

Housing Allocations Scheme Focus Group

16 March 2022



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Housing Allocations Scheme Overview

Most recent policy
revision in
February 2017

November 2020 –
Newman Francis
Early Resident
Engagement Work

9 proposed key
areas we have
consulted on

12-week
consultation
closed on 24
February 2022



Housing Allocations Scheme Overview

Working with teams to revise the policy and communicate changes to those on the Housing Register

Multiple internal and external focus groups were held during the consultation

Internal Focus Groups
Housing Management,
Social Services,
Environmental Health,
Wider Council

External Focus
Groups
CAG Group,
Residents, Community
Groups



Areas we are exploring in the scheme

Tackling overcrowding – Lacking bedrooms and Adult and Children in the household

Bedroom Sharing – Reducing the age for an own bedroom from 21 to 17

Adult Household Members – to be included in household bedroom calculations and statutory homelessness duty

Waiting Time Points – Additional points each year for those on the housing register

16 hrs Working Points – should these be removed?



Areas we are exploring in the scheme

Prevention points

Accumulation of Points – The ability to add points from multiple different priorities together to gather more points overall

Points versus Banding

Penalties for Refusals – Homelessness duty accepted and non-homeless applications

Disqualifications – Who should be able to join the register



Overcrowding

Current

- Those lacking two or more bedrooms

Feedback

- Early resident feedback suggested an increased focus on overcrowding, and concerns for adult children

Consideration

- (a) Higher priority for households with children (under 21) in comparison to adult only households (those over 21 years)
- (b) Recognition of lacking one bedroom for households with children
- (c) Two levels of priority:
 - i.) **Higher overcrowding** = children in household lacking two or more bedrooms
 - ii.) **Lower overcrowded** = children in households lacking one bedroom or adult only household lacking two or more bedrooms



Bedroom Sharing

Current

- One bedroom for every two children of the same sex, aged up to and including 20
- One bedroom for a child of the opposite sex, aged over ten

Feedback

- Early resident feedback strongly indicated a preference for a reduction from 21 for own bedroom.

Consideration

- One bedroom for every two children of the same sex, aged up to and including 17 (can obtain an own bedroom at age 18)
- One bedroom for a child of the opposite sex, aged over ten



Household Members

Current

- 21+ year olds not included in the definition of a household/bedroom calculations (except in very particular cases). This applies to non-homelessness households on the Register.
- 21+ included, by law, in statutorily homelessness (duty accepted) households

Feedback

Early resident feedback strongly indicated a preference for the inclusion of all ages

Consideration

- Change the definition of a household, to include all of the applicant's children, or their partner's children, aged 21 or over. This will bring the Policy in line with homelessness legislation



Waiting time points - reflects the time spent on the Housing Register in 'unsuitable accommodation' waiting to be rehoused

Current

- No provision to award points for the length of time households wait on the Housing Register to be rehoused.

Feedback

- Early resident feedback very clearly advocated for a recognition of the time spent on the Housing Register.

Consideration

- Applications will receive points every year they remain on the Register to reflect the time they have been waiting.
- These points will be a % of the total points they were given at the start of their application, so higher priority residents receive more waiting points
- For example, 10% of an original award of 2000 points or 10% of an original award of 100 points).



Working points – keep or remove?

Current

- 50 additional points for those working 16+ pw for last 6 months and ongoing (672 total 557 are HML)

Feedback

- Mixed opinions for keeping or removing
- Some people felt there should be more points for carers, key workers, people working full time, people doing voluntary work and working single parents.

Consideration

Pros

- Concept of a 'reward' for economic activity
- Incentive to explore employment or training options if not currently working
- Possible way of ensuring mixed communities of working and non-working households

Cons

- Post-Covid implications, including equalities implications for particular parts of our community most affected by its impact on jobs.
- Working is not an indication of priority need for rehousing over other needs
- 'Penalty' for being unable to work
- Removal will be unpopular with those who currently have them



Prevention points

Current

- Homeless Reduction Act 2017 – duty for early intervention and prevention
- Moves to the Private Rented Sector are considered as a prevention to homelessness
- Choosing to move to Private Rented Sector accommodation means you do not qualify for the housing register (not duty accepted)

Feedback

- Residents suggested helping people move out of RBKC if that is what they want, giving people more choice in where they live

Consideration

- Those who voluntarily move into PRS at any stage to remain/ qualify for the housing register even if they move out of borough – who would have full homelessness duty accepted
- (a) Higher priority for existing homelessness households who move out of TA into the PRS than those who remain in TA.
- (b) Higher priority for those who would have a full duty accepted who choose to move to the PRS (with no duty accepted) instead of taking TA.
- (c) Both TA and PRS occupancy having the same level of points.



Accumulation of points - the ability to add points from multiple different priorities together to gather more points overall

Current

- Combination of some points possible

Feedback

- Early resident engagement revealed that some residents reported that the above can be a bit unclear

Consideration

- Residents will receive a 'baseline priority' based on their main need. This will place them in Band A, or Band B and so on. Residents will then be awarded additional points for additional needs, while remaining within their original band.
- This provides greater clarity regarding the ability to acquire additional points based on the household's circumstances and which combinations apply for each lane.



Points versus banding

Current

- Points only
- An example of what banding looks like is below:

(These are existing, not proposed, priorities)

Band 1 Urgent Need	Exceptional priority Emergency health and independence At serious risk of harm
Band 2 High housing need	Supporting health and independence Redevelopment of homes Vacating homes Supporting adoption and fostering
Band 3 Low priority	Overcrowding Contractual duties Move-on priority Homeless duty

Feedback

- 97 people showed a preference for keeping the points-based system
- 74 suggested changing it
- The issues raised most frequently, included;
 - Need for a less complex system that is more transparent and easier to understand.
 - Tailored to individual circumstances – whatever the scheme is, it should fully consider people's individual needs and circumstances.
- Some people felt they couldn't respond because they needed more information about both

Consideration

Hybrid banding (Swim lanes) with points in layers.

- Main household priority for joining the register determines which lane is joined.



Quotas – Guaranteed movement within each main priority

Current

- Separate Rehousing Plan which stipulates percentage of lettings for some, but not all priority groups.
- Points alone have not worked to ensure consistent moves across all priority groups.

Feedback

- Residents have fed back that they want far more transparency when we allocate homes, and far more transparency on `where they stand' in terms of being rehoused.

Consideration

- Incorporate Rehousing Plan by the use of “quotas” with a proportion of housing allocated to each main priority group. All the information will be found in one place in the Allocations Scheme.
- An example of what it might look like is below (percentages are indicative only)

Main Priority group	Quota of lettings
• Homeless	40%
• Overcrowded	7%
• Risk of Harm or Harassment	7%



Penalties

Current

- Homelessness applicants: Duty discharged if one suitable offer is refused. No further offers.
- Non-homelessness applicants: Two refusals in any given 12 month period, then suspension for 12 months.

Feedback

- A few people said that people should be able to decline more offers of housing without penalty.
- Some people also mentioned they weren't sure about the rules and how they would apply to them, that they felt confused and were worried about being penalised for declining an offer.

Consideration

- Remove all sanctions except for those who have a homelessness duty accepted.
- Non-homelessness residents will be free to decline property offers.



Disqualifications – who cannot join the register

Current

Multiple criteria including:

- supplying false or misleading information;
- paying money to obtain a tenancy;
- convictions or legal action for violence or harassment of all kinds;
- deliberate overcrowding; moving to property unsuitable for existing disability;
- disposing of financial assets and resources.

Feedback

Mixed feedback – no clear steer.

- Most of the more detailed responses suggest that the main priority of tenants is that tenancies should be applied for and awarded fairly, that officers should try harder to understand their applicants, but that swifter, more decisive action was needed to deter antisocial behaviours.

Consideration

- Tighter definitions.
- A **scoring system for anti-social behaviour** with strict guidelines defining who will or will not be disqualified from the register for what level of anti-social behaviour.
- A stronger definition of what providing false or misleading information should include, for example failing to provide relevant information, hiding material facts, or lying.

