

# Appendix 4: Update 2 - Harrow Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme

## Summary of the major changes from the old Lettings and Transfer scheme (last amended October 2008)

The *Localism Act* affects how the council decides who should be offered public rented housing (i.e. council and housing association homes). One of the most important changes we want to make is to reduce the time that people needing such housing have to wait. As we can't increase the supply of available accommodation, the only way we can achieve this is to reduce the number of people we aim to house. We will do this by defining much more clearly the characteristics of those people whose needs could best be met by an allocation of public rented housing, in a way that the council considers to be fair to all those who seek such an allocation. Below we summarise the main ways in which the new scheme sets out to achieve that goal.

No.	Subject	Old scheme	New scheme	Para no.
1	<b>Number of priority bands</b>	There are currently 4 bands: <b>A, B, C and D.</b>	There will be 5 bands: <b>A*, A, B, C, and D.</b> See below for an explanation of the new bands	
1a	<b>Definition of band A*</b>	A. Emergencies, some homeless cases & high priority underoccupiers	Emergencies and <i>all</i> underoccupiers (see line 12 below).	
1b	<b>Definition of band A</b>	B Urgent cases, accepted homeless in non self contained hostel accommodation and B & B, and lower priority underoccupiers	Urgent and high priority band comprises homeseekers and transfers with an overcrowding (see line 3 below), medical (see line 4 below) or welfare need (see line 13 below) to move. It also includes: (i) working age underoccupiers who need to downsize because of the benefit penalty, (ii) accepted homeless and previously accepted homeless who have taken a qualifying offer, and who are in low paid employment or volunteering, suffering financial hardship in temporary accommodation.	
1c	<b>Definition of band B</b>	C. Those legally entitled to "reasonable preference", i.e. homeless, medical or welfare need and overcrowded families.	Hardship band comprises accepted homeless who are not working, some working families, and older residents who would benefit from a move to sheltered housing but who do not have a high medical or welfare need.	

Harrow Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme

No.	Subject	Old scheme	New scheme	Para no.
1d	<b>Definition of band C</b>	New band. No equivalent	This is now the reduced preference band for various types of case which would otherwise have a right to priority, such as those who have refused 2 offers of suitable accommodation (including private rented accom) or those found to be intentionally homeless.* Given the lower numbers in bands A*, A and B under the new scheme it is possible that some band C applicants may get an offer if they wait long enough. *Intentionally homeless households may be excluded from the housing register entirely.	
1e	<b>Band D</b>	D. Applicants who were assessed as having no housing need were advised of the unlikelihood of ever receiving a Locata offer and, if they insisted on their right to join the register, placed in band D. (This includes working families struggling to pay high private sector rents but who are not overcrowded)	Applicants who are assessed as having no housing need, and so stand no chance of being housed through Locata, will no longer be able to bid on Locata. They will remain in band D and will be able to get helpful advice about their housing issues on the Locata targeted housing options website at <a href="http://www.locata.org.uk/harrow">www.locata.org.uk/harrow</a> .	
2	<b>Overcrowding – maximum no. of bedrooms</b> allocated to each family member	The room occupation standard was a compromise between the standards operated by the different west London Locata partners in 2002. The standard is in most respects more generous than the national standard.	The national <i>bedroom standard</i> will be used, except that adult family members (age 21+) will not count towards the overall bedrooms needed unless they care for a family member with a disability or require care themselves.	
3	<b>Overcrowding – priority to move</b>	If families are 1 bedroom short they receive band C priority.	Only families with school-age children who are 2 bedrooms short will receive priority.	

**Harrow Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme**

No.	Subject	Old scheme	New scheme	Para no.
4	<b>Medical need – priority to move</b>	Band C – if current housing adversely affects the physical or mental health of one or more household members. Band B – if there is a <i>major</i> adverse effect or multiple need. Band A – if there is extreme multiple need or life and death medical need to move.	Only those whose current housing conditions are having a <i>major</i> adverse effect on their medical condition or disability (or that of a member of their household), including major multiple needs and life and death cases will meet the new definition of medical need to move.	
5	<b>Homelessness – long term duty</b>	A large proportion of our available housing goes to people who, having been made homeless many years before, have waited in priority band C in “temporary accommodation” (TA) for years rather than settling into suitable private rented accommodation.	If people become homeless, we'll find a suitable private rented home and discharge our homelessness duty, so that they no longer have preference for general needs public rented housing.	
6	<b>Homelessness – those accommodated in emergency housing</b>	Those to whom the council accepts a homelessness duty who are in hostel or bed and breakfast get band B until an offer of TA or public rented housing can be made.	Those to whom the council has accepted a homelessness duty but who are unsuitably accommodated, either in hostels, bed and breakfast or private sector housing, will have reasonable preference (band C), not additional preference (band B), pending finding suitable longer term accommodation.	
7	<b>Working families</b>	No recognition was given to whether or not people were working when allocating public rented housing.	The new scheme gives priority to households who are in low-paid work and who have school age children. If such a household is also overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms or is homeless they will receive extra priority.	

**Harrow Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme**

No.	Subject	Old scheme	New scheme	Para no.
8	<b>Community contribution</b>	No recognition was given to whether or not people were making a contribution to the Harrow community through their volunteering activities.	The new scheme gives priority to households who volunteer for an approved organisation for at least [16] hours per week. If such a household is also overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms or is homeless they will receive extra priority	
9	<b>Ex-members of the armed forces</b>	No recognition was given to whether or not people had served in the armed forces prior to applying for housing in Harrow.	People who have served in the regular armed forces within 5 years of making a housing application, if they already qualify for reasonable preference (such as medical need or homelessness) <i>and</i> they have an urgent housing need, will receive additional preference.	
10	<b>Not resident in Harrow</b>	Everyone had a right to apply to join the housing register, whether or not they had a local connection to Harrow or lived in the borough and, if they were homeless, overcrowded or had medical need, they would be entitled to band C.	People who live outside Harrow will no longer be able to join the housing register (with certain exceptions such as existing Harrow social care clients).	
11	<b>Older people needing sheltered accommodation</b>	Most people over 60 are placed in band C, the only exceptions being those with a very urgent medical need and those who are moving as underoccupiers, who get higher banding.	Those older people with a medical or welfare need that meets the threshold for emergency priority under the scheme will be placed in band A and for urgent priority in band B. Others who are assessed as likely to benefit from the support offered in sheltered housing will be placed in band C.	

**Harrow Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme**

No.	Subject	Old scheme	New scheme	Para no.
12	<b>Underoccupiers</b>	Underoccupiers requiring one bedroom or giving up two bedrooms (e.g. a 4 to 2 bed move) get band A, others get band B.	Under the new scheme all underoccupiers will be placed in band A or A*, but it is anticipated that a few more properties may need to be allocated outside Locata, in cases where an underoccupier is prepared to give up a particularly large or rare type of home but is not the one who has been waiting longest.	
13	<b>Eligibility</b> – No change	The rules on the eligibility for housing allocation of “ <i>persons from abroad</i> ” have not changed, and are set nationally by the government.		
14	<b>Welfare need to move</b> – No change	The new scheme does not reduce or take away the priority of people with a strong welfare need to move (for example local authority care leavers). The Housing Service will continue to work closely with both Adults’ and Children’s Services to make sure that the most vulnerable people continue to receive high priority for public rented housing.		

We estimate that well over 95% of new lettings (excluding HousingMoves transfers) will go to households who have lived in Harrow for at least 5 years.

<b>Possible effects on housing register numbers of the proposed changes</b>		
Band and reason Waiting time in A – less than 3 mths Waiting time in B – less than 1 year Waiting time in C – between 3 and 12 years depending on no. of bedrooms needed	Numbers on current housing register (Figures for “live” Locata applications – i.e. not under offer – as at 09/01/12)	Estimated numbers with the proposed changes to housing register – aim is to reduce waiting time in band B so that no-one waits more than 3 years
A – homeless	1	1
A – medical	1	1
A – release adapted property (transfers only)	1	1
A – emergency management transfer & DV reciprocals	5	5
A – severe social hardship	1	1
A – underoccupation transfers	26	26
<b>Total band A (now A*)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>
B – homeless	10	0 (these would move to band C)
B – medical	63	80 (some former band C medicals would be reassessed as A)
B – non statutory successor (transfers only)	1	1
B – statutorily overcrowded (transfers only)	3	3
B – severely overcrowded	0	107 (estimate that a tenth of band C unsatisfactory housing cases would qualify)
B – release supported housing & move on quotas	7	7
B – social hardship	12	12
B – underoccupation transfers	24	24
B – working households with a reasonable preference	0 – not currently a priority	Estimate 30 from existing band C homeless groups
<b>Total band B (now band A)</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>263</b>
C – homeless	301	311 (includes former band B)
C – former homeless taken qualifying offer	192	192
C – medical	125	0
C – unsatisfactory housing conditions (mostly people who are short of 1-bedroom)	1078	0
C – elderly sheltered	103	103
C – working households with no other reasonable preference	0 – not currently a priority	100 (guesstimate)
<b>Total band C (now band B)</b>	<b>1799</b>	<b>705</b>

**Gainers and Losers (nos. calculated from Locata as at 27/03/12)**

**Only bands A to C have been taken into account.**

	Gain	Est no	Lose	Est no
Underoccupiers moving to 2 bed & only giving up 1 bedroom	Move from band B to band A*	32		
Overcrowded families – new measure will be bedroom standard, no bedroom for over 21s in household unless they are carers or being cared for.	If 2 bedrooms or more overcrowded will move from band C to band B.	139***	If only 1-bed overcrowded will lose their priority if this is their only housing need	900
<b>To be continued</b>				

**Unsatisfactory conditions and overcrowding non-homeless (total of 1,094\*) – effect of changing to 2 bedrooms short of the bedroom standard (but without any disregard for children aged 21+) so that 1 bedroom short no longer qualifies for priority**

Current bedrooms occupied	Bedroom standard	numbers	Priority retained (+) lost (-)
0	1	7	-
0	2	53	+
0	3	8	+
0	4	2	+
1	1	3	-
1	2	310	-
1	3 or 4	31	+
2	2	114	-
2	3	304	-
2	4	24	+
3	2	12	-
3	3	70	-
3	4	109	-
3	5 or 6	19	+
4	2	1	-
4	3	4	-
4	4	11	-
4	5	7	-
4	6	2	+
5	4 or 5	3	-
Total of families losing priority because not 2 bedrooms short**			955
Total of families retaining priority because 2 bedrooms short			139

**Footnotes**

\* 40 families with a 2+ bed need had no current bedrooms input on the system – I am chasing info on these and they haven't been counted above.

\*\* Some of these families may retain priority for unsatisfactory conditions other than overcrowding or in combination with being 1 bedroom short or in combination with medical factors. In addition, some will have the chance to gain new employment or volunteering priority.

\*\*\* Because the 21+ household members have not yet been calculated this is likely to be an overestimate.

**Accepted Homeless (total of 293) – effect of changing to the bedroom standard (but without any disregard for children aged 21+)**

Current bed need on Locata	Bedroom standard	numbers	Bedroom gain (+) loss (-) status quo (=)
1	1	1	=
2	2	59	=
2	3	3	+
3	2	13	-
3	3	87	=
3	4	7	+
4	3	24	-
4	4	44	=
4	5	6	+
5	3	1	-
5	4	14	-
5	5	17	=
5	6	3	+
6	4	2	-
6	5	6	-
6	6	4	=
6	8	1	+
7	8	1	+
Total of families losing 1 or more bedrooms from entitlement			60
Total of families gaining 1 or more bedrooms in entitlement			21
Total families whose bedroom entitlement is unaffected			212

**Formerly Accepted Homeless who took a qualifying offer (total of 191) – effect of changing to the bedroom standard (but without any disregard for children aged 21+)**

Current bed need on Locata	Bedroom standard	numbers	Bedroom gain (+) loss (-) status quo (=)
2	2	32	=
2	3	1	+
3	2	10	-
3	3	94	=
3	4	3	+
3	5	1	+
4	3	13	-
4	4	19	=
4	5	1	+
5	4	6	-
5	5	5	=
5	6	1	+
6	5	2	-
6	6	2	=
6	7	1	+
Total of families losing 1 or more bedrooms from entitlement			31
Total of families gaining 1 or more bedrooms in entitlement			8



Total families whose bedroom entitlement is unaffected	152
--	-----

**Medical, unsatisfactory conditions and overcrowding non-homeless (total of 1,248) – effect of changing to the bedroom standard (but without any disregard for children aged 21+)**

Current bed need on Locata	Bedroom standard	numbers	Bedroom gain (+) loss (-) status quo (=)
1	1	23	=
2	2	478	=
2	3	5	+
3	2	99	-
3	3	367	=
3	4	4	+
4	3	82	-
4	4	126	=
4	5	6	+
5	3	2	-
5	4	30	-
5	5	19	=
5	6	1	+
6	5	4	-
6	6	1	=
6	7	1	+
Total of families losing 1 or more bedrooms from entitlement			217
Total of families gaining 1 or more bedrooms in entitlement			17
Total families whose bedroom entitlement is unaffected			1014