it is not disputed that commuting to work from one area to another can result in an affordability issue for many households on lower income levels. Nonetheless the limited housing resources must be reserved for those in most need, and this policy recommendation includes safeguards for applicants from outside of the borough including those in serious housing need who fall within a reasonable preference group, applicants who are living in temporary accommodation arranged by the Council outside of the borough while awaiting an allocation as part of the main homelessness duty, those in social housing in another borough that need to move to Southwark for work, and for specified key workers.

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that *Working in The Borough* as a reason for qualifying to join the housing register is removed.

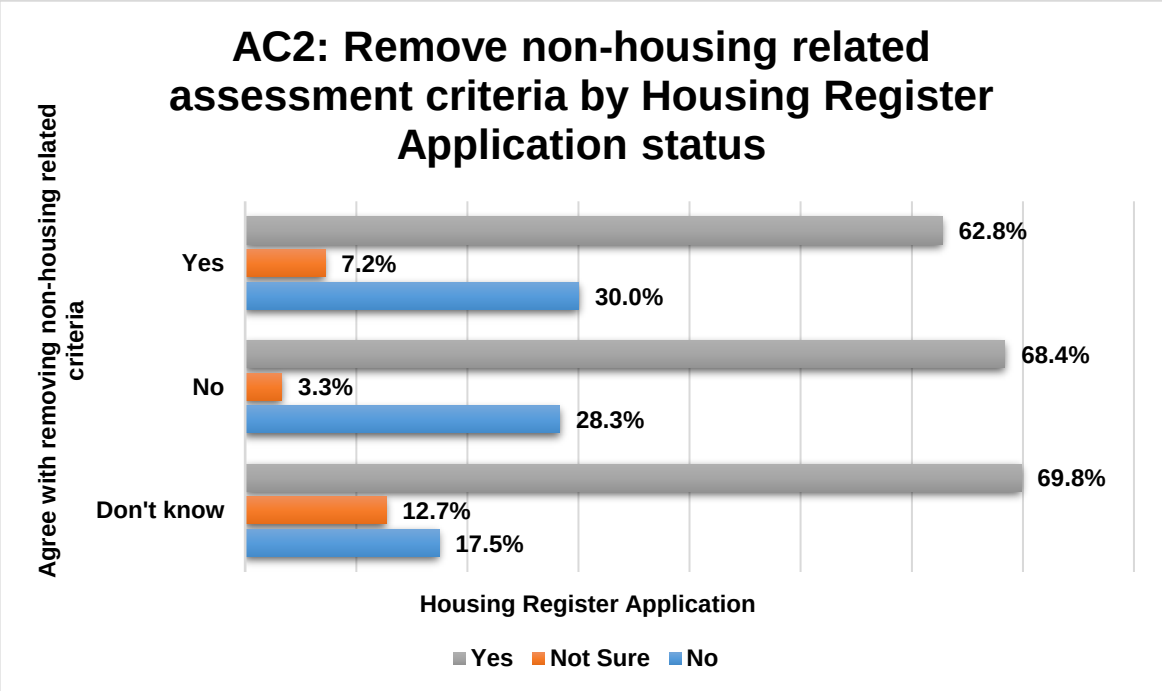
## 2.5 Question 2: *Do you agree that we should remove assessment criteria that give applicants priority for reasons not related to the need for housing?*

**Survey results: Agree 49.9% - Disagree 40.7% - Don't know 9.4%**

Almost half (333) of those responding agree with this proposal with just over 40% (272) disagreeing.




Of those agreeing with the removal of non-housing related criteria, 209 (62.8%) have a housing register application and 100 (30%) do not. 186 (68.4%) of those with a housing register application do not agree with this proposal.



135 (49.6%) of respondents living in a social rented home agree with this proposal, with 111 (40.8%) disagreeing and 26 (9.6%) answering 'don't know'. 39 (50%) of those privately renting also agree, with 32 (41%) disagreeing, and three of the four shared ownership respondents (75%) also disagree with this proposal. The largest proportion of any housing situation group agreeing is those living with friends at 62.5% followed by owner occupiers at 58.9%.

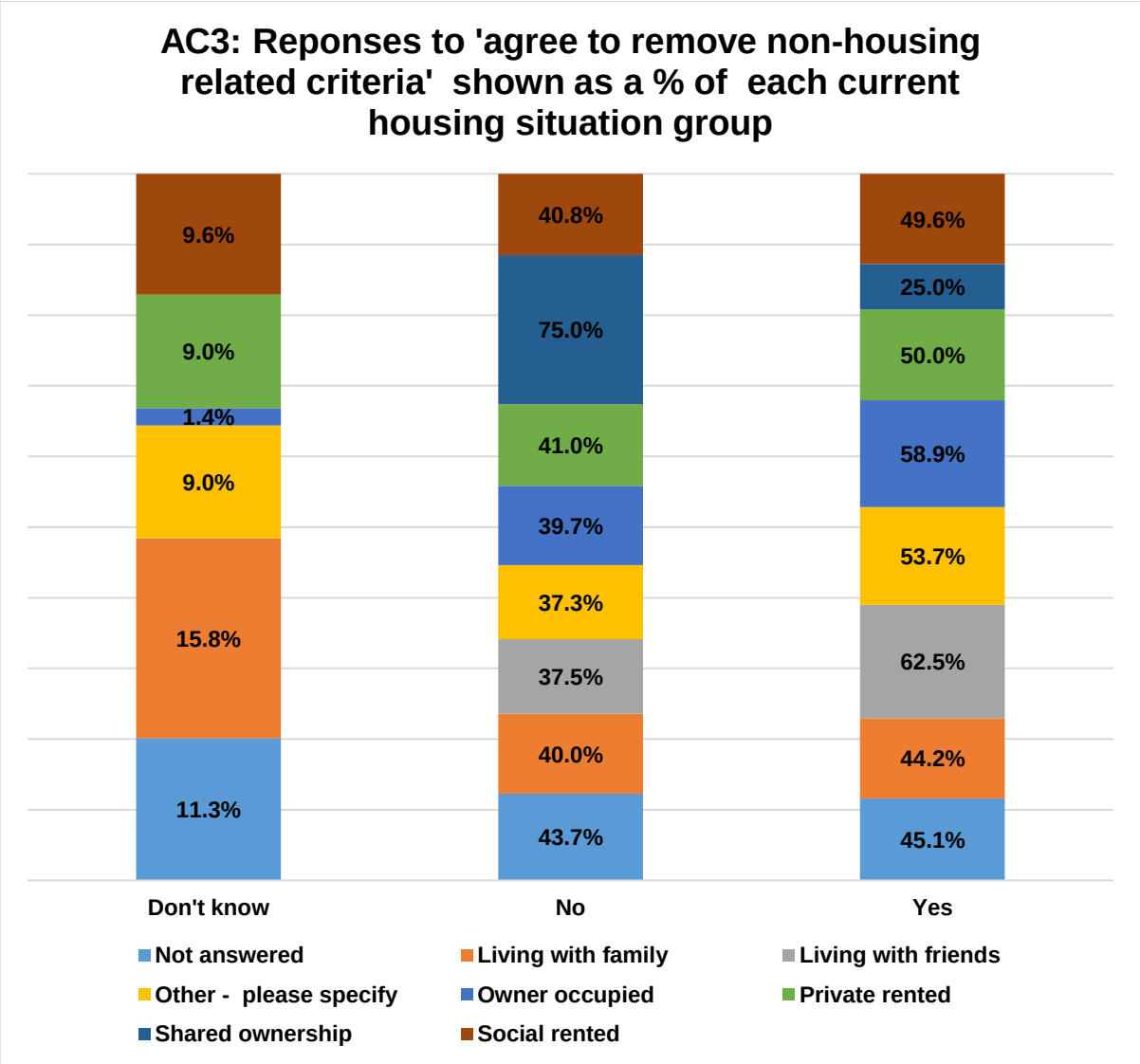
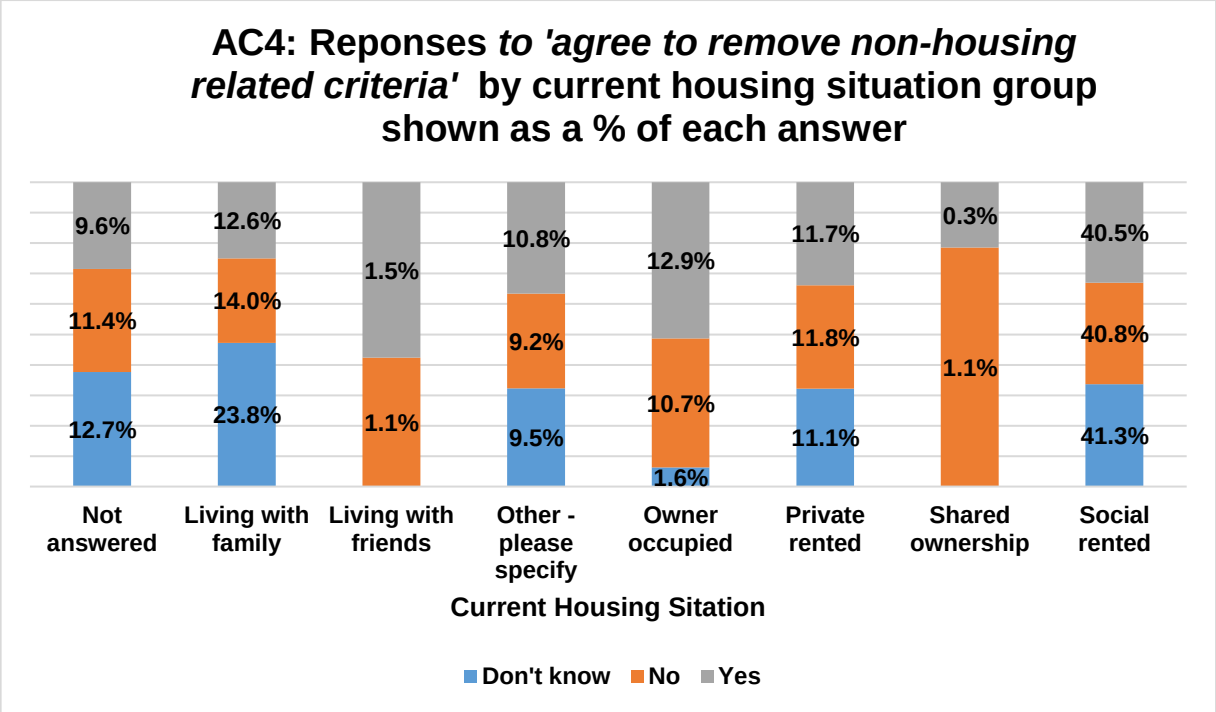



Chart AC4 below shows the percentage make up of each response to the question on removing non-housing related criteria.

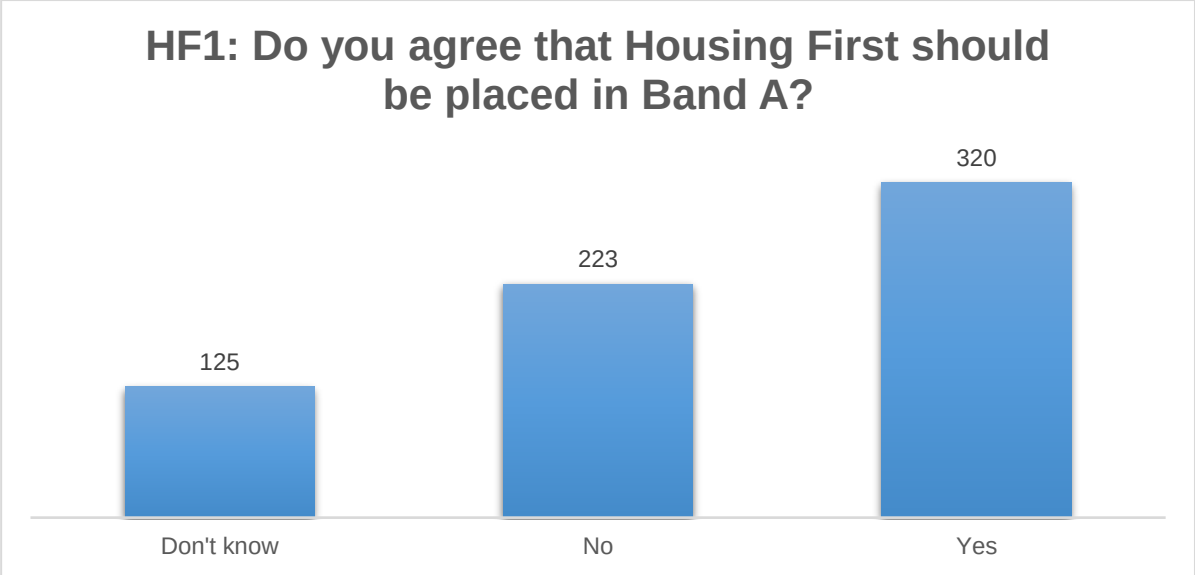



Community contribution such as working or volunteering is highly valued and supported by the Council, but there is a risk that this discriminates against some applicants who are unable to work or volunteer due to specific vulnerabilities for example. This proposal enables a refocus on housing needs as a priority for housing and allows for clarity in how an application will be assessed.

**Recommendation 2: It is recommended to remove assessment criteria that give applicants priority for reasons not related to the need for housing.**

**2.6 Question 3: *Do you agree that adults who are homeless and working with officers on the Housing First support programme should be placed in Band A?***

**Survey results: 47.9% Agre e – 33.4% Disagree – 18.7 Don't know**



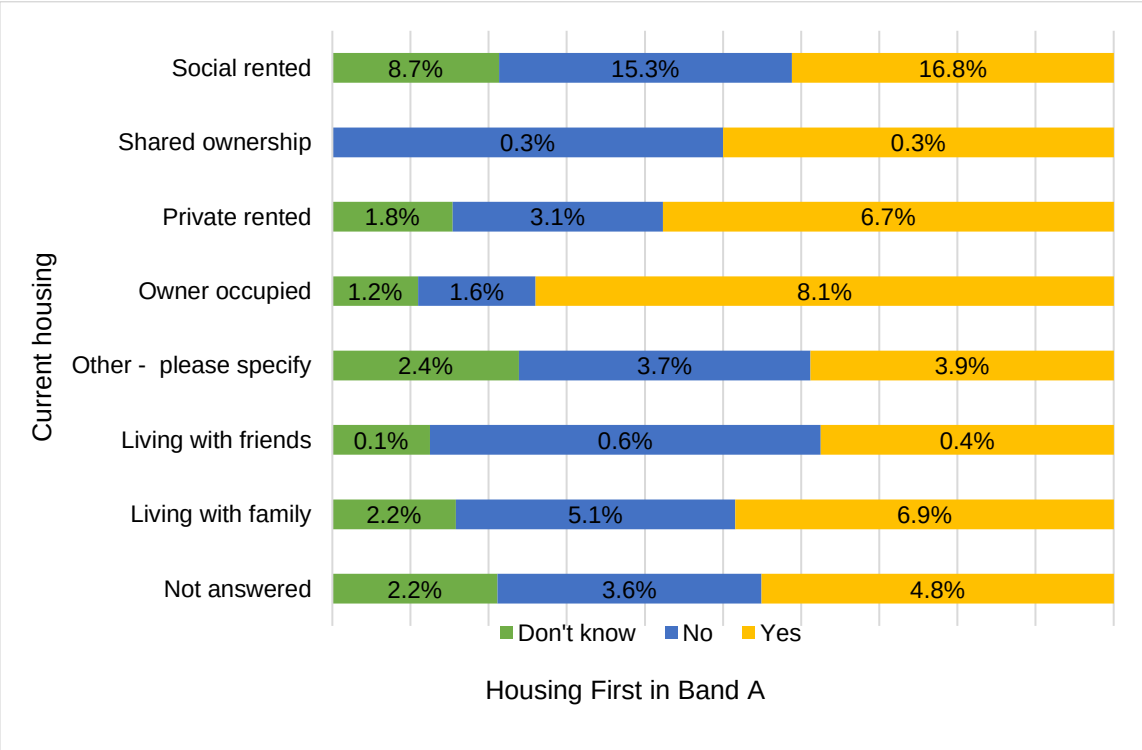




**Figure 9: Agree with Housing First in Band A, by current housing circumstances**

Single homeless are among the most vulnerable in our society. This proposal is designed to help reduce the numbers of very vulnerable rough sleepers through the Housing First Programme, who will need dedicated, focussed support to sustain a tenancy. The scheme will have a finite number of spaces at any one time and is only for those single homeless who meet the scheme criteria and agree to participate. As one respondent highlighted, the criteria for Housing First were not set out with a great level of detail within the scheme document, and this has been added.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that adults who are homeless and working with officers on the Housing First support programme should be placed in Band A.

## 2.7 Question 4*: Do you agree that we should allow homeless applicants to retain their priority if they take a private rented sector tenancy while waiting for an allocation of social housing?*

Survey results: Agree 51% - Disagree 34% - Don't know 15

More than half, 340 of respondents agree with this proposal, and of those 213 have a current housing register application, and 158 of the 227 who disagreed have a current register application. 111 of those in favour are social housing tenants compared with 113 of those who disagree, while the greatest proportion of those agreeing are owner occupiers.

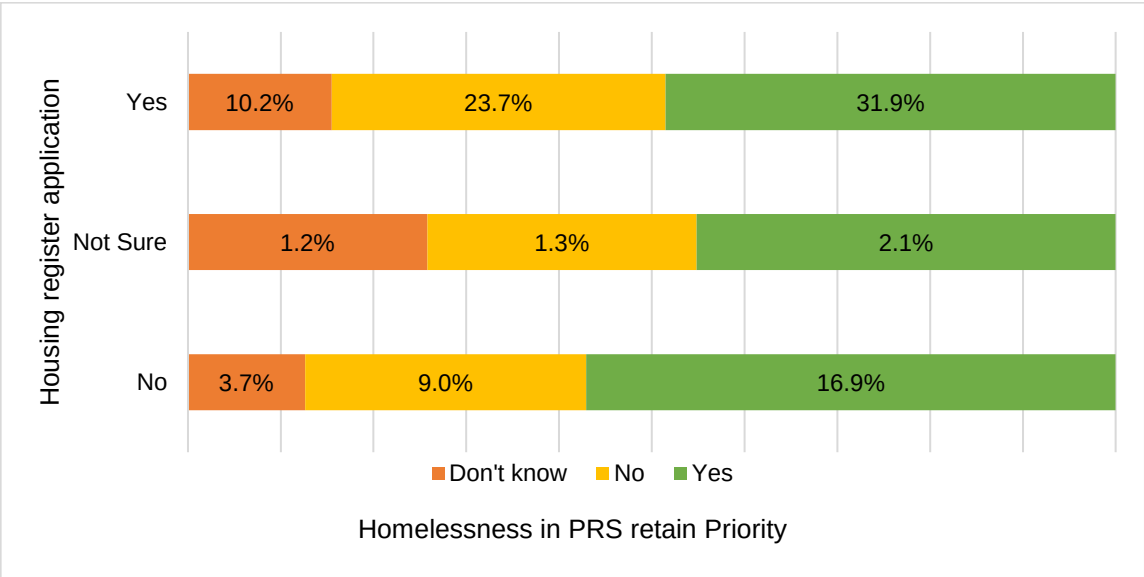



**Figure 10**: **Retain homelessness priority in PRS, by application status**

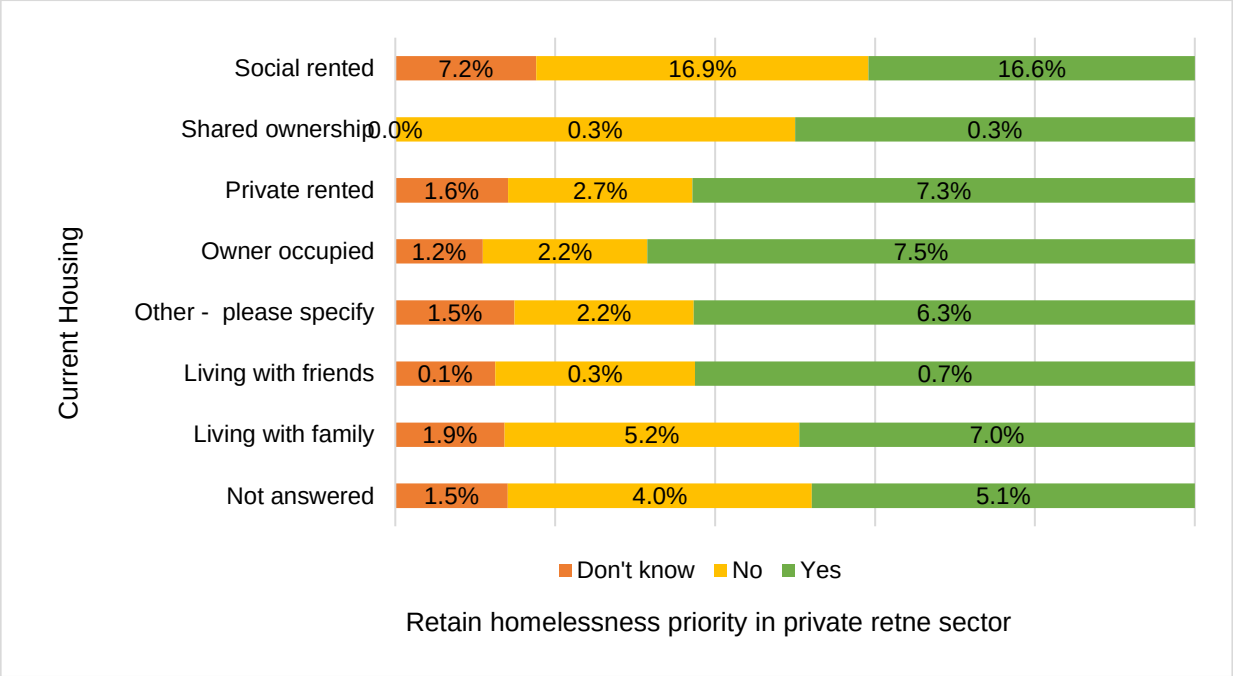



**Figure 11**: **Retain homelessness priority in PRS, by current living situation**

This proposal is designed to help reduce the need for council arranged temporary accommodation for applicants owed a main housing duty, where they are able to remain in the private rented sector for a longer period, or to take up a private rented sector tenancy as a more suitable alternative, without the loss of priority for an allocation of social housing. the scheme will be a choice for applicants to participate in this scheme, and the qualification criteria will be amended to provide an exception to ensure that applicants securing privately rented accommodation out of the area remaining in the property as a private tenant and not join another borough's housing register will still qualify on the Southwark Housing Register. Procedures for approving this will take account of new periodic tenancy legislation and/or other changes once they become law.

**Recommendation 4:** It is recommended that homeless applicants be allowed to retain their priority if they take a private rented sector tenancy while waiting for an allocation of social housing

## 2.8 Question 5: *Do you agree that applicants in Band E who will have a low priority for housing, should be prevented from bidding for an allocation of social housing?*

**Survey results: Agree 38.5% - Disagree 45.5% - Don't know 16%**

A greater proportion of respondents disagree with this proposal than any other within the new Scheme. Of those disagreeing 141 are tenants, and 222 have a current

housing application. Of those respondents who agree, 85 are current social housing tenants and 145 have a current housing application.

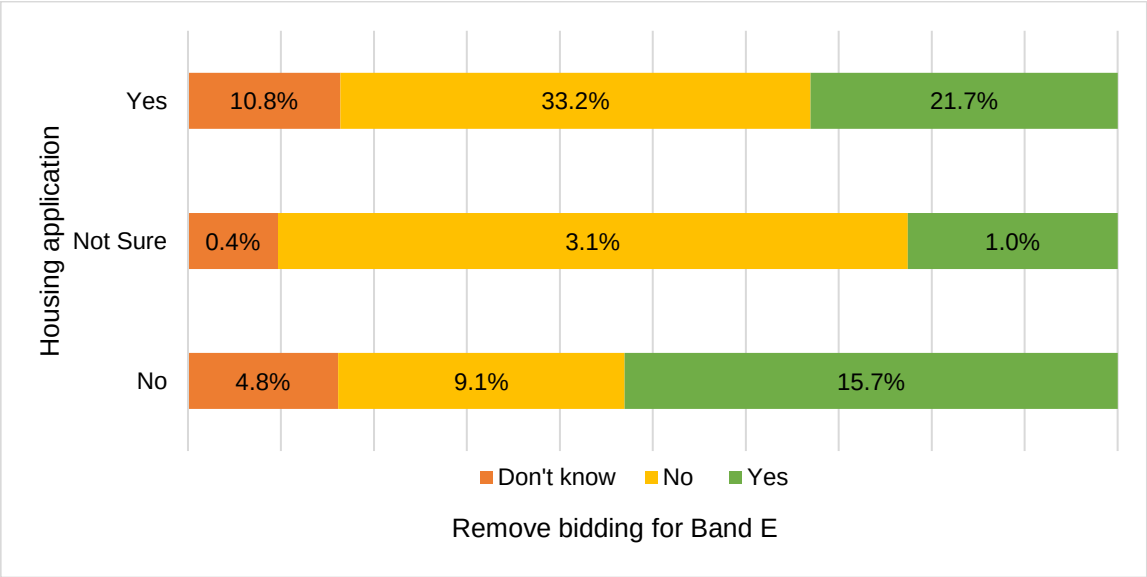



**Figure 12: Band E prevented from bidding by application status**

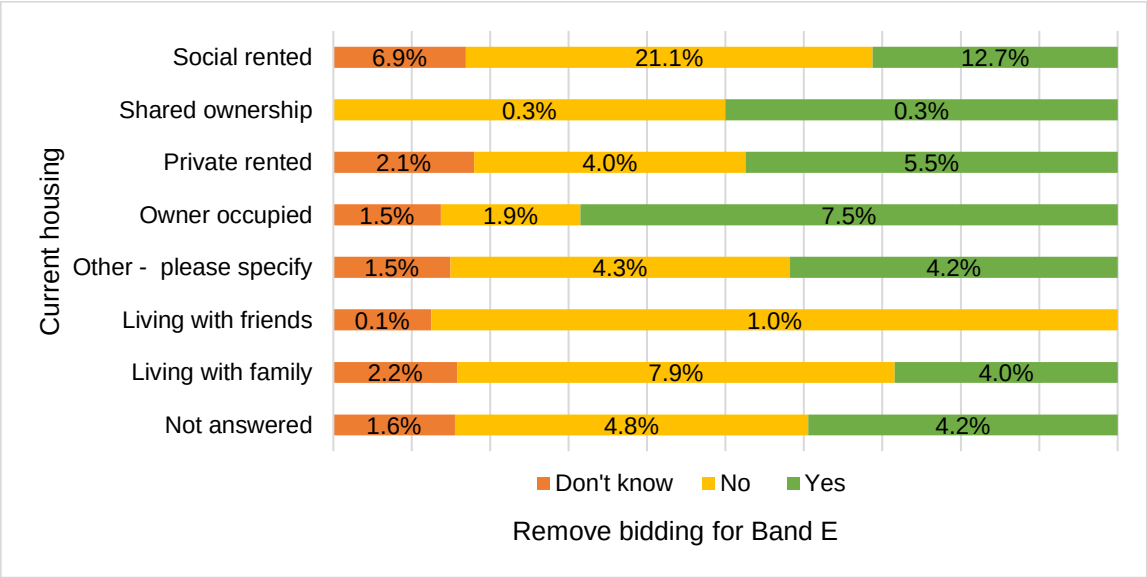



**Figure 13: Remove bidding for Band E by current housing circumstances**

This prevention from bidding for Band E priority applicants has been proposed in order to help manage the expectations of applicants within this band. The level of housing need within Band E will be too low to be shortlisted for an allocation of social housing, but the concerns raised are understood and this proposal will be monitored and reviewed following 12 months of operation of the new scheme.

**Recommendation 5:** Following this feedback, we are recommending removal of this requirement. While we anticipate that households in this band are unlikely to be rehoused through the scheme, we recognise the concerns raised and will focus on

engaging with residents so they understand the alternative options available to them, such as renting in the private sector, mutual exchange, and other realistic housing routes. This responds to the feedback received while still helping residents to have a clearer understanding of their housing prospects.

**2.9 Question 6: *Do you agree that applicants who are no longer suitable to be a social housing tenant should be removed from the register for at least a 12-month period?***

**Survey results: Agree 60% - Disagree 25.9% - Don't know 14.1%**

Almost 399 of respondents agree with this proposal, of which 243 have a current housing application, compared with 173 who disagree, of which 131 have a current housing register application. Only those living with friends or in shared ownership had more respondents disagree than agree, but by only one respondent in each case.

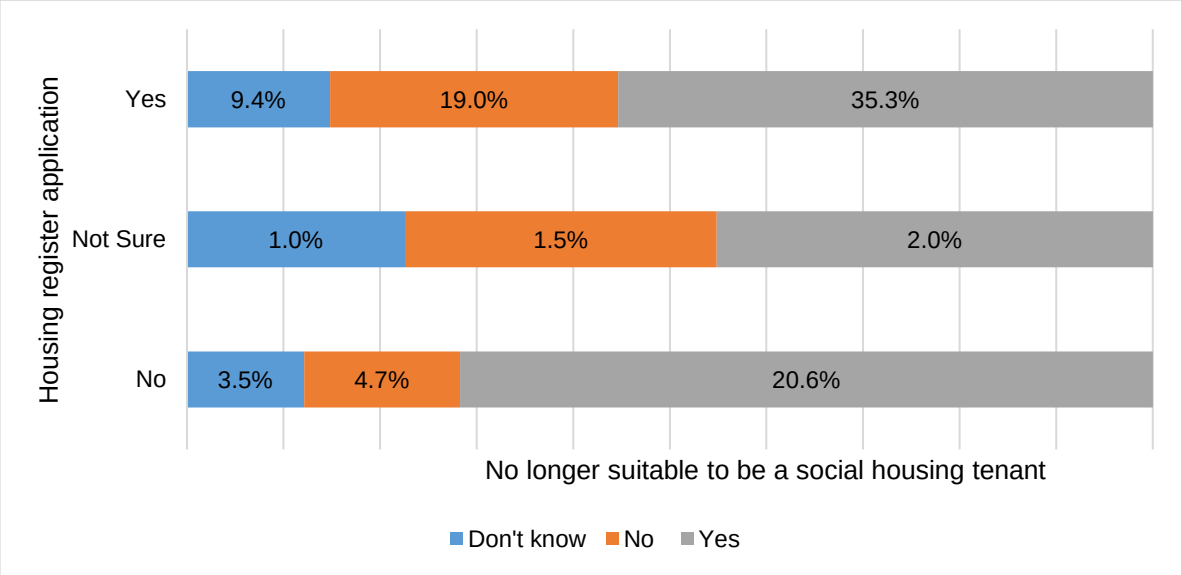



**Figure 14: Suitability to be a tenant by application status**

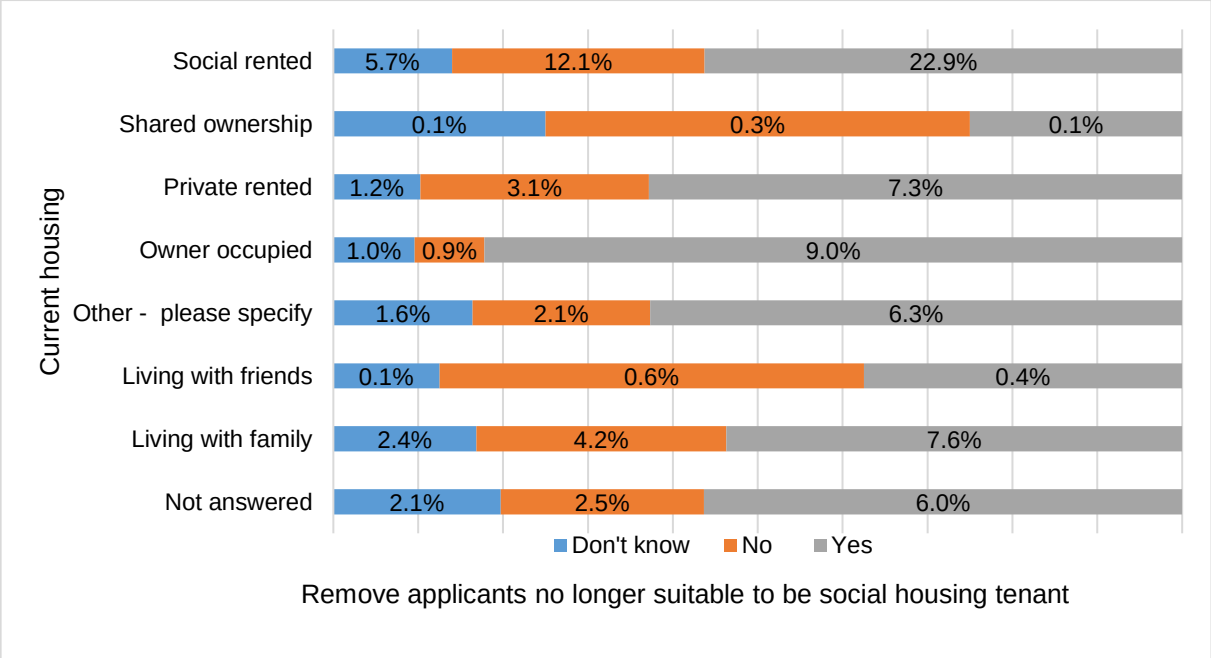



**Figure 15 Unsuitability by current housing situation**

There are safeguards in place within the proposed new scheme; which sets out the circumstances for removing an application from the housing register and the procedure followed in such circumstances including notification of the removal, the reason(s) for the decision, and that the application can be reinstated with the original application date within six months of the removal if they are once again eligible and qualify.

If removal is due to rent arrears the conduct of the household with regard to the arrears must be serious enough to be considered unacceptable behaviour which is also clarified within the scheme. The arrears recovery service has considerable success of supporting those in arrears to sort out benefit issues and help clear arrears, and the Scheme provides the opportunity for those in arrears to remain on the register whilst maintaining an agreed repayment schedule. As with all decisions made under the Scheme the applicant will also have the right to request a review of such decision if they believe their application has been unreasonably or incorrectly cancelled, however it is noted that any decision to remove an application from the Housing register or for an applicant to be disqualified from applying due to their conduct making them unsuitable to be a social housing tenant should be made by a suitably qualified and senior officer, and the Scheme has been amended to reflect this.

**Recommendation 6:** It is recommended that applicants who are no longer suitable to be a social housing tenant should be removed from the register for at least a 12-month period.

**2.10 Question 7: *Do you agree that Southwark should limit the number of offers of accommodation made to each applicant?***

**Survey results: Agree 54.2% - Disagree 36.2% - Don't know 9.6%**

Of the 362 respondents agreeing with this proposal, 201 have an application on the housing register 149 do not. 195 of those disagreeing have a current application while 35 do not. The greatest proportion of those agreeing with the proposal are owner occupiers.

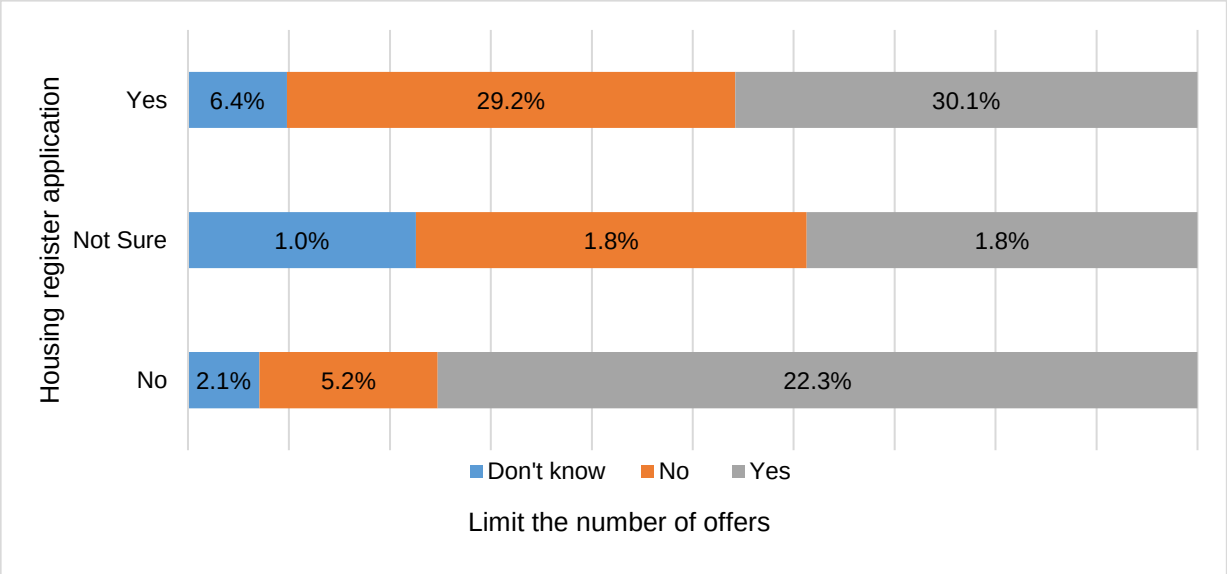



**Figure 16: Limit the number of offers by applicants on register**

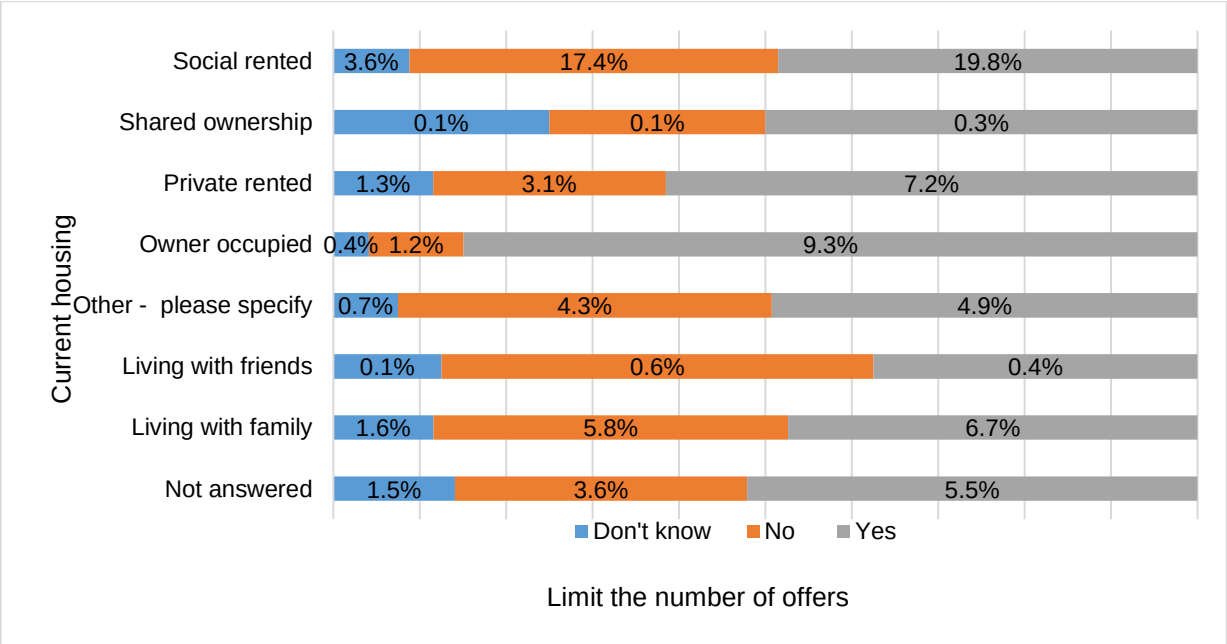



**Figure 17: Limit number of offers by current housing situation**

This proposal is designed to encourage applicants to accept the home that they have selected to bid on and has been offered, when the housing available to let is extremely limited. Extending this to applicants living in temporary accommodation is not being considered at this time again due to the shortage of housing generally and the need to help homeless applicants move to a more settled, suitable home.

**Recommendation 7:** It is recommended that the number of offers of accommodation made to each applicant is limited to two offers

**2.11 Question 8:** ***Do you think applicants who refuse 3 (three) suitable offers of accommodation (or the number agreed following this consultation) should be removed from the register or suspended for a 12-month period?***

**Survey outcome**: **Agreed 12 months suspension 41%– Agreed 12 months removal 26% - Not sure – 17% - Other 16%**

Of those responding to this proposal, 273, of which 208 had current applications on the register, selected 'suspended for a 12-month period', and 171, of which 88 have current register applications, selected applicants should be 'removed from the register for 12-months.' The greatest proportion of those choosing suspension of the known current housing situation categories are living with friends, followed by those living in social rented housing, while those living in owner occupied homes mainly selected removal from the register for 12 months.

The 16% of respondents who selected 'other' made a range of suggestions. 29 said applicants should not be suspended, 38 said applicants should be suspended for a shorter period, between 3 and six months and 14 said applicants should be suspended permanently.

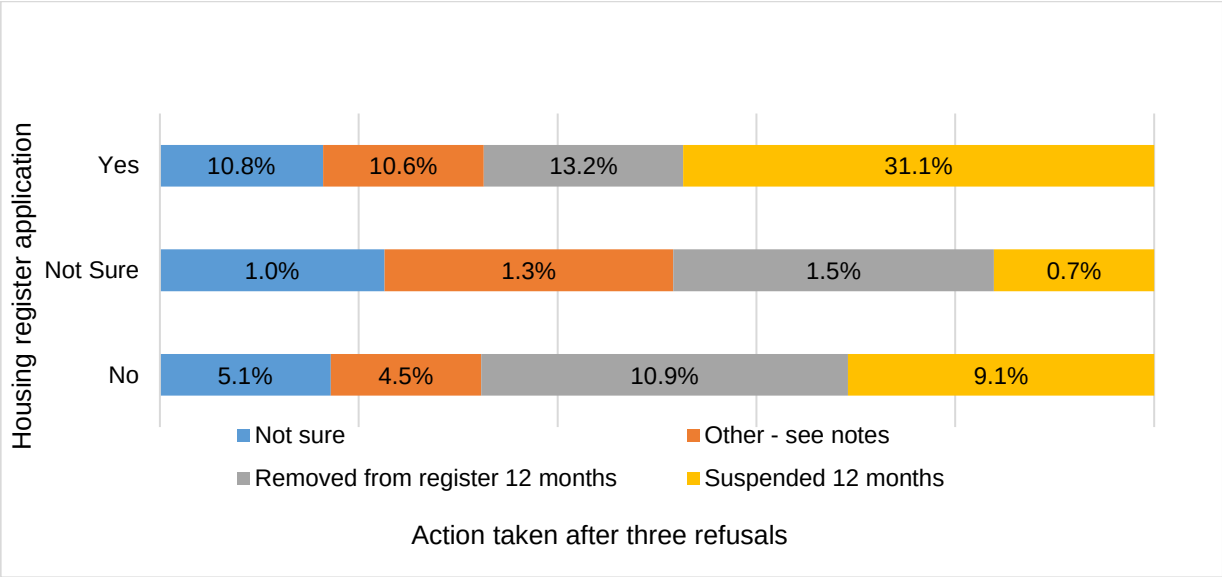



**Figure 18: Action taken after three refusals, by application on register**

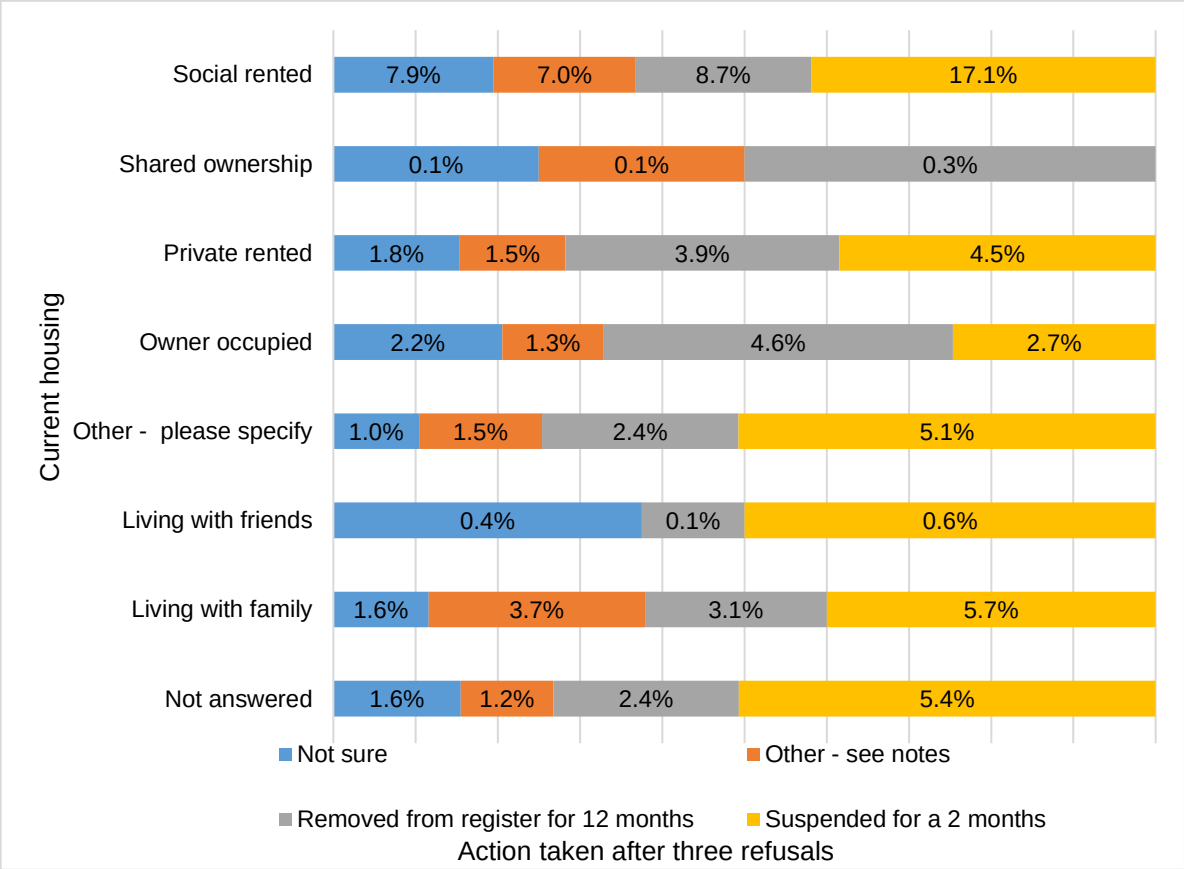



**Figure 19: Action taken after three refusals, by current housing situation**

Removing applicants who refuse three suitable offers from the register for a 12-month period results in all of their waiting time within a band being lost and when able to reply, starting from the bottom of the band. Suspending for a 12-month period does

still result in a loss of waiting time, but only 12 months loss. Housing is in incredibly supply and if an applicant bids for, but rejects three homes without an acceptable reason, having viewed them, it may be unfair on other applicants for the applicant to continue to have the same level of priority with not consequences for refusal, however, removal from the register after, in some cases, many years of waiting, is considered to be less preferable than suspension.

Several respondents suggested that the advertised property information could be improved, such as showing floor plans and information on other charges as these may be reasons for refusing, and this will be taken into consideration with the new system development.

**Recommendation 8:** It is recommended that applicants who refuse three suitable offers of accommodation are suspended form the housing register for a 12 month period.

## 2.12 Question 9: *Do you agree that applicants should be required to confirm their housing circumstances on an annual basis to remain on the housing register?*

**Survey outcome: 74% Agree - 18% Disagree – 8 % Not sure**

The majority of respondents agree with this proposal, with 303 of the 494 agreeing, having a current housing register application. The greatest proportion (within their current housing situation group) of respondents who agree that an annual review should be required are owner occupiers, followed by those living with friends. The lowest proportion are those living in social rented housing.

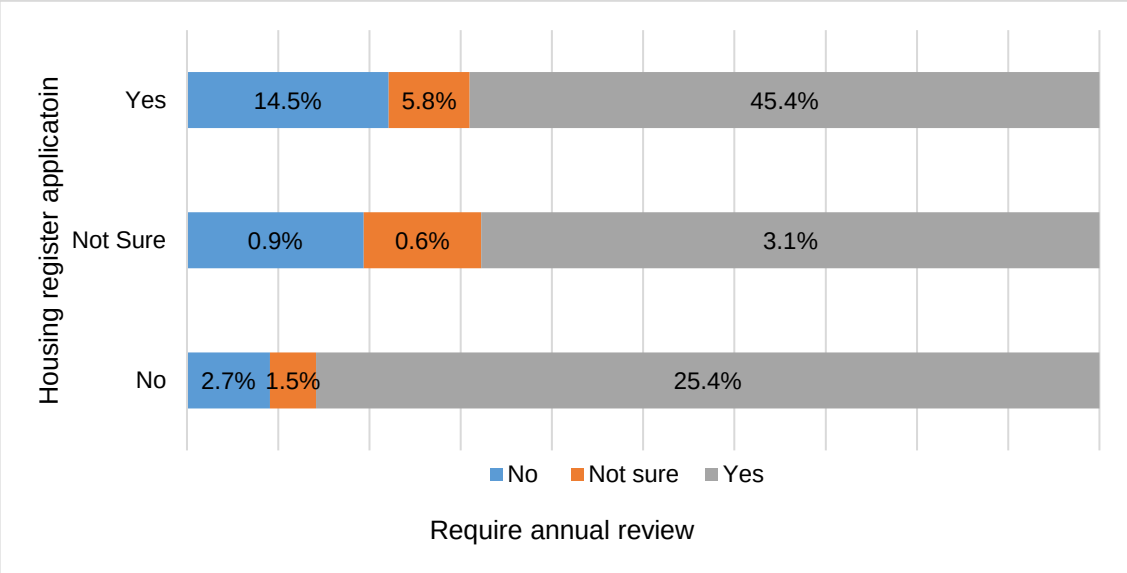



**Figure 20: Annual review by application on register**

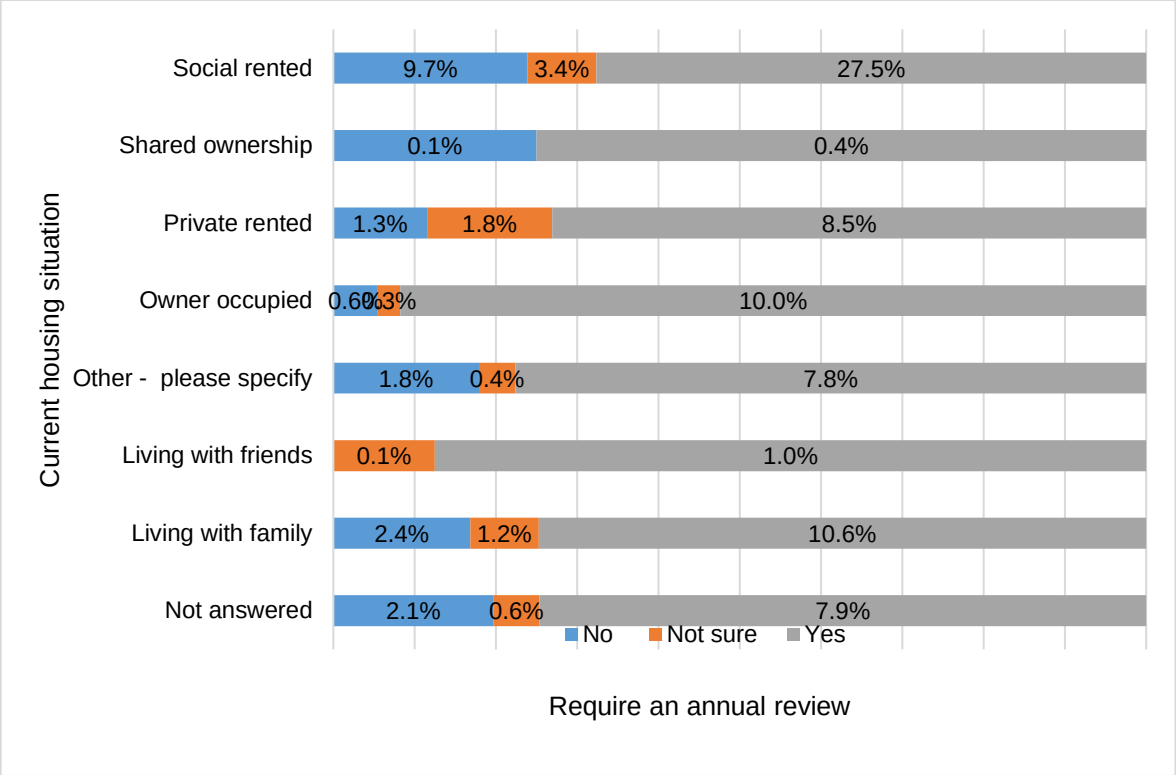



**Figure 21: Annual review by current housing situation**

The results for this question show that the majority of respondents with a current housing application are in favour of completing an annual review, with the largest proportion currently living in social rented housing. The provision in place to inform of a change of circumstances and the checks required immediately prior to allocation are not sufficient to replace an annual review. An annual review is standard practice, and the process need not be onerous.

**Recommendation 9**: It is recommended that that applicants are required to complete an annual review form to keep their application on the housing register, and support is provided to those

## 2.13 Question 10: *Do you agree that applicants should be removed from the register if they do not place any bids for a suitable advertised property during a 12-month period?*

**Survey Outcome: 56.3% Agree – 34.3% Disagree - 9.4% don't know**

Almost two thirds, 242, of those agreeing with this proposal have a current housing register application with 197 either disagreeing or not certain. With the exception of shared ownership, survey respondents in all housing situations included a greater proportion of those who agree, than those who disagree, or are not certain. The greatest proportion (within each housing situation group) of those agreeing are

currently living with family or friends, or in the PRS (Fig.30) and the lowest proportion agreeing are those currently living in social rented housing, who also include the highest proportion disagreeing.

The greatest proportion of those who are uncertain are two of the four respondents living in shared ownership homes, these are closely followed by respondents in social rented housing with 19 respondents uncertain.

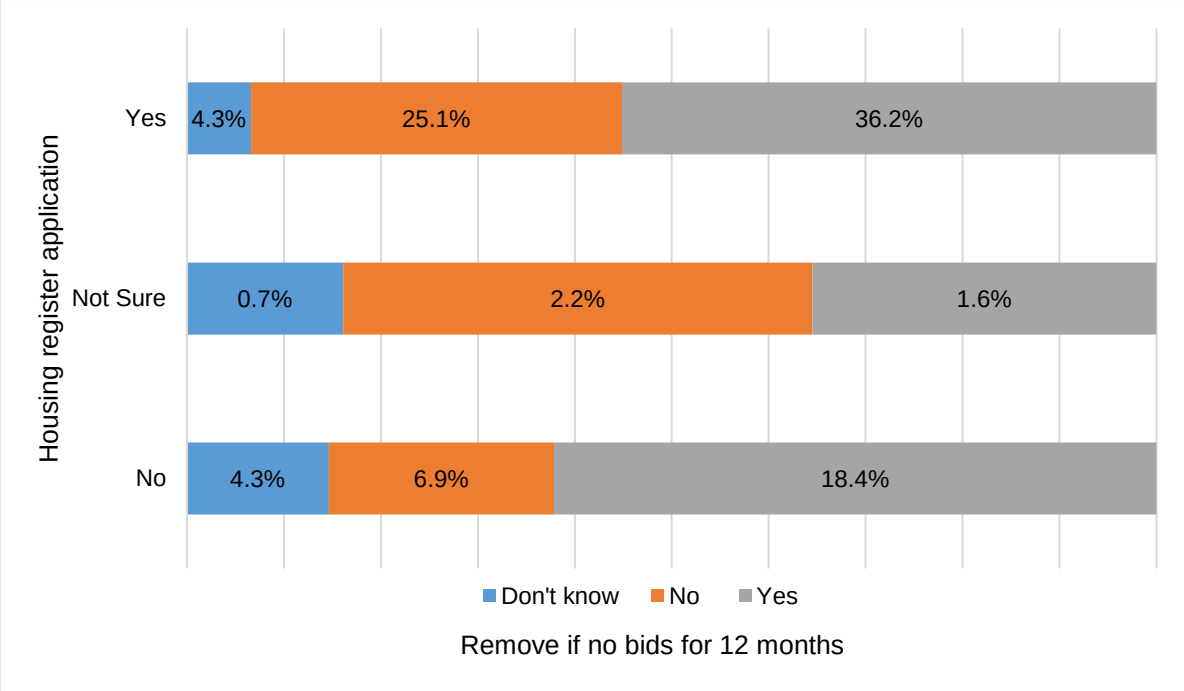



**Figure 22: Removal if not bidding by application status**

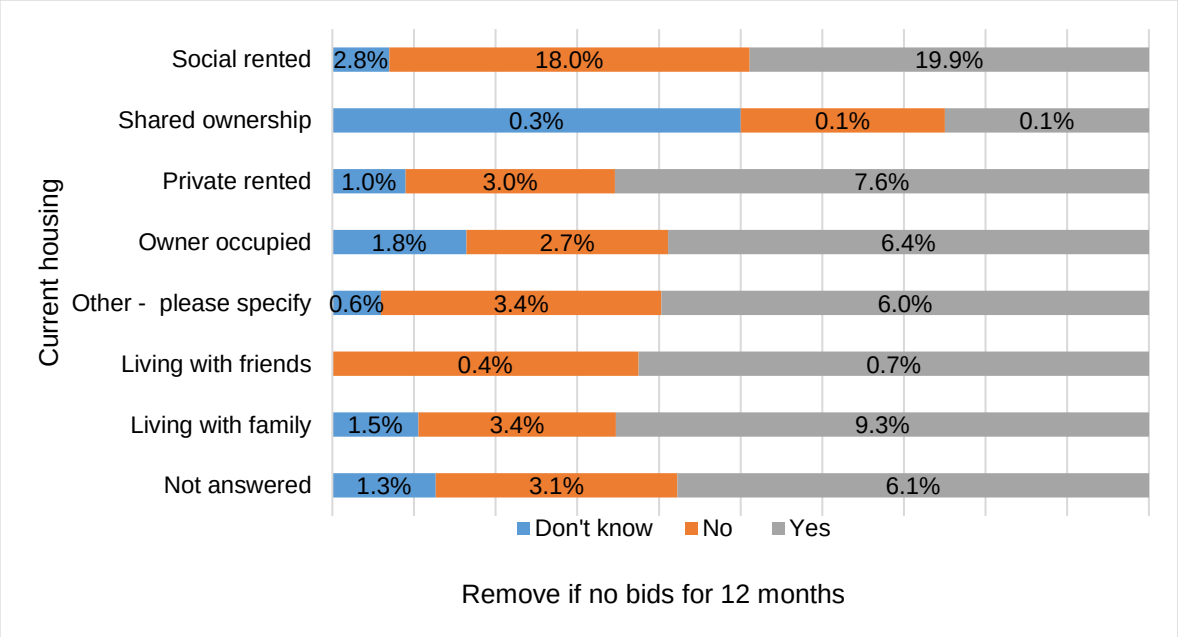


**Figure 23: Remove from register if no bids by housing situation**

The proposal is not designed as a punishment for those how don't bid, but a way to help manage the scarce housing resources. Applicants who do not bid when properties that meet their needs are advertised within a 12-month period will be contacted to explain why they are being removed and given the opportunity to request that the decision is reviewed. The concerns regarding some applicants needing support to bid is understood, and this will be addressed as part of the transformation and redesign of the service, for example in opening Bournemouth Road to assist applicants. Applicants will be offered support where it is known that such support is required and encouraged to request this support.

**Recommendation 10**: It is recommended that that applicants are removed from the register, following appropriate investigation as to the reasons why no bids have been made, if they do not place any bids for a suitable advertised property during a 12-month period

## 2.13 Other proposed changes raised by respondents where no specific survey question was asked

### Overcrowding

### Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth feedback

A significant number of the email responses received were substantially identical submissions linked to Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth (HASL), reflecting the views of individual members. The feedback covered all of the consultation questions and raised wider concerns about areas including overcrowding, bedroom sharing, Local Lettings Plans, Annual Lettings Plans and the priority given to homeless households.

The Council has considered these responses alongside the online survey results, workshop feedback and wider stakeholder engagement. Where the feedback identified the need for greater clarity, changes have been made to the final draft scheme, including clearer wording on statutory overcrowding, the treatment of Band E applicants and how Annual Lettings Plans may be used. Other points raised by HASL are addressed in the relevant sections below, with the reasons for the proposed approach set out against each issue.

Is a serious issue affecting many households in the borough and elsewhere, therefore the Council is not proposing stricter criteria for overcrowding in the highest priority Band. The addition of 'three bedrooms or more' was to simplify overcrowding priority with a more general definition. As the housing action group correctly state,

our general definition does not explain statutory overcrowding in all circumstances, as on occasion some properties have rooms of a size that is small enough to result in statutory overcrowding while lacking just two bedrooms, for example. We have amended the final draft scheme document to clarify that statutory overcrowding includes reference to the definition in Part X of the Housing Act 1985.

We are not proposing to remove the 'deliberate act' clause however, as it is important to ensure that applicants are prevented from deliberately overcrowding themselves for the purpose of being given overcrowding priority. This deliberate act is a rare occurrence which is fully and fairly investigated when it does occur, but the safeguard this clause provides is nonetheless important.

For applicants in shared accommodation, there is provision within the Scheme to prioritise all overcrowded households to an appropriate level in accordance with the Scheme. Those sharing facilities with other households are not automatically overcrowded, and property conditions are managed through licencing and enforcement, so no additional policy is required.

**Number of bedrooms**

The proposed scheme includes a move away from Local Housing Allowance bedroom criteria and adopts Section 4.8 of The Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance which states:

'*The Secretary of State takes the view that the bedroom standard is an appropriate measure of overcrowding for allocation purposes and recommends that all housing authorities should adopt this as a minimum. The bedroom standard allocates a separate bedroom to each:*

- *married or cohabiting couple*
- *adult aged 21 years or more*
- *pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex*
- *pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex'*

The Council recognise this is can be a very important and impactful policy area, but we no longer have the number of social rented homes becoming available to let each year to meet the standard set out in the current scheme, and a change needs to be made. There are many applicants waiting for a considerable time for a property that allows for additional bedrooms for each household members of 16 years or over, other than couples, and we are not able to meet this demand.

This bedroom standard is used by many Boroughs with similar challenges. Where a household member reaches the age of 18 years they are entitled to apply for an allocation of accommodation as a single person, and there are safeguards in place within the scheme to protect vulnerable people, for example those who do not have the capacity to manage living alone, and each case is assessed on its individual circumstances.

**Recommendation 11:** It is recommended that the definition of Overcrowding within Band A is reworded to include the Housing Act 1985, Part X definition

**Annual Lettings Plan**

Southwark Law Centre and the Housing Action Group are opposed to the proposal to us an annual lettings plan as a component of the Housing Allocations Scheme. The provision of an Annual Lettings Plan (ALP) within the Scheme is not new, or unusual. There is provision within the current scheme, as there is with a large proportion of English Council's Housing Allocations Schemes as the use of such plans helps to balance allocations made according to dynamic local need and circumstances, often allowing for more responsiveness than the main scheme Banding system. The Scheme document sets out the provision for operating an Annual Lettings Plan alongside the main scheme, as part of the scheme, to act as an additional set of circumstances which will be considered, or rules which will be applied. We understand the comments regarding the clarity of what the plan will include, however such a plan will be subject to a need impact assessment and review of allocations made before any decision on what an ALP will include. Such decisions will be made by Members, following appropriate consultation.

The concerns voiced by the action group appear to be conflating the issues of not advertising on choice-based lettings and making direct lets, and the provision of an ALP. This follows the legal challenge from members of the action group during 2024, objecting to the number of direct lettings made by the Council for a period, thereby reducing the number of advertised homes. The current scheme does have provision for direct lets however the proposed Scheme aims to set out the policy and procedure for direct lets more clearly.

The ALP and direct lets policies are separate, though at ties will be used in conjunction. Any quota's imposed by an ALP will not automatically result in properties being direct lets, unless specifically stated. Most properties will still be let through the CBL system, with matching criteria included in the advertisement.

**Recommendation 12:** It is recommended that no change is made to the proposed provision within the Scheme for an Annual Lettings Plan

### Local Lettings Plans

Southwark Law Centre and the housing action group are opposed to the proposal to use an local lettings plans as a component of the Housing Allocations Scheme. Local Lettings plans are good practice, widely used and the power to use this is provided through the Housing Act 1996 A, (6) (b) allowing the Council to allocate particular housing accommodation to persons of a particular description, including where these persons do not fall within a reasonable preference, provided that, overall, the Council is able to demonstrate according reasonable preference to those that do fall within a reasonable preference group. Allocations will be strictly monitored to ensure that the Council is compliant with this regulatory requirement.

Each new build scheme will be considered for a Local Lettings plan and where it is approved for a particular description of persons, such as social housing tenants, the properties will be advertised as such. It is useful to understand that for each social housing tenant moving to a new build home, their vacated social rented home will normally also become available to let through the housing register.

**Recommendation 13**: It is recommended that no change is made to the proposed provision within the Scheme for Local Lettings Plans

## 3.5 Homelessness

Southwark Law Centre and the Housing Action Group consider the new Banding system effectively demotes homeless applicants with the removal of priority stars and the inclusion of applicants in ‘insecure’ accommodation within the same Band. The aim of the proposed changes impacting homeless applicants are designed to help prevent homelessness wherever possible, by giving the same priority to those who are in temporary accommodation with the Main Duty owed, to those in often greater insecurity of tenure who may otherwise need to come through the Council’s homelessness service.

Removing the priority star for homelessness allows for greater clarity of priority and aligns the level of priority to other need within the Band for applicants that are not homeless.

Greater clarity of the specific circumstances of applicants in ‘insecure’ housing in Band C has been added to the scheme document.

**Recommendation 14**: It is recommended that the proposals for prioritisation of homeless applicants within Band C of the new scheme are approved.

# Section 3: Demographics

## 3.1 Age Group

Of the 668 online survey responses, 418 provided their age group and 250 (37.4%) declined to answer. Of those who answered the largest group were aged between 35-44 and the smallest, between 75-84 years.

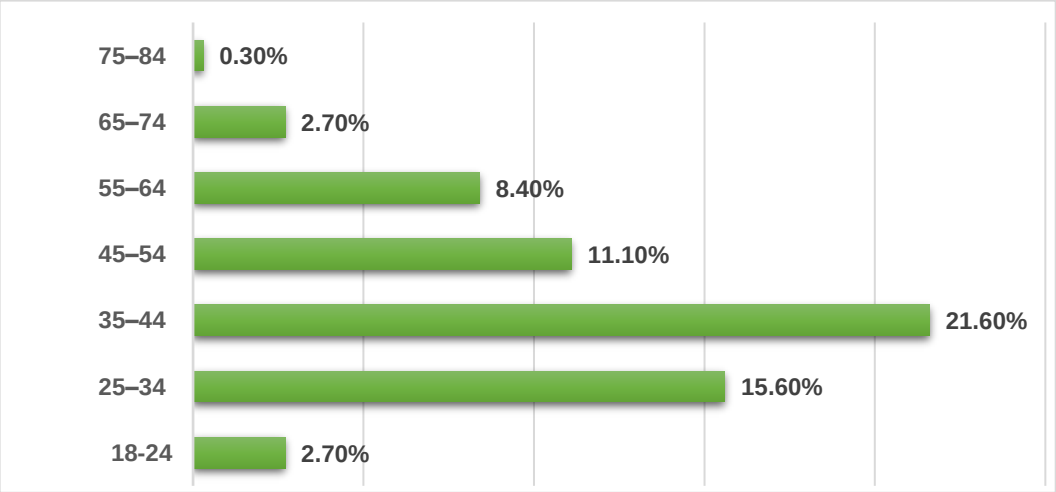



**Figure 24: Age group of respondents**

## 3.2 Current locality

Responses to the online survey were received from across the Borough, with the highest proportion from Peckham with 110 responses and the lowest from Elephant and Castle at 27 responses.

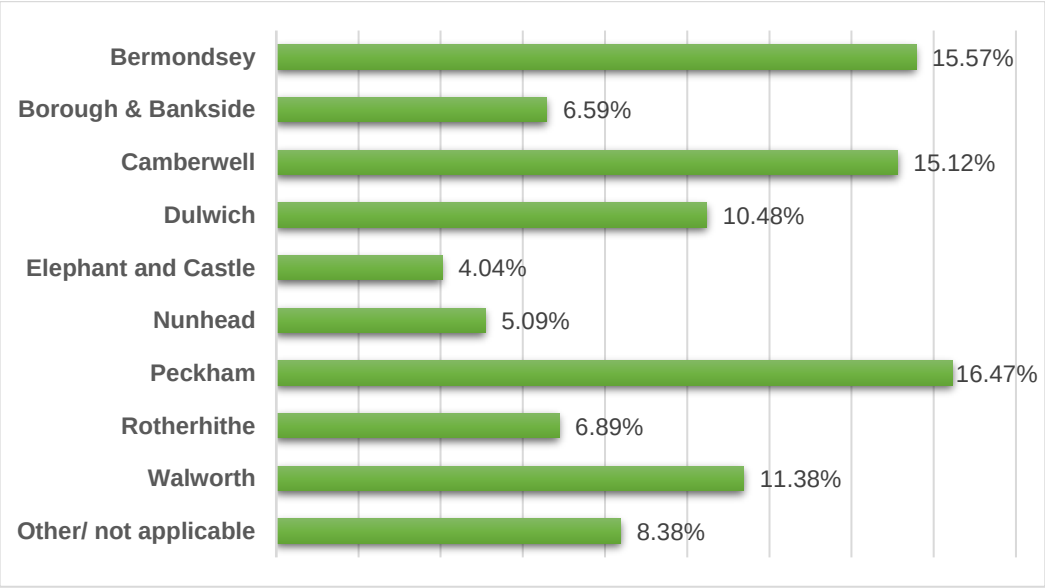


**Figure 25: Current locality of respondents**

## 3.3 Household income

281 respondents answered this question, with 159, almost a quarter, stating their household income is under £30,000 each year.

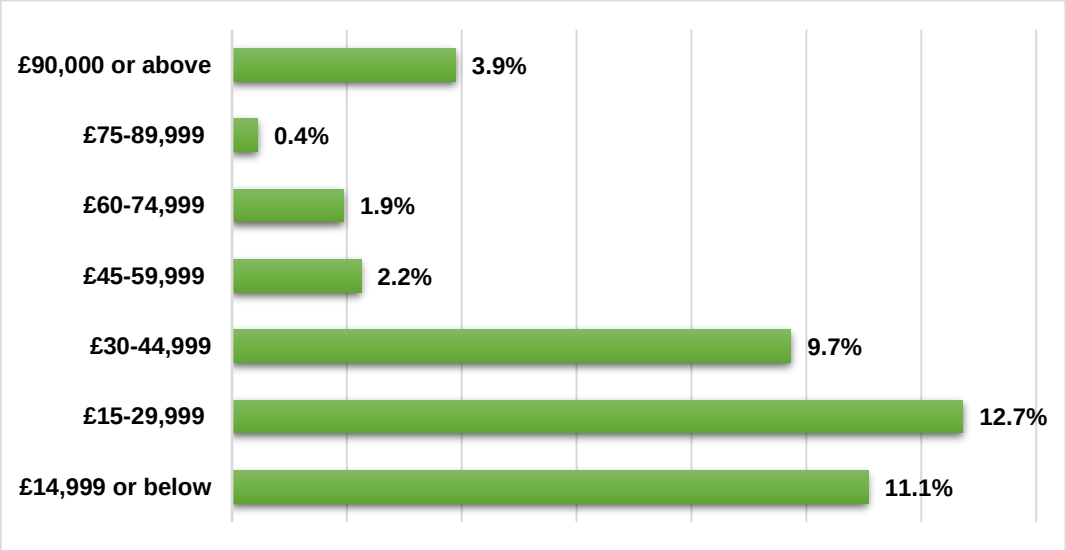



**Figure 9: Household income**

## 3.4 Ethnic background

Less than half of respondents answered this question. Of those that did, the largest ethnic group are Black British with 68 responses, followed by White British at 59 responses. There are many ethnic groups with small numbers among the response as can be seen in figure 3.

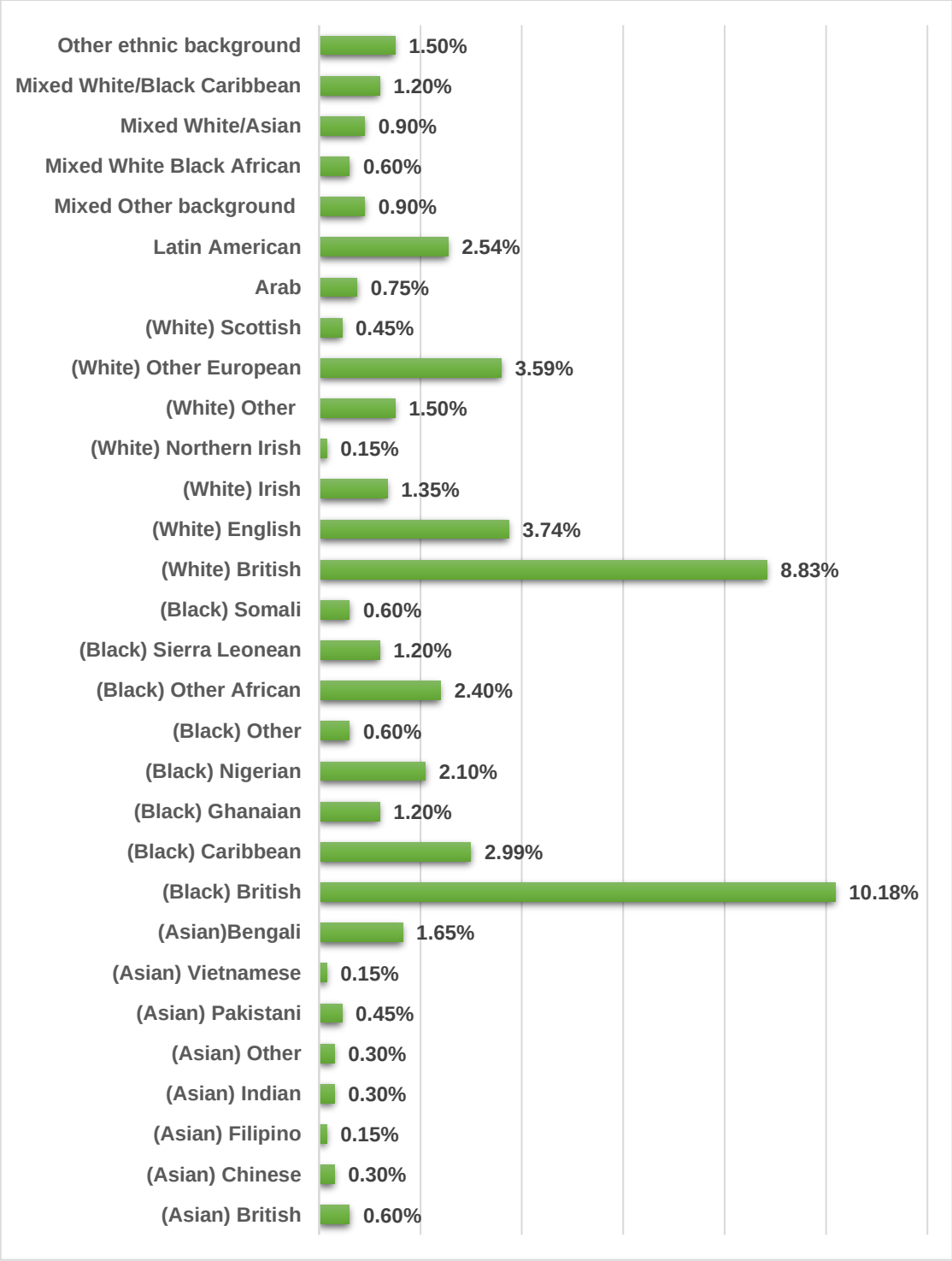



**Figure 26: Ethnic background**

## 3.5 Religion or belief

Of those responding to this question, 154 are Christian, and 75 confirmed they follow no religion. There were 48 respondents who confirmed they are Muslim and smaller numbers of responses from those of other religions including Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist.

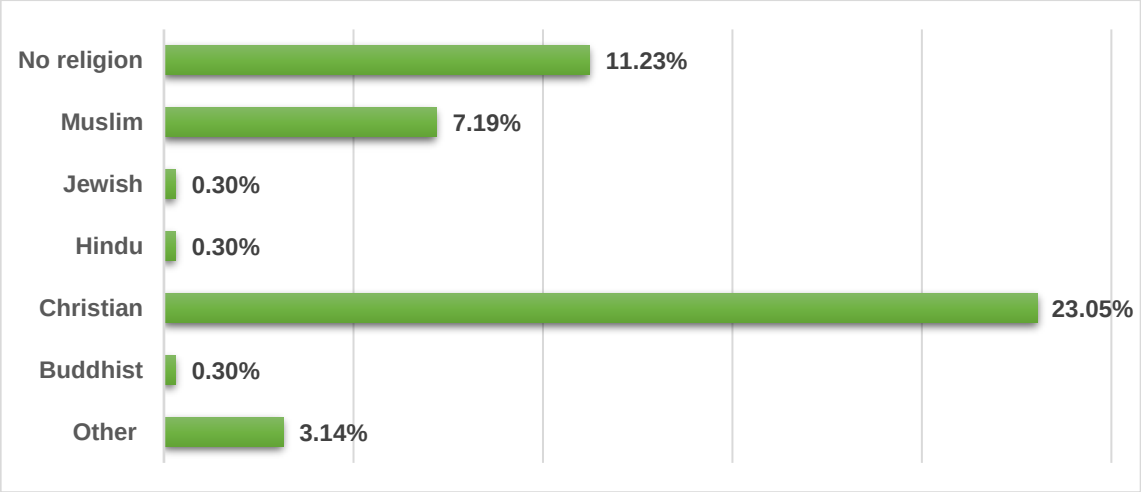



**Figure 27: Religion or belief**

## 3.6 Disability

Less than half of respondents answered the question on whether they did or did not have a disability, with 17 of those who did respond confirming that they did not wish to answer the question, and 240 stating that they do not have a disability. Of the 74 respondents who confirmed they do have a disability, 27 responded to the question asking about for information about the type of disability.

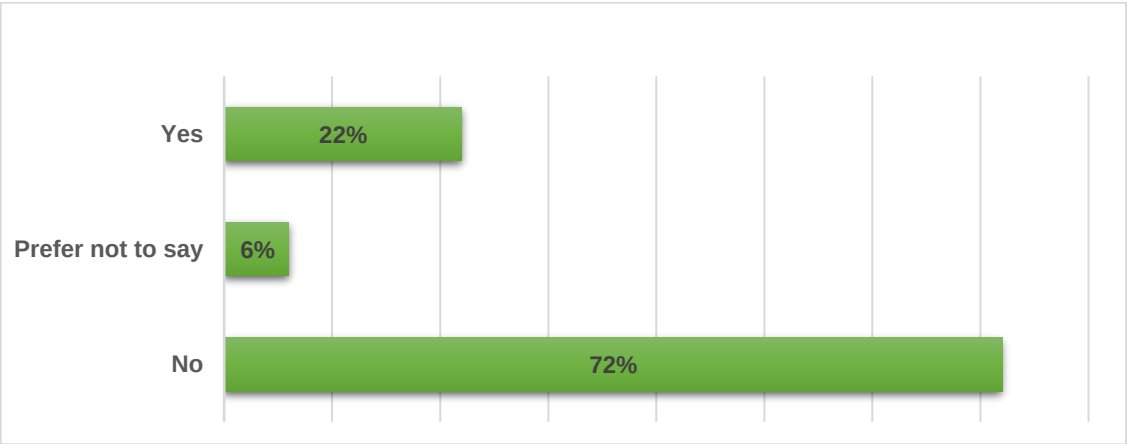



**Figure 28: Confirmation of disability**

As Table 1 shows, disability due to mental health issues at 30% was the most common reason for disability, followed by hearing or vision loss, and physical mobility issues both at 26% of respondents answering the question.

| Stated Disability | Responses |
|---|---|
| Hearing / Vision (e.g. deaf, partially deaf or hard of hearing; blind or partial sight) | 26% |
| Learning disability (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia etc.) | 11% |
| Mental health (lasting more than a year. e.g. severe depression, schizophrenia etc.) | 30% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Long-term illness or health condition (e.g. Cancer, HIV, Diabetes, Chronic Heart disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Chronic Asthma) | 3.7% |
| Physical / Mobility (e.g. wheelchair user, arthritis, multiple sclerosis etc.) | 26% |
| Prefer not to say | 3.7% |

**Table 1: Stated disability**

# Management Transfer Policy

APPENDIX C

This Policy sets out Southwark Council's approach to management transfers for Council tenants. A management transfer is an urgent managed move where the Council agrees that a tenant is not safe to remain in their current home because of domestic abuse, violence, harassment, intimidation, hate crime, threats of violence likely to be carried out, or another urgent housing management reason.

## Introduction

1. For housing association tenants, their landlord may have their own scheme for initiating management transfers within their housing stock, or may use the Council's housing allocations scheme to request a transfer. For households living in the private sector, the homelessness application process and/or housing allocations scheme is available to assist in re-housing.

2. This Policy does not cover moves outside of the borough. Where a move out of the borough is requested or considered to be required, a reciprocal move may be arranged with the authority for the area that the tenant wishes to move to. The Council does not have any influence over the decision made by the receiving authority.

3. This Policy does not cover managed moves due to major works required to a property that cannot be reasonably carried out with the tenant in occupation, or the property needs to be demolished, redeveloped or re-designated. Such managed moves are covered under the Council's Allocations Policy.

## Strategic context

4. This Policy supports the Council's Corporate Plan commitment to provide a high quality and responsive housing service built on respect for residents. It also supports wider Council strategies and policies by helping residents move safely where there is an urgent risk.

**Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

5. The overarching aim of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to set out the Council's strategic approach to preventing and relieving homelessness in the borough. If a person is not safe in their home due to a risk or threat of violence they can make a homeless application. Priority need is given to various categories of applicant, including:
    - A person who is homeless as a result of that person being a victim of domestic abuse.

- A person who is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence from another person or threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out.

6. Management transfers prevent homelessness by removing tenants from areas where they may face risk or threat of violence and by providing tenants who may have fled their home due to violence, with a permanent address.

**Community Safety Strategy**

7. The Community Safety Strategy outlines a number of priority areas which aim to make Southwark a safer place to live. One of the priorities is to reduce violent crime, including violence against women and girls (VAWG) and domestic abuse. While the strategy focuses on tackling the criminal aspect of violent crime, management transfers can help to reduce the risk of further violence, either to a family or an individual, therefore helping to lower the number of reported violent crimes.
   Tenancy strategy

**Housing Allocations' Policy**

8. The Housing Allocations Policy explains the criteria and procedures the Council uses to prioritise applicants for social housing. Under this policy, applicants who need to move under a management transfer will be given a direct allocation with a caveat that only one suitable offer will be made for these households.

**Anti-Social Behaviour Policy**

9. The Anti-Social Behaviour Policy outlines the approach the Council takes to tackle conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to a person. Management transfers may be required where a tenant needs to move due to domestic abuse, violence, harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence likely to be carried out due to serious anti-social behaviour and crime, including hate crime.

**Vulnerable Adults' Housing Policy**

10. Vulnerable people can be disproportionately affected by crime and anti-social behaviour. Criminals are known to target and exploit vulnerable people who may be unable to protect themselves from harm. The Vulnerable Adults' Housing Policy explains how vulnerable adults, who use the Housing Service, are identified; can gain access to services; how the service will adapt to their needs; the safeguards which are in place to protect vulnerable adults; and, how Housing Services staff will signpost and refer vulnerable adults to other organisations when they require additional support.

**Safeguarding Policy**

11. The Safeguarding Policy sets out the procedures that will be followed when there are concerns or allegations of abuse or neglect towards a child or adult at risk.

**Applying for a Management transfer**

12. If a resident believes they need to move urgently because they are not safe in their home, they should contact their Resident Officer as the first step. The Resident Officer will listen to the resident's concerns, consider the information available, and assess whether a management transfer request may be appropriate. Residents will not be expected to decide for themselves whether they qualify, and management transfer requests will not be open for residents to freely self-initiate without this initial assessment.

13. Where the Resident Officer considers that the case may meet the criteria for a management transfer, the resident will be asked to complete the relevant form, with support from the Resident Officer where needed. Access to the form will be managed by the Council, for example through a private link or assisted submission, so that requests are made in the right way and include the information needed to make a proper assessment.

14. This approach helps the Council manage expectations, reduce referrals that are not suitable for a management transfer, and improve the quality of the information submitted. It also means residents can be assured that the Council will engage with each case individually, consider the circumstances carefully, and make sure the right support or housing option is explored.

15. The Resident Officer will continue to engage with the resident throughout the process, explain what information or evidence is required, and help the resident identify and gather supporting information from relevant agencies, such as Social Services, a disability service, elderly care service, the Police, a domestic abuse service, or a hospital consultant. Where police evidence is relied upon, the Council will normally request confirmation from an officer of an appropriate seniority. Where this is not reasonably available within the required timeframe, the Council may accept evidence from an alternative appropriate source or from another police officer, where it is satisfied that the evidence is credible and sufficient. In some cases, the Resident Officer may need to apply for a police disclosure.

16. Once the Resident Officer has assessed the issue and the request is progressed, the Council will write to the resident within 5 working days setting out the evidence or additional information that is needed to support the application. If the resident has difficulty obtaining evidence, they should tell their Resident Officer as soon as possible so the Council can consider further support, flexibility, or alternative evidence where appropriate. If the resident does not provide the evidence or information reasonably required by the

Council within an agreed timeframe, and there is no agreed reason for the delay, the request will normally be closed. Where a resident is unable to provide the required evidence within this timeframe because of vulnerability, safeguarding concerns, or delays outside their control, the Council may extend the deadline where it is reasonable to do so.

**How a management transfer decision is made**

17. Once an application for a management transfer has been submitted and the evidence has been verified by the disclosure or appropriate agency, the case will be considered through the Council's single Management Transfer process for urgent rehousing cases.

18. A panel of senior officers, including the relevant Senior Resident Manager and Housing Needs Manager, will consider the application, assess the urgency and priority of the case, discuss the available options, and make a recommendation.

19. The management transfer decision itself must be taken by an individual officer who is authorised to do so under the Council's internal scheme of delegation. In making the decision, the authorised officer will consider the full implications of the transfer, ensuring that the applicant's needs and safety are taken into account.

20. The single Management Transfer process is intended to give residents confidence that urgent rehousing cases are considered fairly, consistently and with senior oversight. It helps the Council prioritise households facing the greatest risk and take the right action to support resident safety and progress urgent moves as quickly as possible. While supporting evidence from agencies will be considered as part of the management transfer application process, the final decision on whether to approve the management transfer rests with the Council.

21. All management transfer decisions will be confirmed to the resident in writing. This includes decisions to approve or refuse a request. Where a request is refused, the letter will explain the reasons for the decision in clear language, including how the resident's circumstances and evidence were considered. Written decision letters help residents understand the outcome, provide a clear record of the Council's decision, and support transparency, fairness and consistency.

22. The panel will make every effort to resolve the situation without having to move the applicant. Where appropriate and in agreement with the applicant, the Council may consider legal remedies, such as Exclusion Orders, Possession Proceedings and other available powers to deal with domestic abuse, hate crime and anti-social behaviour. In considering any legal

remedies, the Council will take account of the applicant's safety and any safeguarding concerns, and will not require an applicant to remain in occupation where it is not safe or reasonable to do so. If a management transfer is the only option, the transfer will be authorised by an appropriately delegated officer in line with the Council's internal scheme of delegation.

23. Where a management transfer request is refused, the resident may request an internal review of the decision in writing within 21 working days of the decision letter. The review will be carried out by a manager who has had no previous involvement in the case and who is authorised under the Council's internal scheme of delegation. The Council will confirm the outcome of the review in writing, including clear reasons for the review decision.

**Access to Temporary Accommodation**

24. If a resident is at high risk and it is not safe for them to remain in their home, they may also have the right to make a homelessness application. This policy does not take away or limit that right. Where the Council accepts a duty under homelessness legislation, temporary accommodation may be provided in line with the Council's statutory duties. The management transfer process can continue alongside the homelessness application so the Council can consider both routes, coordinate support between Housing Needs, Landlord Services and Allocations or Lettings, and seek to reduce the time the resident spends in temporary accommodation wherever possible.

**Safety and Support**

25. Throughout the management transfer process Landlord Services will work with the relevant agencies to help ensure the safety of the victim.

26. Management transfers are part of a multi-agency response to residents at risk of violence, harassment and intimidation. As well as using management transfers as one form of housing option, tenants will have their wider needs assessed and be provided with all necessary support and/or referred to specialist support services as required. For example, high risk victims and survivors of domestic abuse will be referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and specialist domestic abuse services. Where a child or an adult with care and support needs is at risk of harm due to violence, harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence likely to be carried out, a child and/or adult, a safeguarding referral will be made in accordance with the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

**Obtaining a management transfer**

27. Applicants will be notified in writing whether or not a management transfer has been agreed. If an applicant does not already have an active and verified housing register application, they will be asked to complete and submit one. Once a management transfer has been agreed, the Council will seek to match

the resident to suitable accommodation as quickly as possible, taking account of the urgency of risk, the household's assessed bedroom need, the availability of suitable accommodation and any relevant safety or support needs. The main purpose of a management transfer is to reduce risk and help the resident move to safer accommodation. It is not intended to secure a larger home unless there is a clear assessed need.

28. For the purposes of this Policy, "suitable accommodation" will be assessed in accordance with the Council's relevant statutory duties and applicable statutory guidance. In assessing suitability, the Council will consider factors including (where relevant) the size and type of accommodation, affordability, location and proximity to support networks and essential services, medical and disability-related needs (including any adaptations), risk and safeguarding considerations, and any other factors relevant to the household's safety and wellbeing.

29. The Council will normally aim to make a like-for-like offer. This means the resident will usually be offered accommodation that meets the same assessed bedroom need as their current home or housing application. A larger property will only be considered where there is an assessed medical need, a safeguarding requirement, or where homelessness suitability rules apply because the household is being assisted through that route. This helps make sure management transfers are used fairly for their main purpose: reducing risk and supporting a safe move.

30. While a management transfer is being progressed, residents can continue to bid through Southwark Homesearch within their assessed band, as determined under the full Housing Allocations Scheme. If the resident was already on the housing register for another rehousing reason, such as overcrowding, they can continue to bid within that assessed band unless the Council reassesses the application and determines that their circumstances or housing needs have changed. At the same time, the Council may also identify suitable accommodation through the management transfer process where this is lawful, appropriate and needed to address the risk.

31. The Council will normally only make one offer of suitable accommodation, including where the resident has bid successfully through Southwark Homesearch. This is to help meet the resident's urgent housing need as quickly as possible.

32. If applicants are vacating a larger property for a smaller one, they may benefit from the Downsizing scheme.

33. In accordance with section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, where the Council grants a new tenancy to a victim of domestic abuse who has or had a

secure lifetime tenancy, the tenancy offered will also be a secure lifetime tenancy; as specified in the Council's Tenancy Policy.

34. If an applicant has fled the property they are still responsible for the tenancy, including upkeep and payment of rent up until the time the tenancy is legally ended. Where an applicant has accrued rent arrears, the presence of rent arrears will not be a reason to refuse a management transfer request. However, the Council will carefully consider the circumstances in which the arrears accrued and the options for arrears recovery in line with the Rent Arrears Policy.

35. Residents should not end or give up their tenancy before taking advice from the Council. Giving up a tenancy too early may affect the Council's ability to progress a management transfer and may remove the transfer route. If a resident needs to leave their home because it is not safe, they should speak to their Resident Officer or Housing Needs officer as soon as possible so that the Council can explain their options, including any homelessness application, temporary accommodation, and management transfer arrangements.

**Requesting a review of suitability of an offer of accommodation.**

36. If an applicant refuses a direct offer or a successful bid of accommodation, the applicant may request a review of the offer. The request may be made at the time of viewing the property or no later than two days of the viewing. If no request for a review is made, the management transfer status will end and no further offer will be made on this basis.

37. Any request for a review must be made in writing and clearly set out the reasons why an applicant disagrees with the Council's decision on the suitability of the accommodation. A form will be provided at the viewing for this purpose.

38. Formal reviews will be conducted by the reviews team within the Council's Housing Needs Service, with no previous involvement in the case, who will notify the applicant of the outcome of the review, including the reasons for their decision.

39. During this process, the Council may seek any further information it requires, including advice from medical and other specialist advisors, if necessary.

40. If, based on the evidence submitted by the applicant, the Council concludes that the applicants' reasons for refusal of the offer of suitable accommodation are not valid, the applicant will be given five further days to reconsider the offer. If the offer is still not accepted, the offer of accommodation will be withdrawn and the management transfer status will end.

**Complaints**

41. If an applicant is not satisfied with the service they have received regarding the way the Housing Service has dealt with their management transfer application, the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure can be followed. Complaints leaflets are also available from the Council's website.

42. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted if further advice and support is needed on making a complaint to the Council.

**Data Protection**

43. The Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR regulate the processing of information relating to individuals, which includes the obtaining, holding, using or disclosing of such information.

44. The Council needs to collect and use certain types of information about its service users in order to carry out its everyday business and to fulfil its objectives and its statutory functions.

**Equality and Diversity**

45. The Council is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling unlawful discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The Council, in delivering this policy, will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure that no individual is discriminated against based on their sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, disability or age.

46. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a duty on the Council and that responsibility cannot be delegated to a contractor/service provider and is a continuing duty.

47. A Customer Access Review has been undertaken to assess the impact this policy will have on affected persons with protected characteristics. The review concluded there were no known circumstances of a negative equality impact.

**Policy Review**

48. This Policy will be reviewed every year, or sooner, in the event of major legislative or operational changes.

APPENDIX D

# Appendix D – Detailed Schedule of Changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme

This appendix provides a comprehensive, schedule of changes between the Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2013 (old policy) and the Housing Allocations Scheme 2026 (new policy).

| Policy area | Old policy (2013 scheme) | Change made | New policy (26 scheme) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overall structure** | Four priority bands (Bands 1–4). Additional priority awarded through stars and Good Tenant awards. | Replace four band structure and remove priority stars. | Five priority bands (Bands A–E). No priority stars or non housing related awards. | Simplifies the scheme, improves transparency, and ensures prioritisation is based on housing need only, reducing risk of legal challenge. |
| **Introduction of Band E** | Lowest priority applicants placed in Band 4 and could bid. | Creation of a new lowest band with no bidding rights. | Band E introduced for households with low or no housing need, including transfer applicants without reasonable preference. | Manages expectations, reduces false hope, and improves system efficiency by focusing bidding on applicants with realistic prospects. |
| **Reasonable preference for homelessness** | Homeless applicants without a main homelessness | Clear separation of homelessness duties across bands. | Homeless households owed the main duty placed in Band C. | Ensures compliance with Part 6 Housing Act 1996 by giving |

| Policy area | Old policy (2013 scheme) | Change made | New policy (26 scheme) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | duty were not clearly distinguished. | | Homeless households not owed a duty placed in Band D. | reasonable preference while differentiating levels of need. |
| **Removal of priority stars** | Priority stars awarded for working, volunteering, or being a “good tenant”. | All stars removed. | No additional priority based on employment, volunteering, or tenancy conduct (outside housing need). | Aligns with statutory guidance, reduces complexity, and avoids indirect discrimination. |
| **Local connection – working in borough** | Working in Southwark was an automatic qualification route. | Remove employment based local connection (with statutory exceptions). | Working in the borough no longer provides automatic qualification, except where required by Right to Move guidance. | Reflects severe housing scarcity, focuses access on housing need, and aligns with consultation feedback and legal advice. |
| **Care leavers** | Care leavers generally placed in Band 2. | Increased priority for care leavers. | Southwark care leavers given Band A priority, subject to defined criteria and time limited application of priority. | Supports corporate parenting duties and addresses poor outcomes for care leavers. |
| **Housing First** | No explicit reference. | Explicit prioritisation introduced. | Applicants accepted onto Southwark’s Housing First programme | Supports homelessness prevention and move-on from rough sleeping |

| Policy area | Old policy (2013 scheme) | Change made | New policy (26 scheme) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | placed in Band A. | in line with national policy. |
| **Armed forces** | No explicit Band B priority identified in the change schedule. | Clarify priority for eligible armed forces applicants. | Eligible armed forces applicants placed in Band A. | Recognises the statutory requirement to give additional preference to qualifying armed forces applicants while maintaining a proportionate banding structure. |
| **Overcrowding – assessment method** | Overcrowding assessed using LHA bedroom criteria and complex definitions. | Simplified and clarified overcrowding framework. | Overcrowding assessed using statutory overcrowding and the bedroom standard, with clear thresholds for Bands A–C. | Improves clarity, consistency, and legal robustness, and reduces disputes. |
| **Overcrowding – deliberate act** | Priority could be reduced if overcrowding caused by a "deliberate act". | Deliberate act test removed. | No reference to deliberate act in overcrowding assessments. | Reduces evidential burden and risk of challenge, and reflects difficulty of proving intent. |
| **Bedroom sharing rules** | Same sex siblings expected to share until age 15. | Ceiling age increased. | Same sex siblings may share until age 20. | Aligns with London practice, improves consistency, and reflects modern |

| Policy area | Old policy (2013 scheme) | Change made | New policy (26 scheme) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | household norms. |
| **Under occupation** | Bids were limited to assessed bedroom need, with little flexibility. | Introduced greater flexibility for downsizing households to widen bidding options. | Introduced greater flexibility for downsizing households to widen bidding options. | Increases move options, supports downsizing, and helps release larger homes for households in greater need. |
| **Direct lettings** | Used, but criteria less clearly articulated. | Clarified and formalised. | Direct lettings permitted in defined circumstances, with senior officer approval. | Improves transparency and auditability of non CBL allocations. |
| **Auto bidding** | No explicit provision. | New operational tool introduced. | Auto bidding may be used for specified applicant groups to support timely allocations. | Supports vulnerable applicants and reduces delays where bidding barriers exist. |
| **Management transfers** | Emergency and management transfers partially embedded in the scheme. | Remove from main scheme and create separate policy. | Standalone Management Transfer Policy approved alongside the scheme. | Provides clearer governance, faster responses to risk, and avoids competition with general applicants. |
| **Accessible housing** | Limited system-wide visibility of | Creation of an Accessible Housing Register. | Improved coding and identification of adapted and | Improves matching, reduces legal |

| Policy area | Old policy (2013 scheme) | Change made | New policy (26 scheme) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | adapted homes. | | adaptable homes at advertising stage. | risk, and supports disabled applicants. |
| **Annual reviews of applications** | No routine annual review requirement. | Introduce rolling annual review. | Applicants must confirm circumstances annually to remain on the register. | Improves data accuracy, reduces failed offers, and supports fair prioritisation. |
| **Refusals of offers** | Refusals could lead to band demotion. | Change consequence of refusals. | Three suitable refusals within 12 months leads to suspension from the register for 12 months, not band demotion. | Clearer, fairer, and easier for applicants to understand. |
| **Temporary accommodation move on** | Limited explicit linkage. | Strengthen alignment with homelessness strategy. | Scheme prioritises move on from temporary accommodation through banding and lettings plans. | Supports reduction in TA use and aligns with national homelessness objectives. |
| **Local and Annual Lettings Plans** | Used, but perceived as opaque. | Strengthen transparency and reporting. | Continued use of LLPs and ALPs, with clearer explanation and annual reporting. | Maintains flexibility while addressing consultation concerns about transparency. |
| **Consultation and review cycle** | No defined review timetable. | Introduce formal review commitment. | Scheme to be reviewed after 12 months of operation and | Ensures learning, responsiveness, |

| Policy area | Old policy (2013 scheme) | Change made | New policy (26 scheme) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | reported to the Lead Member. | and ongoing compliance. |

## Summary

Taken together, these changes provide a clearer, fairer and more transparent framework for deciding how scarce social housing is allocated in Southwark. The revised scheme supports consistent and evidence-based decision-making, strengthens legal compliance, and reflects consultation feedback, operational experience and the Council's wider duties on homelessness, equalities and housing delivery. The changes also make the scheme easier to understand by explaining how priority is assessed, why certain households are placed in different bands, and how limited social housing can be targeted towards those with the greatest assessed housing need. This approach is intended to improve accountability, manage expectations and build confidence in how allocation decisions are made.

APPENDIX E

# Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2026

# Equality Impact and Needs Analysis

April 2026

# Guidance notes

## Things to remember:

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) public authorities are required to have due regard to the aims of the general equality duty when making decisions and when setting policies. Understanding the affect of the council's policies and practices on people with different protected characteristics is an important part of complying with the general equality duty. Under the PSED the council must ensure that:

- Decision-makers are aware of the general equality duty's requirements.
- The general equality duty is complied with before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration and when a decision is taken.
- They consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the aims of the general equality duty as an integral part of the decision-making process.
- They have sufficient information to understand the effects of the policy, or the way a function is carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- They review policies or decisions, for example, if the make-up of service users changes, as the general equality duty is a continuing duty.
- They take responsibility for complying with the general equality duty in relation to all their relevant functions. Responsibility cannot be delegated to external organisations that are carrying out public functions on their behalf.
- They consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the aims of the general equality duty not only when a policy is developed and decided upon, but when it is being implemented.

Best practice guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission recommends that public bodies:

- Consider all the protected characteristics and all aims of the general equality duty (apart from in relation to marriage and civil partnership, where only the discrimination aim applies).
- Use equality analysis to inform policy as it develops to avoid unnecessary additional activity.
- Focus on the understanding the effects of a policy on equality and any actions needed as a result, not the production of a document.
- Consider how the time and effort involved should relate to the importance of the policy to equality.
- Think about steps to advance equality and good relations as well as eliminate discrimination.
- Use good evidence. Where it isn't available, take steps to gather it (where practical and proportionate).
- Use insights from engagement with employees, service users and others can help provide evidence for equality analysis.

Equality analysis should be referenced in community impact statements in Council reports. Community impact statements are a corporate requirement in all reports to the following meetings: the cabinet, individual decision makers, scrutiny, regulatory committees and community councils. Community impact statements enable decision makers to identify more easily how a decision might affect different communities in Southwark and to consider any implications for equality and diversity.

The public will be able to view and scrutinise any equality analysis undertaken. Equality analysis should therefore be written in a clear and transparent way using plain English. Equality analysis may be published under the council's publishing of equality information or be present with divisional/departmental/service business plans. These will be placed on the website for public view under the council's Publications Scheme.

Equality analysis should be reviewed after a sensible period of time to see if business needs have changed and/or if the effects that were expected have occurred. If not then you will need to consider amending your policy accordingly. This does not mean repeating the equality analysis, but using the

experience gained through implementation to check the findings and to make any necessary adjustments.

Engagement with the community is recommended as part of the development of equality analysis. The council's Community Engagement Division and critical friend, the Forum for Equality and Human Rights in Southwark can assist with this (see section below on community engagement and www.southwarkadvice.org.uk).

Whilst the equality analysis is being considered, Southwark Council recommends considering implications arising from socio-economic disadvantage, as socio-economic inequalities have a strong influence on the environment we live and work in. As a major provider of services to Southwark residents, the council has a policy commitment to reduce socio-economic inequalities, and this is reflected in its values and aims. For this reason, the council recommends considering impacts/needs arising from socio-economic disadvantage in all equality analyses, not forgetting to include identified potential mitigating actions. **The Council has adopted the Socio-Economic Duty as part of its overall equality, diversity and inclusion policy commitments in the Southwark Equality Framework.** This requires us to ensure we do not make any conditions worse for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage through our policies and practices.

**Section 1:** Equality impact and needs analysis details

| | |
|---|---|
| **Proposed policy to which this equality analysis relates** | Housing Allocations Scheme 2026 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Equality analysis author** | | Ricky Bellot, Housing Choice and Supply Manager | | | |
| **Strategic Director:** | | Hakeem Osinaike, Strategic Director of Housing | | | |
| **Department** | | Housing Services | **Division** | Housing Strategy and Business Support | |
| **Period analysis undertaken** | | December 2024 – May 2026 | | | |
| **Date of review (if applicable)** | | August 2027 | | | |
| **Sign-off** | Candida Thompson | **Position** | Director of Housing Needs and Support | **Date** | |

## **Section 2:** Brief description of policy/decision/business plan

### 1.1 Brief description of policy

The new proposed Southwark Housing Allocations Scheme 2026 (the Scheme) setting out the priorities used and procedure to be followed in allocating social housing within the borough as required under section 166 of the Housing Act 1996.

The supporting code of guidance, Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for local authorities, (the Code) updated in 2024, explains how councils can manage their housing registers and tailor their allocation priorities to meet local needs and local circumstances, while ensuring the statutory requirement of giving reasonable preference and additional preference to certain groups mandated by the Secretary of state, is met.

The reasonable preference groups are:

- Homeless people as defined in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing. The Code recommends the use of the bedroom standard as a minimum measure of overcrowding.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including relating to a disability, a care leaver or someone leaving a drug or alcohol recovery programme, and for those who could not be expected to find their own accommodation, such as those with learning disabilities.
- People who need to move to avoid hardship to themselves or to others for example to access specialist medical treatment or to provide care for a relative.

Local authorities can also give additional preference to other particular groups of people who have a reasonable preference if they have a need to move urgently, for example because:

- of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability
- they are severely overcrowded and this poses a serious health hazard
- they are homeless as a result of violence or threats of violence

Local authorities must also give additional preference to certain people within the armed forces communities who have a reasonable preference (see above), if they have a need to move urgently.

In addition to prioritising applicants, the Scheme must set out how we offer people the opportunity to express preferences about the accommodation to be allocated to them (section 166A), which for Southwark, like the many Councils in England is through enabling applicants to bid for a home through our Choice Based Lettings system.

In assessing the socio-economic impact of the Scheme in particular it is important to understand both prioritisation and choice in the context of the increasing level of housing need both locally and nationally, and the number of social rented homes available to allocate each year. The Council's Housing register currently has just under 23,000 households registered for an allocation of social rented housing. Each of these have been assessed against specific criteria and all have been determined as in of need of an affordable home and prioritised within one of the current Bands 1 to 4. As our data report shows, on average less than 10% of these households are allocated a home each year, which makes it essential that this very limited resource is allocated in a fair and transparent way.

The proposed revised Scheme, 2026, is designed to:

- Create an easy to understand, fair and transparent allocations system
- Offer applicants information and advice to enable them to make informed choices about their housing options
- Ensure equality of opportunity in accessing the housing register and in the allocation of properties
- Help to prevent homelessness
- Offer housing choice to applicants where possible
- Support the principles of social inclusion, community cohesion and aim to meet customer expectations

- Promote sustainable tenancies and communities by acknowledging support needs where appropriate
- Make the most effective use of local social homes

**Relevant data, research and consultation**

To inform this EINA and determine the potential impact of the proposed changes on those with a protected characteristic we have analysed; the housing register from December 2024 with just under 23,000 applicant households; details of the allocations made during 2023-2026; local homelessness data; JSNA and 2021 Census Data; DWP research; Adult Social Services data; and our own complaints data. All of this data was anonymised to protect individual's privacy.

Following this consultation, and the implementation of the resulting new Scheme, further analysis will be undertaken at least annually and used to identify where services need to change or improve, as well as what will be needed from an Annual Lettings Plan in order for the assessment and prioritisation of applications and social housing allocations to continue to be made fairly, and in accordance with legal requirements, while responding to any changing circumstances or demand.

Where additional data is identified this will also be used to improve our understanding of our customers, their housing needs and the impact of this Scheme.

**Proposed changes**

The specific proposed policy changes will ensure that the Scheme meets all current regulatory requirements and helps to address housing inequality for some groups. The proposals will not fully address all disadvantage, and in particular socio-economic disadvantage caused by the significant shortage of affordable housing for those in housing need, as only a small percentage of applicants will be allocated a social home each year.

The following changes are being proposed: (for full information please see Housing Allocations Scheme Consultation Document)

**Qualification**

- Financial qualification will be included, to only qualify applicants who do not have the resources to secure suitable housing in the commercial market.
- The exemption from the residency requirement of living withing the Borough for five years will now from time to time include certain prescribed key workers.
- The exemption from the residency requirement criteria for applicants with family living in the borough for more than five years will be reduced to only applicant with a parent or adult child living in the borough for more than five years.
- The exemption from the residency requirement criteria related to working in the borough is recommended to be removed, with the exception of applicants under the Right to Move legislation.

**Prioritisation**

- We are proposing to remove all priority stars, including those for Community and Working, as these do not provide clarity for households on their level of priority within a band, and they are not based on housing needs. There are currently 2,614 applicants with Works Stars, of which 1758 have an additional priority need, and 1,672 applicants have been awarded a community star, and 1,627 of these are also known to have an additional priority need.

**Good Tenant Award**

- We are proposing to remove the good tenant award as this is also not based on housing need. There is an impact on the 48 tenants with this award, but the individual impact can only be understood following a full reassessment of their application

**Priority Bands**

- In order to ensure we give reasonable preference and additional preference to certain applicants it has been necessary to create an additional band. The proposed Scheme replaces the current Bands 1 to 4 with Bands A to E. Band A will include applicants with the highest need and Band E, the lowest.

- Band E includes applicants with a low level of housing need and therefore the lowest priority for social housing.**Applicants in Band E will be able to bid for properties through the choice-based lettings system.**

However, due to the level of demand and the way priority is applied within the scheme, applicants in higher bands will always be considered first. This means that households in Band E are unlikely to be rehoused through the scheme. Allowing Band E applicants to bid ensures the scheme is transparent and fair, and enables residents to see what types of homes become available. The Council will also provide clear advice and support on alternative housing options, including private renting and mutual exchange.

- There may be occasions when households within this band are offered a direct let of accommodation, but as the demand for all properties within Southwark is high it is not envisaged that this will happen often.

**Band demotion**

- As part of this consultation, we are considering the removal of band demotion as a penalising action, for example applicants no longer meeting the qualification criteria due to their level of rent arrears or unacceptable behaviour, or who refuse three suitable property offers, will be removed from the register as non-qualifying and not demoted to the lowest Band as is currently the case.

- Management discretion to allow the applicants to remain in their position on the register with no loss of priority will remain, as will appeal rights against any such decision, and applicants can reapply when their circumstances change.

**Annual Review**

- An annual review of all applications will take place, which will require input from the applicant. Failure to participate in the annual review will lead to an applicant being removed from the register on the basis that their housing needs have changed and they are no longer seeking social rented housing.

**Non-bidding**

- The removal of applicants from the Housing Register who have not submitted a bid for accommodation in the previous 12 months, where there have been suitable properties for these applicants, is also being proposed. Management discretion to allow the applicants who have not bid to remain in their position on the register with no loss of priority will remain, as will appeal rights against any such decision.

**Homeless Households**

- We are considering offering maintained priority for accepted homeless households who arrange an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector instead of using temporary accommodation provided by the Council as part of a Council duty for rehousing.

- Band C priority will be given to homeless households whom the council would have a duty to house, and Band D for other homeless households, with the exception of those accepted for the Housing First Scheme who will be given Band A priority.

**Care leavers**

- We propose that Band A is given to applicants nominated by Children's Services, as
- Southwark Care Leavers ready to move on to more independent housing.

**Local lettings plans**

- The use of local lettings plans will be retained and the percentage of allocations to certain groups will now be more flexible, between 1 and 100%, to respond to the size, type and location of homes being

allocated within the local lettings plan. At present 50% of all new build homes are made available to existing social housing tenants within the local area of the build and this would also change on a site-by-site basis.

**Annual Lettings Plan**

- We will retain the right to use an Annual Lettings Plan alongside of and in addition to the Banding prioritisation, to help address local housing needs in a responsive way, by setting proportions of allocations for specific priority needs groups, or applicants within specific bands, depending on circumstances. An Annual Lettings plan will be developed following an assessment of need and will be approved by Council Members.

**Section 3:** Overview of service users and key stakeholders consulted

| **2. Service users and stakeholders** | |
|---|---|
| **Key users of the department or service** | C22,900 households registered on the Housing Register, their advocates and support agencies and other Southwark residents in housing need. |
| **Key stakeholders were/are involved in this policy** | Southwark Housing Association partners, Landlord Services officers, Adult and Children's Services, Community safety officers, have participated in developing this draft Scheme and will be invited and encouraged to participate in the public consultation. |

**Section 4:** Pre-implementation equality impact and needs analysis

**Protected characteristics summary (at-a-glance)**

| Protected characteristic | Key impact (summary) | Mitigations / actions |
|---|---|---|
| Age | • Under-35s (often single) in low-need bands may have limited/no access to bidding outcome (Band E).<br>• Care leavers 18+ benefit from enhanced priority (greater access to 1-bed homes).<br>• Older residents benefit via older persons'/supported housing routes and rightsizing opportunities. | • Monitor % of 18–34s in Band E and any increase in homelessness approaches.<br>• Support care leavers via Children's Social Care; align with Joint Housing Protocol (2026–27).<br>• Maintain assisted-digital support (officers/partners, auto-bidding); clear comms and review routes. |
| Disability | • Positive: higher priority for hazardous housing, harassment/hate incidents, and mobility/mental health needs.<br>• Risk: digital/annual review/non-bidding requirements may disadvantage cognitive/fluctuating conditions.<br>• Adapted homes remain scarce; longer waits likely for some physical disabilities. | • Assisted applications/bidding (including through third sector); auto-bidding and account flags to prevent removals.<br>• Maintain/adapted homes register; Local Lettings Plans to prioritise accessible/adapted homes.<br>• Implement Housing-Health-ASC joint protocol (2026–27); Annual Lettings Plan can target disability needs. |
| Gender reassignment (incl. gender identity) | • Positive: Band B priority for hate crime/severe harassment linked to gender identity.<br>• Risk: documentation/name-marker mismatches could delay assessments.<br>• Data on this characteristic is incomplete (privacy/disclosure). | • Staff training (LGBTQI+); handle info sensitively; reduce barriers in application/evidence processes.<br>• Engage LGBTQ+ support organisations during consultation; seek mitigation guidance.<br>• Explore safeguarding risk indicators to support direct offers/emergency transfers when needed. |
| Marriage and civil partnership | • No direct change in eligibility/priority for married/civil partnered households.<br>• Risk: indirect discrimination if joint apps/household changes/evidence requirements applied inconsistently. | • Monitor outcomes for joint applications and separation-related changes for consistency.<br>• Annual monitoring of register/allocations/homelessness/complaints to identify unintended impacts. |
| Pregnancy and maternity | • Neutral overall; priority arises via circumstances (overcrowding, medical/welfare, homelessness).<br>• Risk: indirect disadvantage if | • Clear advice on change-of-circumstances (pregnancy/birth) and evidence needed.<br>• Flexibility where health/caring responsibilities affect engagement; active homelessness prevention/safeguarding routes. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | evidence/timeframes/comms don't reflect pregnancy/early parenting needs.<br>• Removal of Good Tenant Award may help where maternity leave triggers income drop/arrears risk. | • Monitor outcomes/complaints where pregnancy/maternity is disclosed to spot unintended impacts. |
| Race | • Residency qualification may disadvantage new arrivals (given 40% residents born outside UK/Ireland/CI).<br>• Positive: Band B priority for racial harassment/violence; exceptions apply where appropriate.<br>• Sibling room-sharing age change may reduce overcrowding priority for some larger families (correlates with some ethnic groups). | • Translations/interpreters offered; staff trained to translate and flag language needs.<br>• Engage advocacy/support groups and forums (Homeless Forum/TA Working Group) for insight.<br>• Monitor family waiting times/outcomes by protected characteristic to identify unintended impacts. |
| Religion and belief | • No evidence of religion/belief-specific disadvantage from the Scheme.<br>• Data is limited (most applicants do not disclose); impacts may overlap with ethnicity/language. | • Engage with faith groups during consultation to test for any unintended impacts.<br>• Ongoing monitoring through annual review to confirm no discrimination/unintended bias. |
| Sex | • Positive: additional preference supports those fleeing domestic abuse (women disproportionately affected).<br>• Health-related priority is needs-based; no sex-specific negative impacts expected. | • Monitor outcomes by sex (applications, banding, homelessness, allocations, complaints).<br>• Continue consistent domestic abuse/safeguarding pathways and referrals to specialist support. |
| Sexual orientation | • No evidenced adverse impact; disclosure data is incomplete.<br>• Positive: Band B priority where harassment/threats of violence linked to sexual orientation; emergency transfers for tenants. | • Annual staff training (LGBTQI+ and trauma-informed care); confidentiality assurance to encourage monitoring data.<br>• Include LGBTQI+ organisations in engagement; signpost/referral where safety concerns are raised.<br>• Track outcomes and complaints referencing discrimination/safety concerns. |

This section considers the potential impacts (positive and negative) on groups with 'protected characteristics', the equality information on which this analysis is based and any mitigating actions to be taken, including improvement actions to promote equality and tackle inequalities. An equality analysis also presents as an opportunity to improve services to meet diverse needs, promote equality, tackle inequalities and promote good community relations. It is not just about addressing negative impacts.

The columns include societal issues (discrimination, exclusion, needs etc.) and socio-economic issues (levels of poverty, employment, income). As the two aspects are heavily

interrelated it may not be practical to fill out both columns on all protected characteristics. The aim is, however, to ensure that socio-economic issues are given special consideration, as it is the council's intention to reduce socio-economic inequalities in the borough. Key is also the link between protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantage, including experiences of multiple disadvantage.

**Socio-economic disadvantage may arise from a range of factors, including**:

- poverty
- health
- education
- limited social mobility
- housing
- a lack of expectations
- discrimination
- multiple disadvantage

**The public sector equality duty (PSED)** requires us to find out about and give due consideration to the needs of different protected characteristics in relation to the three parts of the duty:

1. Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advancing equality of opportunity, including finding out about and meeting diverse needs of our local communities, addressing disadvantage and barriers to equal access; enabling all voices to be heard in our engagement and consultation undertaken; increasing the participation of underrepresented groups
3. Fostering good community relations; promoting good relations; to be a borough where all feel welcome, included, valued, safe and respected.

The PSED is now also further reinforced in the two additional Fairer Future For All values: that we will

- Always work to make Southwark more equal and just
- Stand against all forms of discrimination and racism

| **Age -** Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds). | |
|---|---|
| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential Socio-Economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
| The continuation of the priority bandings based on the level of overcrowding will help to ensure no negative impact on overcrowded families with children, 0–18.<br><br>**Impact of Band E (revised approach to bidding)**<br>Following consultation feedback, the Council has amended its approach and will now permit applicants in Band E to bid for properties through the choice-based lettings system.<br>The original proposal to restrict bidding was identified as having the potential to disproportionately impact certain groups, including younger single people and those affected by Local Housing Allowance (LHA) shared accommodation rates, who may be more likely to have lower incomes and fewer savings. These households may also be less likely to have children or meet medical or welfare thresholds for higher priority bands.<br>The main alternative for these households is likely to be private renting, which may be limited to shared accommodation that can be:<br>• scarce in practice<br>• unstable, including licence arrangements and frequent moves<br>• unsuitable for some individuals<br>Allowing Band E applicants to bid mitigates the risk of this group being excluded from participating in the allocations process and supports a more transparent and inclusive system.<br>Further to this, under the revised approach where Band E applicants are able to bid, the Council recognises that there remains a risk of disproportionate impact on groups overrepresented in low-need bands, including single people, some younger applicants, and those with limited digital access (often older people) who may struggle to evidence housing need. However, enabling participation in bidding reduces the likelihood of systemic exclusion and improves visibility of housing options.<br><br>Risk assessment for children moved out-of-borough: how many households might take the PRS option; mitigation to | Children could potentially be negatively impacted if they moveoutside of the area into private sector housing, as a result of the disruption of changing school, moving away from support networks and other familiar facilities, although this change will be optional and will lead to the benefit of retained priority on the register.<br><br>18+ year old care leavers may also have a positive socio-economic impact from this policy as they will be prioritised for settled accommodation which will help them to take advantage of possible employment and community opportunities.<br><br>Older people over 60 on the housing register have a greater opportunity for rehousing than other age groups due to the number of sheltered homes available each year compared with the level of need, and there is support for older Southwark tenants who choose to move to smaller accommodation. In addition, outside of the Scheme, there are currently a number of available extra-care homes for those with medium to high levels of care need. This is not impacted by the scheme but is advantageous to older adults.<br><br>Underoccupancy in the Borough predominantly experienced by older residents can cause additional financial burden and potential isolation. The priority banding for those engaging with the Council's rightsizing scheme |

reduce disruption (school continuity support, proximity, safeguarding links).

18+ year old care leavers will have a positive impact with the enhanced prioritisation and potential for a one-bedroom home rather than only being able to bid for a studio flat. Under the new scheme, the amount of 18-25s in the top band is going from under 1% to around 13% due to the care leaver change in priority.

Young single people without statutory priority need are likely to be concentrated in Bands D or E and may have limited or no access to bidding, despite high levels of youth homelessness locally.

The provision of older persons' and supported housing allows allocations to be tailored to older residents' needs rather than requiring competition through general needs housing.

Modelling of the age breakdowns in the proposed scheme indicates that the proportions of applicants over 60 years of age across the highest 2 priority bands will increase from 15.76% of all applicants to 22.87%.

Current Band

| Age Range | BAND 1 | BAND 2 | BAND 3 | BAND 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18-25 | 0.06% | 14.09% | 47.24% | 38.61% |
| 26-35 | 0.49% | 3.74% | 52.58% | 43.19% |
| 35-59 | 2.81% | 6.98% | 51.69% | 38.52% |
| 60+ | 11.99% | 3.77% | 26.61% | 57.63% |
| Under 18 | | | 33.33% | 66.67% |
| **Total** | **3.30%** | **6.27%** | **48.01%** | **42.43%** |

New Band

| Age Range | BAND A | BAND B | BAND C | BAND D | BAND E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18-25 | 13.19% | 2.28% | 45.80% | 0.12% | 38.61% |
| 26-35 | 0.98% | 6.96% | 48.31% | 0.66% | 43.10% |
| 35-59 | 3.80% | 14.31% | 41.59% | 0.77% | 39.52% |
| 60+ | 12.47% | 10.40% | 18.48% | 1.05% | 57.59% |
| Under 18 | | | 33.33% | 33.33% | 33.33% |
| **Total** | **5.06%** | **10.91%** | **40.37%** | **0.74%** | **42.92%** |

will help residents to access more suitably sized accommodation.

| **Equality information on which above analysis is based** | **Socio-Economic data on which above analysis is based** |
|---|---|

ONS 2023 data
Census 2021 data
Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,
Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024
Complaints data
Adult Social Care Data
JSNA/Census data

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

Care leavers moved up in priority will be supported by our social care teams with close monitoring of outcomes. This work to improve engagement and outcomes for Southwark's care leavers will be aligned with a revised Joint Housing Protocol to be launched between Housing Needs and Support and Children's Social Care in 2026-2027.

The support for residents with specific re-housing plans for those moving into Sheltered Housing, downsizing to smaller accommodation, and mutual exchanges is being further developed with tenants and applicants with the aim of downsizing being more attractive older persons.

There will be support offered through homelessness prevention activities, to ensure those who don't meet thresholds for higher banding are still offered support should they face housing issues that may lead to homelessness. For example, the prevention and relief duty offered through the Homelessness Reduction Act is not age restricted would provide a personalised housing plan for those owed these duties to try and alleviate their housing issues.

Although there is potential for older persons to be digitally excluded from the online application and bidding process, there are officers in place to help with this and services provided by our partner agencies across Southwark including Age UK, Citizens Advice and local support groups provide support to older people to apply and bid for accommodation. Southwark has improved its face to face offer of advice and support, as well as co-locating its housing advice provision to a number of community services and libraries. The Housing Needs and Support service will also be operating through new customer facing roles to provide support and guidance for those most marginalised and digitally excluded. For residents able to bid online, the revised scheme enables auto bidding and support services to help residents with their bidding.

There will also be steps to manage expectations of those joining the register in lower bands as well as ensuring clear comms and review routes for these groups.

**Data will be monitored to see what % of applicants in Band E are 18-34 and the outcomes of these cases. We will monitor to see if there are disproportionate levels of under-35s in this band and if there are higher homeless approaches of this group following implementation.**

**Disability -** A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Please note that under the PSED due regard includes:

Giving due consideration in all relevant areas to ''the steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in

| |
|---|
| particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.'' This also includes the need to understand and focus on different needs/impacts arising from different disabilities**.** |

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
|---|---|
| Band A includes applicants living in insanitary or hazardous accommodation, which often disproportionately affects disabled residents whose conditions are exacerbated by poor housing.<br><br>Band B explicitly covers harassment and hate incidents against disabled people, including autistic people and those with learning or physical disabilities.<br><br>Local Lettings Plans allow prioritisation of adapted and accessible homes for applicants with mobility or access needs.<br><br>The Transfer Policy allows management moves where a tenant is unsafe due to disability-related harassment or risk, supported by evidence from social care or health professionals.<br><br>There is potential for people with disabilities to be disadvantaged within the process, particularly those with mental illness. In 2021 over 42,000 Southwark residents (14%) recorded a disability. Southwark Adult Social Care provided support to 5,650 long-term service users in 2023/24 with the most common primary support reason was for older people and physical disability at 68%. The next most common reason for support was learning disability for the wider age range of 18-64 year olds. Therefore there may be a potential disproportionate impact of annual review / non-bidding removals on people with cognitive impairment, fluctuating conditions, or inpatient stays.<br><br>The potential to be excluded from submitting an online application or to engage with the weekly digital bidding process is high for this group with physical and mental health problems.<br><br>There is some provision in place in the way of supported housing where a resident has been assessed as suitable by Adult Social Care Services, although these services are in high demand, but single adults with a severe mental health problem may be positively impacted by this scheme within the priority categories of the new bandings. It must be recognised however, that specially adapted properties for applicants with a physical disability are in short supply in Southwark, and waiting times for this type of accommodation can be significantly higher compared to general needs accommodation. | Disability and socio-economic disadvantage are closely intertwined. About 14% of Southwark residents report a disability, with higher concentrations in more deprived areas (in parts of Old Kent Road or Nunhead up to 1 in 5 residents have a disability). Disabled people in low-income households face barriers to employment and health services – nearly half of working-age disabled adults nationally have a mental health impairment and 42% have mobility problems, limiting their incomes and access to opportunities.<br><br>Socio-economic disadvantage can therefore exacerbate challenges like managing long-term conditions or affording care, while disability can itself lead to economic hardship.<br><br>Southwark's housing allocation scheme ensures that accessible or adapted social homes are offered to households that include wheelchair users or others with impairments who need them. |

The new Scheme will also actively promote the needs of disabled groups by being designed to ensure that applicants with Severe mobility needs and/or mental health and housing needs are prioritised for accommodation that is suitable for their needs. In addition, details of all Council properties that have been adapted, as well as those considered to be adaptable, will form an adapted homes register which will simplify the home search for applicants requiring such a home.

Modelling of the breakdowns in the proposed scheme indicates that the proportion of households identified with a disability across the 2 highest priority bands will increase from 23.06% to 32.68%.

Current Band

| Disability Indicator | BAND 1 | BAND 2 | BAND 3 | BAND 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 100.00% |
| N | 2.72% | 6.19% | 49.22% | 41.88% |
| Y | 15.10% | 7.96% | 23.27% | 53.67% |
| **Total** | **3.30%** | **6.27%** | **48.01%** | **42.43%** |

New Band

| Disability Indicator | BAND A | BAND B | BAND C | BAND D | BAND E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 100.00% | |
| N | 4.55% | 10.60% | 41.72% | 0.76% | 42.36% |
| Y | 15.51% | 17.17% | 12.72% | 0.21% | 54.40% |
| **Total** | **5.06%** | **10.91%** | **40.37%** | **0.74%** | **42.92%** |

**Equality information on which above analysis is based**

**Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based**

Southwark's JSNA Annual Report 2025
ONS 2023 data
Census 2021 data
Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,
Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024
Primary support reason for long-term service users in 2023/24, by age group Southwark Adult Social Care Division
NHS Southwark ICB data
DWP data

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

Steps are taken both to support applicants in making their initial application and subsequently in making their bids so as to ensure they suffer no disadvantage, and third sector partners are trained to run bidding sessions etc. for this. Southwark Council's Housing Needs officers also support people with disabilities to move through a mutual exchange or downsizing to smaller accommodation.

Our new bidding system will be able to flag households where auto bidding needs to take place or where support is required to make changes to their account or a support service is involved. This will ensure that no accounts are suspended or removed unnecessarily. It will also help prevent any accounts being suspended after 3 refusals + CBL changes for those who need support to bid.

Through Southwark's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030, the Council will be implementing its joint housing protocol between Housing, Health and Adult Social Care in 2026-2027. This protocol will support the early identification and support required for residents to access the allocations scheme and improve the joint working arrangements to ensure residents can maintain suitable accommodation with tailored support where required.

Southwark Council, through its planning policies has developed high numbers of properties for people with physical disabilities in the Owner Occupied and Affordable Housing Sectors which provides more access to adapted homes.

The proposed Annual Lettings plan can enable the flexibility to target specific groups, following an assessment of need, which could include households with disabilities.

**Gender reassignment:**
- The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

**Gender Identity:** Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex or can differ from it.

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
|---|---|
| Southwark is the fifth highest ranking local authority in England for residents identifying as trans or non-binary. Within the borough 3,200 residents reporting a gender identity different from their sex registered at birth. Half of these used no specific gender identity term, the rest used 'trans woman', 'trans man' or 'nonbinary'. Despite having a relatively high proportion of the population with gender identities that differed from sex assigned at birth, the numbers are likely to be underestimates as many residents declined to answer the question.<br><br>Transgender residents may be particularly at risk of housing crisis and homelessness arising from transphobic reaction by family, neighbours and members of the local community. The Scheme will have a positive impact in such a situation through according reasonable preference and additional preference thereby giving a Band B priority to applications from those who are a victim of a hate crime, and/or severe harassment due to this protected characteristic.<br><br>There may be barriers experienced by trans applicants from documentation requests that are not in their current name or show a previous gender marker. This could result in some delays to assessments. | There are no identified issues from the proposed Scheme which are considered could disadvantage residents with this protected characteristic on socio-economic grounds,<br><br>However, it is important to note that research has shown 25% of trans people have experienced homelessness in the UK. |
| **Equality information on which above analysis is based.** | **Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based** |

| | |
|---|---|
| | |

ONS 2023 data
Census 2021 data
Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,
Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024
Complaints data
Stonewall – Resources – Facts & Figures

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

It is acknowledged that data on this protected characteristic is incomplete and while ongoing efforts will be made to encourage such information being given at the point of application, we must also ensure our applicants privacy. Officers will be encouraged to ensure an assurance of privacy is explained to customers to encourage completion of sensitive information.

As part of our annual training plans, theService will undertake training on this topic as well as others within the LGBTQI+ space. This will be for all staff in the Housing Needs service, and we have made sure that LGBTQ+ support organisations are part of the engagement plan for this consultation so that we have a much greater understanding of any potential impact and will seek guidance on how we can mitigate this. Staff will be encouraged to handle information sensitively and actively work to reduce barriers faced by this group when making an application.

We will explore safeguarding risk indicators when required on an account to ensure direct offers and emergency transfers are considered appropriately.

**Marriage and civil partnership –** In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couples. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples and must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. **(Only to be considered in respect to the need to eliminate discrimination.)**

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
|---|---|
| The Scheme treats married and civil partnered households on the same basis as other households, with no reduction in eligibility or priority.<br><br>Potential risk of indirect discrimination could arise if processes around joint applications, household composition changes (including separation), or evidence requirements (for example, proof of relationship status where relevant to household make-up) are applied inconsistently. The Scheme's rules and associated procedures should be applied consistently to avoid any differential treatment between married and civil partnered applicants. | Marriage/civil partnership status is not, in itself, expected to drive distinct socio-economic impacts from the Scheme. Any impacts are more likely to arise via related factors such as household size, income, rent arrears or relationship breakdown, which are addressed through the Scheme's needs-based banding and the wider housing advice/support offer.<br><br>However, some applicants may experience socio-economic disadvantage linked to relationship circumstances (for example, separation leading to a sudden reduction in |

| | |
|---|---|
| This equality information is collected by the service; however, there is a low level of customers sharing this information when completing the housing application.<br><br>There are no identified issues from the proposed changes which could discriminate or disadvantage married couples or those in civil partnerships. | household income, increased costs from running two households, or a change in rent liability). Where this results in arrears or homelessness risk, applicants may require advice and support and may access priority through the homelessness duties or welfare/medical grounds rather than through marital/civil partnership status. |
| **Equality information on which above analysis is based**<br>**Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based** | |
| ONS 2023 data<br>Census 2021 data<br>Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,<br>Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024<br>Complaints Data | |
| **Mitigating or improvement actions to be taken** | |
| There is no evidence of potential inequality as a result of the new Scheme for applicants identified as having this characteristic, and this will be monitored at least annually to ensure there are no unintended consequences from the introduction of the new Scheme. Data that will be reviewed includes register/allocations data, homelessness approach data as well as complaints/enquiry information.<br><br>In addition, the service will monitor (where data is available) outcomes for joint applications and cases where household composition changes following separation, to ensure that administrative processes (for example requests for evidence and changes to applications) are applied consistently and do not result in differential treatment between married and civil partnered applicants. | |

| **Pregnancy and maternity -** Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding. | |
|---|---|
| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
| The Scheme does not apply direct priority on the basis of pregnancy or maternity alone; each application will be assessed on the applicant's circumstances and housing need. There may be cases where pregnancy impacts the households priority, for example the overcrowding threshold, medial/welfare considerations, homelessness. For example a pregnant person who is on maternity leave may see a drop in their income and find themselves in rent arrears. The removal of the | There are socio-economic impacts relating to pregnancy and maternity arising from the lack of suitable housing, but the impact from this proposed Scheme update is neutral.<br><br>Pregnancy and maternity can be associated with reduced household income (for example during maternity leave), increased essential costs, and a |

<table>
<tr><td>good tenant award will positively impact situations such as this.<br><br>Pregnancy and maternity can, however, be associated with changes in housing need and increased risk of housing instability. There may be cases where pregnancy impacts priority through:<ul><li>overcrowding and bedroom entitlement once a baby is born (and where relevant, where a child is expected imminently);</li><li>medical or welfare needs linked to pregnancy, birth recovery or caring for a newborn;</li><li>homelessness duties and suitability of accommodation (including temporary accommodation) where a household includes a pregnant person or a newborn.</li></ul>There is a potential risk of indirect disadvantage if evidence requirements, review timeframes or communication methods do not take account of pregnancy-related health needs and appointment/care demands. Consistent application of the Scheme and reasonable flexibility in how information is provided will help reduce this risk.<br><br>For example, a pregnant person who is on maternity leave may see a drop in their income and find themselves in rent arrears. The removal of the good tenant award will positively impact situations such as this.</td><td>higher risk of rent arrears or overcrowding. Where these factors contribute to homelessness risk, the Council’s homelessness prevention and relief work and advice/support offer are key mitigations alongside allocations prioritisation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Equality information on which above analysis is based</td><td>Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">ONS 2023 data<br>Census 2021 data<br>Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,<br>Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024<br>Complaints data</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">There is no evidence of potential inequality as a result of the new Scheme for applicants identified as having this characteristic, and this will be monitored at least annually to ensure there are no unintended consequences from the introduction of the new Scheme.<br>To help ensure the Scheme is implemented fairly for households where pregnancy or a recent birth is relevant to housing need, the service will:<ul><li>provide clear advice on how to notify the Council of a change in circumstances (including expected or actual birth) and what evidence is required;</li><li>apply appropriate flexibility where pregnancy-related health needs or caring responsibilities affect appointment attendance, response times or ability to engage digitally;</li><li>ensure homelessness prevention advice and safeguarding pathways are actively offered where there is a risk of homelessness, domestic abuse, or unsuitable accommodation for a pregnant person/newborn;</li><li>monitor, where data is available, outcomes and any complaints/enquiries from applicants who disclose pregnancy/maternity-related circumstances, to identify and address any unintended impacts.</li></ul></td></tr>
</table>

| **Race -** Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. N.B. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller are recognised racial groups and their needs should be considered alongside all others | |
|---|---|
| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
| The 2021 Census shows that 51% of people living in Southwark have a White ethnic background compared to 81% nationally. 25% reported 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African' ethnicities, with 16% of these reporting 'African' ethnicity and 6% reporting a 'Caribbean' ethnicity.<br><br>For the first time, the 2021 Census provided data on the number of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latin American with 17% of people in Southwark recording this ethnicity.<br><br>Although proof of identity is required before an application can be assessed, the questions on Race or Ethnicity are not mandatory and therefore often not completed. The applicant data that could be used to compare with this ONS and Census data is then sparse, and therefore not comparable. As this is a matter of applicant privacy; this is not enforced, therefore we rely on support groups and other organisations to help understand the impact of our allocations policies.<br>As 40% of Southwark's residents were born outside the UK, Channel Islands and Ireland, the five-year residential qualification criteria designed to have a positive impact for local people meeting the criteria, will mean new resident arrivals to Southwark and or the UK will not be able to access the Housing Register.<br><br>The new scheme should have a positive impact where household needs to move because of hate crime, racial harassment or violence, as applicants facing these issues have reasonable preference, and this includes for those who would not normally meet the five-year residency criteria.<br><br>With the same-sex sibling room sharing age raised to 20, this may reduce the overcrowding priority for some larger families, which can correlate with certain ethnic groups and lower-income households. Data shows that West African households account for nearly 20% of those identified as overcrowded in the Borough on our register.<br><br>However, data modelling of the breakdowns in the proposed scheme indicates that the proportion of all ethnic communities identified by our register application across the 2 highest priority bands will increase from 9.56% to 15.97%. | Over 80 languages are spoken as main languages in Southwark, with 79% of the population speaking English as their main language. The most common language after English was Spanish, which has almost doubled since 2011 and spoken as a main language by over 13,000 residents, followed by Italian (4,300), Portuguese (3,600), French (3,500), and Chinese, (2,200). Somali was the most common African language spoken.<br><br>Poor quality information could impact negatively on those whose first language is not English and of the 53,700 Southwark residents whose main language is not English, 19% cannot speak English well or have no English proficiency. |

Current Band

| Ethnicity Group | BAND 1 | BAND 2 | BAND 3 | BAND 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Blank) | 5.78% | 6.46% | 43.37% | 44.39% |
| Asian | 2.73% | 7.34% | 51.78% | 38.16% |
| Black | 2.55% | 6.73% | 50.49% | 40.23% |
| Latin American | 1.15% | 1.62% | 47.11% | 50.12% |
| Mixed Background | 2.71% | 6.30% | 48.72% | 42.26% |
| Other | 1.82% | 6.94% | 63.80% | 27.44% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 3.56% | 4.87% | 55.46% | 36.10% |
| White | 4.99% | 5.53% | 39.45% | 50.03% |
| **Total** | **3.30%** | **6.27%** | **48.01%** | **42.43%** |

New Band

| Ethnicity Group | BAND A | BAND B | BAND C | BAND D | BAND E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Blank) | 7.70% | 14.04% | 31.60% | 3.28% | 43.37% |
| Asian | 5.45% | 12.58% | 42.28% | 0.42% | 39.27% |
| Black | 4.37% | 11.39% | 42.81% | 0.65% | 40.77% |
| Latin American | 1.62% | 5.54% | 41.11% | 0.46% | 51.27% |
| Mixed Background | 4.86% | 10.85% | 41.15% | 0.72% | 42.42% |
| Other | 5.62% | 6.94% | 58.84% | 0.33% | 28.26% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 5.58% | 11.40% | 45.84% | 0.95% | 36.22% |
| White | 6.08% | 9.77% | 33.01% | 0.59% | 50.54% |
| **Total** | **5.06%** | **10.91%** | **40.37%** | **0.74%** | **42.92%** |

**Equality information on which above analysis is based**

**Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based**

ONS 2023 data
Census 2021 data
Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,
Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024.
Complaints data

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

There is a continuing need to encourage all applicants to complete the ethnic monitoring data to allow the Council to be better informed about the applicants it is providing services for, however as this is not mandatory we are engagement with support groups and other agencies who work with people with this characteristic to help understand the issues they face in applying for social housing, and how we could help mitigate these.

Council forums such as the Homeless forum and TA Working Group represented by advocacy agencies dedicated to support key groups in the Borough, will continue to work as a vital channel for the Council to receive intelligence and insight of the impacts of its allocations scheme and to help inform the development of its Lettings Plans.

We ensure that all applicants, regardless of racial group or language are given access to the same information about housing allocations with translations being made available on request. Officers are trained in how to translate correspondence on computer systems and should offer interpreters where a language barrier arises. Flags on our internal systems should note where an interpreter may be needed so that correspondence is sent in the appropriate language in the first instance.

All ineligible or non-qualifying applicants who approach the Council are referred to the appropriate support groups and public sector agencies responsible for assisting them, and this will continue.

We will monitor the impacts on family households and waiting times by protected characteristic to ensure there is no unintended impact.

**Religion and belief -** Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
|---|---|

Differential impacts by religion or belief are less pronounced than other factors, but some links with socio-economic disadvantage exist. Southwark's residents report a wide range of faith backgrounds (around 43% Christian, 10% Muslim, and 1% other major religions; about 36% have no religious affiliation). No specific negative impact is uniquely caused by religious belief in isolation; instead, challenges often reflect cultural or language factors that overlap with ethnicity and nationality.

Detailed recording of applications and allocations by people of different religions or beliefs does not take place as most applicants choose not to answer this question on the application. This means we are not currently able to identify any trends in relation to individual faith groups. However, modelling on changes across faith groups and those who identify as of no faith or undisclosed are outlined below to indicate changes in distribution across existing and new band breakdown for the proposed scheme.
We have no other evidence that religion or belief alone has any bearing on the ability to access social housing, and there is no evidence of discrimination, unintended consequences or unintended bias taking place since the introduction of the housing allocations scheme.

Current Band

| Religion | BAND 1 | BAND 2 | BAND 3 | BAND 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3.40% | 7.75% | 59.99% | 28.87% |
| Agnostic | | 20.00% | 60.00% | 20.00% |
| Atheist | 2.33% | 5.29% | 35.13% | 57.25% |
| Buddist | 5.65% | 7.26% | 41.13% | 45.97% |
| Christian | 3.11% | 5.25% | 45.29% | 46.35% |
| Hindu | 8.11% | | 35.14% | 56.76% |
| Jewish | | | 25.00% | 75.00% |
| Muslim | 2.62% | 7.80% | 52.84% | 36.74% |
| Other | 3.61% | 6.26% | 42.29% | 47.84% |
| Prefer not to say | 4.51% | 6.52% | 44.92% | 44.06% |
| Sikh | 18.18% | 9.09% | 36.36% | 36.36% |
| **Total** | **3.30%** | **6.27%** | **48.01%** | **42.43%** |

New Band

| Religion | BAND A | BAND B | BAND C | BAND D | BAND E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.79% | 12.78% | 51.10% | 3.21% | 28.13% |
| Agnostic | | 20.00% | 60.00% | | 20.00% |
| Atheist | 4.87% | 6.24% | 31.22% | 0.42% | 57.25% |
| Buddist | 8.06% | 8.87% | 34.68% | 1.61% | 46.77% |
| Christian | 4.20% | 10.65% | 37.66% | 0.27% | 47.22% |
| Hindu | 8.11% | 5.41% | 29.73% | | 56.76% |
| Jewish | | | 25.00% | | 75.00% |
| Muslim | 5.71% | 13.29% | 43.17% | 0.16% | 37.68% |
| Other | 5.46% | 8.90% | 36.92% | 0.35% | 48.37% |
| Prefer not to say | 7.11% | 9.53% | 38.68% | 0.31% | 44.37% |
| Sikh | 18.18% | 9.09% | 36.36% | | 36.36% |
| **Total** | **5.06%** | **10.91%** | **40.37%** | **0.74%** | **42.92%** |

| **Equality information on which above analysis is based** | **Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based** |
|---|---|
| Southwark's JSNA Annual Report<br>ONS 2023 data<br>Census 2021 data<br>Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,<br>Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024.<br>Complaints data | |

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

As part of the consultation, we are engaging with faith groups across the borough, and seeking to understand any potential negative impact of the Scheme on the faith, belief, religion and life choices including the way a person lives due to their religion or faith.

**Sex** - A man or a woman.

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
|---|---|
| Women are 8 times more likely to be a victim of domestic abuse than men, and there is a risk of indirectly discriminating against women if this issue is not given due regard. The impact of the new Scheme is positive for this protected characteristic where women are escaping abuse, through the according of additional preference to this group.<br><br>Female healthy life expectancy has reduced by 8.8 years for the 3 years up to 2020 with significant inequalities in access, experience and outcomes within the borough. The Scheme will have a positive impact | Sex is an issue in relation to economic status, with women more likely to experience socio-economic disadvantage. National evidence indicates women are more likely to be lone parents and, on average, have lower earnings and lower levels of full-time economic activity than men.<br><br>This can interact with housing need, including reduced ability to access the private rented sector, higher risk of overcrowding where children are present, and higher vulnerability to rent arrears following income shocks (for example after |

on applicants with severe health problems that require urgent rehousing, with this clearly prioritised. While the priority does not specify sex, women have equal access on all grounds, therefore no negative impacts are expected.

Current Band

| Gender Identity | BAND 1 | BAND 2 | BAND 3 | BAND 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 100.00% |
| FEMALE | 3.67% | 6.85% | 52.04% | 37.45% |
| MALE | 2.63% | 5.23% | 40.78% | 51.36% |
| OTHER | | | 100.00% | |
| TRANSGENDER | | | 100.00% | |
| **Total** | **3.30%** | **6.27%** | **48.01%** | **42.43%** |

New Band

| Gender Identity | BAND A | BAND B | BAND C | BAND D | BAND E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 100.00% | |
| FEMALE | 5.04% | 12.80% | 43.41% | 0.53% | 38.22% |
| MALE | 5.10% | 7.53% | 34.93% | 1.09% | 51.36% |
| OTHER | | | 100.00% | | |
| TRANSGENDER | | | 100.00% | | |
| **Total** | **5.06%** | **10.91%** | **40.37%** | **0.74%** | **42.92%** |

relationship breakdown). For some households, domestic abuse can also result in immediate financial hardship (loss of income, disruption to employment, debt and costs of relocation), increasing homelessness risk.

The Scheme itself is not projected to result in any socio-economic advantage or disadvantage on the basis of sex; however, the majority of those registered for housing will be disadvantaged by the limited availability of affordable homes. The main mitigation within the Scheme is to prioritise those with the greatest housing need and hardship, including those owed homelessness duties or fleeing violence/harassment.

**Equality information on which above analysis is based**

**Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based**

ONS 2023 data
Census 2021 data
Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,
Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024.
Complaints data

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

There is no evidence of inequality as a result of this characteristic in relation to the new Scheme. This will be monitored at least annually to ensure there no un-intended consequences from the introduction of the new Scheme.

The service will monitor, where data is available, key outcomes by sex (for example applications, banding outcomes, homelessness approaches, allocations, and complaints/enquiries) to identify any differential impacts and take corrective action where required.

Operationally, staff will continue to apply domestic abuse and safeguarding pathways consistently, including signposting/referrals to specialist support and ensuring applicants fleeing domestic abuse, violence or harassment are supported to access the appropriate homelessness duties and priority where relevant.

**Sexual orientation** - Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan; this also includes needs in relation to each part of the duty.** | **Potential socio-economic impacts/ needs/issues arising from socio-economic disadvantage (positive and negative)** |
|---|---|
| Although we have this data for the general population of Southwark there is currently no evidence that the new Scheme will result in inequality for applicants with this protected characteristic as most applicants do not complete the box on the application identifying this characteristic.<br><br>Awarding Band B priority where the applicant is given reasonable preference due to facing harassment or threats of violence because they fail within this group will greatly increase the possibility of the applicant accessing social housing. If the applicant is a social housing tenant, there is also the route of an Emergency Management Transfer.<br><br>The 2021 Census[1] shows that Southwark is ranked fourth in England for proportion of residents identifying with a non-heterosexual orientation, most frequently lesbian, gay or bisexual.<br><br>8% of residents (nearly 21,000 people) aged 16+ have a non-heterosexual sexual identity. Within this population, 56% identified as lesbian or gay and 40% identified as bisexual or pansexual.<br><br>6% of Southwark women identify as LGBTQI+ overall, though this reaches 12% within the 16-24 age bracket. 10% of male residents overall identify as LGBTQI+: peaking at 13% within the 35-44 age bracket. | There are no identified socio-economic impacts arising from sexual orientation alone within the Scheme. However, some LGBTQI+ residents may experience socio-economic disadvantage linked to discrimination, family breakdown, or exclusion from support networks, which can increase housing instability and homelessness risk. Where this occurs, impacts are primarily addressed through homelessness prevention/relief duties and needs-based banding |

Current Band

| Sexuality | BAND 1 | BAND 2 | BAND 3 | BAND 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3.57% | 7.57% | 58.39% | 30.47% |
| Bisexual | 0.41% | 5.69% | 40.65% | 53.25% |
| Gay man (homosexual) | 1.78% | 0.71% | 25.27% | 72.24% |
| Gay woman (lesbian) | 0.75% | 4.51% | 39.85% | 54.89% |
| Other | 2.88% | 6.12% | 44.24% | 46.76% |
| Prefer not to say | 4.51% | 7.51% | 45.25% | 42.73% |
| Straight (heterosexual) | 3.21% | 6.00% | 46.90% | 43.89% |
| **Total** | **3.30%** | **6.27%** | **48.01%** | **42.43%** |

[1] Source: ONS 2023. Census 2021 - Sexual orientation, England and Wales

New Band

| Sexuality | BAND A | BAND B | BAND C | BAND D | BAND E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5.05% | 13.20% | 48.95% | 3.08% | 29.72% |
| Bisexual | 5.69% | 6.91% | 34.15% | | 53.25% |
| Gay man (homosexual) | 2.14% | 2.49% | 22.78% | | 72.60% |
| Gay woman (lesbian) | 2.26% | 7.52% | 35.34% | | 54.89% |
| Other | 5.76% | 13.67% | 33.45% | 0.72% | 46.40% |
| Prefer not to say | 7.15% | 12.32% | 36.66% | 0.66% | 43.21% |
| Straight (heterosexual) | 4.89% | 10.49% | 39.65% | 0.30% | 44.66% |
| **Total** | **5.06%** | **10.91%** | **40.37%** | **0.74%** | **42.92%** |

**Equality information on which above analysis is based**

**Socio-economic data on which above analysis is based**

ONS 2023 data
Census 2021 data
Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register,
Allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024.
Complaints data

**Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken**

It is acknowledged that data on applicants' sexual orientation is incomplete and while ongoing efforts will be made to encourage such information being given at the point of application, we must also ensure our applicants privacy.

As part of our annual training plans, the Service will undertake training on this topic as well as others within the LGBTQI+ space and trauma informed care. and we have made sure that LGBTQI+ support organisations are part of the engagement plan for this consultation so that we have a much greater understanding of any potential impact and will seek guidance on how we can mitigate this.

Staff will be reminded to offer assurance of confidentiality and explain why equality monitoring data is collected, and to signpost/referral to relevant support services where an applicant indicates safety concerns related to sexual orientation

We will track cases as part of our reviews of the impact of the scheme that fall within this group to see outcomes. As well as monitoring complaints that reference discrimination/safety concerns relating to sexual orientation.

## Human Rights

There are 16 rights in the Human Rights Act. Each one is called an Article. They are all taken from the European Convention on Human Rights. The Articles are The right to life, Freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, Freedom from forced labour , Right to Liberty, Fair trial, Retrospective penalties, Privacy, Freedom of conscience, Freedom of expression, Freedom of assembly, Marriage and family, Freedom from discrimination and the First Protocol

| **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan** |
|---|
| Of the articles within the Human Rights Act we consider that the Scheme could potentially impact on:<br>• **Article 8** (private and family life, home) – impacts via evidence collection, data-sharing, home visits, and decisions affecting stability of home/family life.<br>• **Article 14** (non-discrimination) – applied *in connection with* Article 8 and/or Protocol rights.<br><br>However, we have mitigations in place as detailed in the sections above, to ensure that this does not happen. We do not consider the scheme has any direct impact on the other articles. |
| **Information on which above analysis is based** |
| Analysis of the 18,500+ households on the housing register at December 2024, and successful allocations made between April 2023 and March 2024. |
| **Mitigating and/or improvement actions to be taken** |
| The Council provides support to residents who need help with registering and making whilst protecting their privacy, residents should not feel isolated or excluded from the process.<br><br>Applicants will be invited to be involved as much as possible in the way the service is designed and delivered and have full opportunity to express any views through consultations, satisfaction surveys and user panels etc.<br><br>The council will only do what is lawful and pursues a legitimate aim for fair allocation of scarce housing stock. We will also ensure all privacy and data protocols are followed ensuring applicants are informed of their rights under GDPR and notices of consent to gather information. |
| |

## Conclusions

Summarise main findings and conclusions of the overall equality impact and needs analysis for this area:

In addition to the legislation and case law governing allocations, consideration has been given to the government guidance on the allocation of housing, the Equality Act 2010 and recent case law on the operation of Section 149 of that act. Overall, the Scheme has many provisions in place to ensure households within the protected groups are not disadvantaged by the Scheme.

The revised Scheme aims to ensure that all applicants are fairly and equally treated, tackle discrimination and promote equality within the assessment and allocations processes ensuring that the social housing available is allocated to those facing the greatest level of disadvantage.

The ability to reduce socio-economic disadvantage through limited housing allocations is essentially limited however, as all applicants accepted onto the register as qualifying households will be facing a potentially high level of socio-economic disadvantage, being unable to secure suitable, affordable accommodation. The scheme in itself cannot address the general lack of affordable housing and will

not meet the housing needs of the majority on the register, but the Council housebuilding programme remains strong and will continue to develop new homes and regenerate older council homes. This work, alongside the Council's own advice and support programmes to assist residents in maximising benefits, access Cost of Living Fund grants to help meet fuel and food costs, and those programmes funded by the Council and delivered by external partners aim to help those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

As the assessment shows, there may be a negative impact on children when families choose to leave the area for private rented sector housing while keeping their priority on the register, and this is difficult to mitigate until the family is successfully housed back in Southwark which could be some time, again leading to potential socioeconomic impacts until the household is settled.

The impact for those born outside the UK but have not lived in the borough for five years are signposted or referred to support agencies and groups within the borough, or social services where children are involved and the family is at risk of becoming homeless but these occurrences are rare and there is no evidence that they will increase as a result of the new Scheme.

Care leavers of 18+ are impacted positively with additional preference, and the additional preference awarded for those escaping domestic abuse, violence, harassment or hate crime may benefit women escaping domestic abuse, and those who fall into the transgender, sexual orientation, race and religion and belief characteristics.

Children in families suffering overcrowding may be affected by the amended room-sharing rule, which now expects children of the same sex to share a bedroom up to age 20 rather than 16, and this may reduce overcrowding priority for some households. Older people, and households with the protected characteristics of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity should otherwise see no material changes from the new Scheme implementation.

This analysis has highlighted the need to further develop and maintain the monitoring systems to help refine our approach to improving allocations policies and practice. We will be enhancing the monitoring systems to provide a comprehensive framework capable of monitoring the specific outcomes of the new Scheme.

## **Section 5:** Further equality actions and objectives

| **5. Further actions** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Based on the initial analysis above, please detail the key mitigating and/or improvement actions to promote equality and tackle inequalities; and any areas identified as requiring more detailed analysis. | | | |
| **Number** | **Description of issue** | **Action** | **Timeframe** |
| 1 | Undertake an Equality Analysis on an annual basis | Undertake an Equality Analysis on an annual basis | Annually following implementation of scheme |
| 2 | Monthly monitoring of the equalities strands | Update IT records to capture real time feedback | August 2026 |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |

| **5. Equality and socio-economic objectives (for business plans)** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Based on the initial analysis above, please detail any of the equality objectives outlined above that you will set for your division/department/service. Under the objective and measure column please state whether this objective is an existing objective or a suggested addition to the Council Plan. | | | | |
| **Objective and measure** | **Lead officer** | **Current performance (baseline)** | **Targets** | |
| | | | **Year 1** | **Year 2** |
| Review policy and procedures following annual EINA. Existing | Ricky Bellot | New | Any required changes implemented | Any required changes implemented |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

| **6. Review of implementation of the equality objectives and actions** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| **Annual review of policy, meeting stated aims and equalities impact** | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |