

Royal Borough of Greenwich **Allocations Scheme**



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Section 1: Introduction

Greenwich Council is responsible for allocating Council and Housing Association homes to people who are in housing need. The law requires all allocations or 'lettings' to be carried out according to an 'allocation scheme' which meets the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (Part 6), as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. This means having a published policy setting out the Council's priorities and procedures for allocating homes.

The scheme explains who can join the Council's housing register, the way in which homes are allocated and the rules we follow to make decisions about housing applications.

The Allocations Scheme was agreed by Greenwich Council in September 2002.

Amendments were made by Council Cabinet on March 21st 2006.

A summary version of this document called 'Who Gets Housed' is available in a booklet, on the Council's website, in accessible picture format, large print, audio tape or other format on request. Information is also available in community languages on request or via the Council's website.

For more information or advice about the scheme contact:

The Access & Allocations Service
3rd Floor, The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street
London SE18 6HQ

Telephone: 020 8921 2941

Section 2: The Legal Framework: Allocation Priorities

This section explains how the Council meets the principal legal requirements for allocation schemes, as set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended.

2.1 Definition of an 'allocation'

An allocation is the selection of a person to be a tenant of a Council property, or nomination to Registered Provider (RP), also known as a housing association. It includes moves by existing Council or RP tenants, which are known as 'transfers'.

2.2 Reasonable Preference

The Council must provide 'reasonable **preference**' to certain applicants in housing need.

2.2.1 What is 'reasonable preference'?

Reasonable preference means providing certain applicants with an **advantage** or **head start** compared to other applicants who do not have reasonable preference according to the law. Reasonable preference is usually described as '**priority**' within the Council's scheme.

Reasonable preference must be given to:

- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including disability
- 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 others.

The Council does not have to provide the same advantage to all categories of reasonable preference. The allocations scheme is there to meet local needs and housing demand, as well as the requirements of the law.

2.2.2 How does the Council provide 'reasonable preference'?

The scheme provides reasonable preference to the above applicants in two ways:

- **Through the banding scheme** (see 2.3 below). Most applicants with reasonable preference are placed in the 'priority bands' A and B. More offers of housing are made to these bands, so applicants in these bands have an advantage.

- **Through backdating of registration or priority date.** Applicants are housed in date order from when they received priority, or were first registered. Reasonable preference may be provided by using an earlier date.

2.3 Bands and Priorities

The Housing list is divided into three Bands: A, B and C reflecting whether an applicant has reasonable preference and local priority for housing and if so, how much.

Band A is for applicants with reasonable preference because of unsatisfactory housing conditions, who the Council has a need to house:

- Tenants whose homes are being demolished or undergoing major refurbishment work
- Tenants who are living in properties too large for their needs
- Tenants who are living in properties with adaptations that they do not need

Applicants in Band A are housed in date order, from the date that priority was awarded

Band B is for applicants with reasonable preference who the Council must prioritise for housing. Applicants are included in Band B if they:

- **Are homeless** and in priority need according to Housing Act 1996 Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Have **medical needs** seriously affected by the design of the home
- Need to move to avoid **domestic violence, hate crime, or other serious threat**
- Are **severely overcrowded**
- Live in **insanitary housing** that cannot be made suitable
- Are **leaving local authority care**
- Are **leaving hospital** and cannot return home
- Are **moving on** from hostels and supported housing provided by the Council and partner agencies.
- Are **employed by the Council** and must occupy accommodation to do their job, or must find alternative accommodation on leaving their job
- Are **key workers**, or others who must move to the borough to avoid hardship
- Qualify for housing under the Council's '**Unlawful Occupants Policy**' for people remaining in Council property after a tenancy has ended.

Applicants in Band B are housed in date order, from the date that priority was awarded

Band C is for all applicants on the housing register, including those who are in priority bands A and B. Applicants in Band C are housed in date order from the date that their application was registered.

Within Band C two groups of applicants are entitled to reasonable preference:

- People who are **homeless but not in priority need**
- People who have to move because of a **relationship breakdown and** so are threatened with homelessness, who are not in priority need.

These applicants are not within a priority band, but have an advantage compared to other applicants in Band C through backdating of their registration date by three months.

Applicants in Band C are housed in date order, from the date that they were registered.

Applicants living within the Royal Borough of Greenwich will be considered before applicants who do not live within the Borough. Out of borough applicants who bid for advertised properties, will therefore shortlist after applicants who reside within the Borough, irrespective of their date of application.

2.4 Meeting Multiple Needs

Any applicant or household, who has more than one significant need so that they are in more than one reasonable preference category, will have their application date backdated by one month. Where a household contains more than one person with a medical priority, the effective date will be backdated by one month for each additional person who has medical priority. **See Appendix I for a summary of reasonable preference.**

2.5 Additional Preference

The law enables the Council to provide **additional preference** to people who must move due to threats of violence likely to be carried out, or for urgent medical reasons.

Applicants with exceptional urgent needs are referred to a **case review panel** chaired by an Allocations Manager. If the circumstances of exceptional need are proven, the applicant is given appropriate assistance through backdating of their priority date.

2.6 No preference

The Council may remove preference from an applicant guilty of unacceptable behaviour. See 3.4 below for details.

2.7 Providing Choice - Greenwich Homes

The Council is committed to **maximising choice** for housing applicants. A 'Choice Based Lettings' scheme enables people on the housing register to find properties themselves rather than being matched to them by Council staff. The scheme includes housing

association homes as well as Council homes, and the Council is working to provide more choice through the scheme.

The Choice Based scheme is called 'Greenwich Homes'. Vacancies are advertised and applicants are asked to express an interest by bidding for properties of their choice. For more details of Choice Based lettings see 5.1 below.

The Council recognises that the demand for Council and RP housing is greater than the supply of homes available to let. For this reason, and to maximise the options available to residents in housing need, we provide advice and assistance on housing in the private sector, in other boroughs and other parts of the country. The Council also assists tenants to swap homes through a mutual exchange scheme (see 8.1 below).

2.8 The Council's Lettings Plan

The Council has a lettings plan, which is used to manage the allocations service and make sure that allocations are made to meet local needs. The plan includes estimates of the likely supply of empty property and sets out how the available properties should be divided between different groups of applicants. The purpose of this is to achieve a spread of lettings across different categories of applicants, whilst ensuring that the Council provides reasonable preference according to the legislation.

While demand for properties is high, there are still a limited number of properties that are in lower demand because of their location, size or type. Where these properties are identified, they will be prioritised for low paid key workers,

One of the purposes of the plan is to maximise the number of lettings by encouraging tenant transfers. . The Council's priority system and the use of a '**Tenant Only**' criteria for some property lettings, helps to achieve this mobility for tenants wishing to move.

2.9 Equality Policy

Greenwich Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good community relations and to prevent all forms of unlawful discrimination in the way we provide Council services. The Council's Equality Policy and Plan sets out how we will prevent inequality and discrimination. The Allocations Scheme provides policies and criteria to ensure applicants are treated fairly. Applications and lettings are monitored to make sure the service is delivered equally, and so that changes can be made where necessary. Where required, applicants and residents will be provided with information and advice about the scheme in languages and formats to meet their needs.

Section 3: The Housing Register

This section explains who can and cannot register for housing, and how the housing register is managed.

3.1 Why we have a Housing Register

All eligible applicants for housing (whether from existing tenants of the Council or new applicants) are entered on to a Housing Register, where their details are stored and used to assess housing need. The Council only allocates housing to people who are on the register.

3.2 Eligibility to join the Housing Register

There are legal restrictions on who can join the housing register. The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 says a person can only register for housing if they are:

- An existing social housing tenant
- A British Citizen*
- A EEA citizen*
- An EEA citizen who is a worker or person with right to reside in the UK

In addition, nobody who is subject to immigration control is eligible to join the housing register **unless**:

- They have refugee status
- They have Exceptional Leave to Remain which is not subject to restrictions on recourse to public funds
- They have settled status that is not tied to a sponsorship arrangement made during the last five years.
- They are nationals of states which have ratified the European Convention of Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) or the Council of Europe Social Charter (CESC)*

In all circumstances marked with an *, the person must also be habitually resident within the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Republic of Ireland)

Where an application includes people who are **not** eligible to register, those individuals cannot be offered a tenancy. However, the Council will take into account the needs of the whole household when assessing the application.

3.2.1 Definition of a household

Household members who can be included on an application are as follows;

- Anyone who is living with the applicant as a partner

- Dependent children for whom the applicant or their partner has principal care and control. Children who are subject to a shared residency order will only be considered as part of one household
- Non dependent children who are normally resident with the applicant
- Grandchildren who are dependent on the applicant or some other (already accepted) member of the household
- Foster children where long term foster care arrangements have been endorsed by Children's Services and Housing
- Parents (of the applicant) where the applicant can demonstrate that the arrangement is permanent (i.e. not short term following a stay in hospital or similar)
- Carers who have evidence of a formal and permanent arrangement

Generally, extended family members such as cousins, aunts and uncles will not be accepted as part of a household. Extended family members will be expected to make their own arrangements and will be provided with advice and assistance, as appropriate to their circumstances.

3.3 Exclusion from the Housing Register

3.3.1 Good Behaviour Requirement

The Council will exclude from the register applicants who have been guilty of **unacceptable behaviour** which makes them unsuitable to be a tenant. Unacceptable behaviour is any criminal or anti- social behaviour, or any other significant breach of tenancy conditions such as serious rent arrears.

Anti- social behaviour is behaviour that is capable of causing nuisance, annoyance or distress to any person living in, working in or visiting the neighbourhood.

The Council will exclude a person from the housing register if the applicant or member of the household:

- Has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour **AND**
- The unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to have entitled the local authority or Housing Association to have obtained a possession order, **AND**
- At the time of the application, the person is still unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of the behaviour.

The Council will not normally consider incidents that happened more than two years ago, except where the person has been guilty of very serious acts of anti-social behaviour including racial, domestic or other acts of harassment or violence. In these cases the Council will ask the applicant to provide evidence to support removal of exclusion on the grounds that they are now suitable to be a tenant.

In some circumstances the Council is required to assist families guilty of anti-social behaviour or rent arrears because of duties to protect children or to assist vulnerable adults who are homeless. In most cases the statutory duty will not be met through provision of Council accommodation. Any decisions about rehousing in such circumstances will take into account the need to protect the wider community from anti-social behaviour, and to allow existing tenants to enjoy peace and quiet in their homes.

3.3.2 Local Connection Requirement

The main housing applicant must have 5 years continuous residency in the borough at the point of application before they can join the housing register. The Royal Borough of Greenwich will undertake in depth checks in order to confirm address histories.

To comply with legislation, partnership agreements and to avoid exceptional hardship, the following groups will be exempt;

- Pan London nomination agreements.
- Former Armed Forces and other service personnel in urgent housing need, in line with the Secretary of State's regulations.
- Existing council and housing association tenants who live in the borough
- Exceptions at the discretion and specific authorisation of the Director of Housing.

In terms of partnership agreements the following groups will be exempt;

- Care leavers
- Move on from supported housing, Greenwich refuges, other specialist accommodation and
- Reciprocal requests for those fleeing domestic violence

3.4 Suspension from the Housing Register

Existing tenants responsible for anti-social behaviour or rent arrears may join the register but will have their application suspended.

An application will only be suspended due to anti-social behaviour where the criteria in 2.3 above apply, and the Council or housing association has begun a process of legal action that is likely to end in a tenant being evicted. The applicant will be suspended for 12 months after which the circumstances will be reviewed.

Tenants who owe the Council rent may also be suspended from being offered housing, until the arrears are cleared. Exceptions are made where the applicant must move for their own safety, for remedial works to be carried out, or where the arrears are not significant and/or genuine efforts are being made to reduce them. Any applicant suspended from the register is informed in writing and is able to request a review of the decision where the circumstances of their case can be considered.

3.5 16-17 Year Olds

The Council does not generally offer tenancies to 16 and 17 year old applicants. If the Council has a homeless or other legal duty to assist a young person aged 16-17, we will provide supported accommodation wherever possible and will only provide permanent housing with a support service attached. However, 16 and 17 year olds can join the register and will be able to bid for housing when they reach 18.

3.6 Joint applicants

In most circumstances adult joint applicants who are housed will be offered a joint tenancy. This is because their needs have been assessed as one household, and the Council aims to provide secure housing to both partners in a relationship. However, there are circumstances where a joint tenancy will not normally be offered:

Where one of the applicants has been guilty of a breach of tenancy conditions, or there is evidence that s/he poses a threat to any member of the household, then the Council may decide not to offer a tenancy to that person.

Where joint applicants are across generations, such as parents and children applying together, the tenancy will be offered to the applicant(s) whose housing need has led to a priority being awarded or if there is no priority, the most senior member(s) of the family. This is to ensure that properties allocated to meet need are used by the person(s) for who that need was assessed.

Former joint tenants who are left in the property after one tenant has terminated the tenancy are dealt with according to the Council's Unlawful Occupants Policy. See 6.17.

3.7 Home Owners

Applicants who own property are allowed to register but must tell us about any interest in property they have. The decision as to whether the applicant is provided with **any** preference under the allocation scheme is taken following an assessment by an Allocations Manager. The assessment takes into account whether or not the applicant:

- Could reasonably be expected to occupy the property.
- Has access to sufficient income and capital to resolve their housing problems.
- Has medical needs, or need for accommodation suitable for a wheelchair or with support.
- Is legally entitled to assistance, because they are homeless or for other reasons.

Where necessary, a financial assessment will be carried out by the Housing Options and Support Service to advise whether an applicant can afford a suitable property themselves.

3.8 Proof of Identity

All applicants must provide honest and accurate information, and are required to provide documentary proof of the following:

- Identity
- Relationship to and between all those named on the application
- Immigration status
- The property they currently live in

A person can only be registered on one application at any one time, so checks will be made to ensure this. For every person on the application we must normally see at least two of the following forms of proof of identity and proof of where they live:

- Current rent book or card (if applicable)
- Current tenancy agreement (if applicable)
- A bill or receipt (no more than 3 months old) for council tax, gas, electricity, water or telephone services
- A bank statement (not more than 3 months old)
- Details of any benefit being received that shows their National Insurance Number such as Income Support, Pension or Child Benefit
- Full birth certificate
- Proof of pregnancy e.g. hospital or GP letter
- Home Office documents
- Full driving licence

We will only register applications for housing with this ID. Original documents must be provided. Photocopies will not be accepted.

3.9 Information about ethnicity, disability and personal needs

The housing application form asks for details of ethnic origin, disability and particular needs. This information is required for the Council to carry out its legal duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005.

Applications and lettings are monitored to make sure that policies and systems are fair and do not discriminate against any sections of the community. Information on communication and language needs is used to improve our services to applicants.

3.10 Confirmation of Registration

The Council operates an on- line housing application service. On submission of the on- line application, the Council will verify the details and advise applicants within 30 working days of the following:

1. Their reference number
2. Which band the applicant is in and
3. The date of registration

A housing officer may visit to confirm the household details.

3.11 Re-Registration

To keep the housing register accurate and up to date, we write to applicants on a regular basis to ask if they wish to remain on the list and if their circumstances have changed. If applicants do not respond to correspondence they may be removed from the register.

3.12 Advice and Assistance

Advice and assistance to complete the on- line housing application is available from the Service Centres. Translation and interpreting services are arranged on request.

3.13 Home Visits

Applicants who are not Royal Borough Greenwich Council tenants will generally receive a home visit to:

- Check that the applicant (and members of their household) are living at the address
- Check the details relating to the applicants accommodation.
- Offer assistance and advice about the applicants housing.

3.14 Applications from Council Staff

If an application for housing is submitted by a Council member of staff (or a friend or relation of a member of the Allocations Service), the application should be clearly stated

If an application is being considered for rehousing, the offer and the relevant file should be referred to a senior officer for approval.

Other than the above, such cases are to be treated in exactly the same way as all other applicants for rehousing.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to advise that they are a member of staff, or No personal interviews or telephone calls should take place. Another member of staff will always be asked to do this.

3.15 Applicants seeking the Right to Buy

Where a housing applicant makes an application to buy their Council home, their housing application will be suspended, pending the outcome of the transaction. Once the purchase has been completed the housing application must be cancelled.

3.16 Ending an Application

The Council may remove from the register any applicant who does not re-register their interest, on request. Applications are also cancelled when an applicant is rehoused. Any further request for housing will be registered and assessed as a new application.

Section 4: Applicant Rights and Responsibilities

This section explains what rights and responsibilities a housing applicant has according to the legislation and Council policy.

4.1 Information and Advice

The Council must provide advice and information to housing applicants.

Information, advice and assistance is available from the Council's website, the Service Centres, and the Allocations Service. This includes advice about likely waiting times for different property types in different areas of the borough, according to an applicant's priority status.

Applicants must be informed when decisions are made about their application.

The Council will write to let applicants know about decisions made and advising them of their right to a review.

4.2 Right to a Review

Applicants can ask for a review on **any** decision that has been made about their application.

The review must be requested within 21 days of the decision being notified to the applicant.

Requests for a review should be made in writing. This is to make sure there is a record of what the applicant has told us.

- **A review of a decision to exclude an applicant from the housing register** will be conducted by a more senior officer who did not make the original decision. The senior officer's decision will be final.
- **A review of a decision on the suitability or reasonableness of an offer of accommodation** that has been refused leading to a 12 month suspension of the application, or the removal of a priority, will be conducted by a more senior officer who did not make the original decision. The decision of this review is final.
- **A review of a decision made at the Case Review Panel** will first be considered by a reconvened panel who will consider any additional information or evidence that is provided. If the applicant still disagrees with the panel's decision, a senior officer not involved in the original decision will conduct the review. The decision of this review is final.

Notification on the outcome of a review will be provided in writing, with reasons for the decision, within 5 working days of the review being considered. The decision will be either that the review is upheld or not. In reaching this decision, officers must ensure policy has been followed correctly and available discretion has been applied.

4.3 Right to confidentiality

The Council will not share confidential information provided by an applicant, except where it is necessary to do so to provide a service. The housing application includes a confidentiality clause which says how and when confidential information must be shared. Applicants should only sign and submit an application if they agree to information being shared in the limited circumstances required.

4.4 Right of access to information

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act provides access to recorded information held by public bodies, including the Council. The FOI enables any individual to see non-sensitive data, rather than personal case files.

The Data Protection Act allows access to information the Council holds about individuals, including on the housing register.

All requests for information must be made in writing (e.g. letter, fax, and e-mail).

It must clearly state what information is requested and supply details of the name and address. There is no need to say why the information is requested.

The Information Commissioner's Office is an independent body that enforces the FOI Act, the Data Protection Act and the Environmental Information Regulations. For more information visit www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk or see the Commissioner's FOI leaflet.

A lot of information may be supplied free of charge. However, a fee may be payable either to cover administration costs, or to pay photocopying or postage costs, or because of the expense involved in finding and supplying the information. If a fee will apply advance notice will be given.

4.5 Responsibilities to provide accurate information to the Council

Housing applicants are legally required to make honest and truthful applications to the Council when applying for housing, submitting evidence or applying for review. **It is a criminal offence** to knowingly provide false information or withhold information that the Council reasonably requires the applicant to give. Any applicant who submits fraudulent applications or information is liable to criminal prosecution, as well as loss of any tenancy that they have obtained through provision of false information.

Section 5: Allocations and Offers

This section explains how allocations and offers are made, what happens when offers are refused, and the rules used to decide what properties an applicant may be considered for allocation to.

5.1 Bidding for a property under Choice Based Lettings

Homes that become available to let are advertised under the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Adverts are published regularly in the Greenwich Time newsletter and on the Council's website which can be accessed at Service Centres, UK On-Line Centres and libraries.

The advert will show a photograph of the property and include information about:

- Who the landlord is
- The rent
- The sort of property it is, floor level, type and how many bedrooms
- The area it is in
- The size of household that can apply
- The band the property is aimed at

Although we try very hard to ensure that all information in our adverts are correct, there may be times when we cannot offer a home that has been advertised and the information is not correct.

Applicants must be on the Housing Register to be able to register an interest or 'bid' for an advertised property. Bidding is through the Council's website or via an automated telephone service.

Applicants will be advised at the time of registering their bid if they are eligible for the property. When there is more than one eligible bid, the successful applicant will be chosen according to registration or priority date.

Information about Greenwich Homes is provided in Greenwich Time (the Council's newspaper) leaflets, posters, kiosks in the Service Centres and on the Council's website.

We publish information about properties that have been let through Greenwich Homes, in the following edition. The information shows what priority band the successful applicant was in, and how long they had waited. This is to help applicants make informed estimates of how long they might have to wait for different types of homes and locations.

5.2 Direct allocations

Some properties are offered directly to applicants without being advertised. These properties are also allocated according to the Council's allocation scheme and lettings plan. When making direct offers the Council always tries to meet applicant's preferences for the areas where they want to live, and for the sort of property they are interested in. However, in a borough where there is very high demand for social housing and a lot of priority needs to meet, applicants in Bands A and B are expected to consider a wide area of localities and may be offered particular types of properties according to our policies set out below.

5.3 Refusing an offer of Council or RSL housing

Applicants may bid for any number of properties from those advertised, but should only bid for properties they are genuinely interested in. This is because the Council limits the number of offers of housing that it will make before an applicant is suspended from the register or loses priority status. These rules are to ensure that properties are let fairly and efficiently.

The Council will:

- **Suspend from Band C** any applicant who has twice refused an offer of a tenancy of suitable accommodation that they had successfully bid for. The applicant will be suspended for 12 months and will not be able to bid again during this time.
- **Remove from priority Band B** an applicant who refuses an offer of accommodation suitable to their needs, whether the property was offered directly or following a successful bid. The applicant will be able to bid again in Band C, but will lose their priority band status.
- **End homelessness assistance** to a homeless applicant where they have refused an offer of suitable Council or RSL accommodation. If a homeless applicant refuses suitable housing, whether offered directly or following a successful bid, the Council has 'discharged its homelessness duty' to that applicant. This means that the homeless duty has been brought to an end by the offer of suitable accommodation. If the applicant is living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council then they will lose that accommodation and be provided with no further assistance.

5.4 Nominations to Registered Providers (RPs) or Housing Associations

Greenwich Council works in partnership with RPs, also known as Housing Associations to provide social housing. Applicants to the housing register are asked if they are willing to accept nomination to an RPs, as an offer of permanent accommodation. RP properties are also included in the Greenwich Homes scheme. Applicants are encouraged to consider RPs as well, so that they have a wider choice of property available to them.

Applicants are selected for nomination using the same criteria as for lettings to Council property. However some associations have particular criteria that may also need to be met. These may include a prohibition on nominations of tenants with significant rent arrears, even where the applicant is in a priority housing group. Anyone nominated to an association will be notified in writing and their application will be suspended until the result of the nomination is known. If the nomination is successful the housing application will be cancelled when the tenancy start date is confirmed. If the nomination is unsuccessful the application can either be re-instated or if the nomination was to a priority applicant, the priority can be removed. If this occurs, the applicant has the right to have the decision reviewed.

5.5 Exclusions from the Choice Based Scheme

In exceptional circumstances an applicant may be excluded from participating in the Choice Based Scheme because of risk to others. If the applicant is the proven perpetrator of Hate Crime, Domestic Violence, or other forms of violence and abuse **and rehousing close by** would threaten the safety of a previous victim, the perpetrator may be excluded from exercising choice.

Applicants will be advised in writing and will be allocated housing through a direct offer. They will not be advised about which areas are suitable for an offer, as this could enable him/her to establish where a previous victim is living.

5.6 Allocation Criteria

The following criteria are used to decide what size and type of property each applicant may be considered for, with the aim of making best use of available housing to meet need.

5.6.1 Dwelling occupancy

The following schedule is used to decide how many adults and children may occupy a property that is advertised or offered direct to an applicant. There are different rules for adapted property and through the Under Occupation Incentive Scheme.

Property Type	No. Bedrooms	Min number children	Min number people
House	2	1	2
	3	2	3
	3 bed parlour	3	4
	4	4	5
Flat/Maisonette	2	0	2
	3	0	3
	4	0	5

5.6.2 Property types

The following rules are used to allocate properties to applicants in Bands A, B and C, to make sure the Council makes best use of housing stock to meet needs.

- Two children (whatever gender) under 10 years old can share a bedroom.
- Two children (same gender) under 16 years old can share a bedroom (unless the age gap is over 10 years).
- Two children of opposite gender where at least one is 10 years old or over need a bedroom each.
- Each person over 16 years old needs their own bedroom
- A couple and lone parents need one bedroom
- Expected babies are counted as a person from the six month of pregnancy.
- Houses are allocated to a household with children (aged 15 or less).

Only RBG tenants who currently occupy houses in bands A and B, will be considered for rehousing to another house. All other priority applicants will be considered for flats or maisonettes.

Note: There are separate Allocations Policies for applicants with priority from regeneration areas.

5.6.3 Like for Like Moves

Council tenants housed through priority Bands A & B, are generally offered a similar **type** of property to that they currently occupy, of the size they require. This is because rehousing is being offered to meet safety or other needs, rather than to provide more desirable housing. Tenants, who want to move to improve the quality of their accommodation, must do so through Band C, where applicants are housed in date order.

5.7 Access and Care of Children

Applicants may only include children who live with them permanently. Children who live permanently elsewhere, or where there are contact arrangements rather than a residence order may not be included for any lettings purpose.

If there is a joint residence order whereby children reside equally between two parents/carers, then a decision will be required on the size of property that each party is eligible for. In reaching a decision, the Council is entitled to take into account:

- Whether the residence order reflects the reality of current living arrangements.
- The extent to which there will be over crowding or under occupation.

The extent of any under occupation (i.e. by how many bedrooms) and the demand for this size of property will be relevant.

Where there has been a change in contact and residency arrangements, proof is required before it can be taken into account (such as confirmation from a social worker, or solicitor). In the absence of any court or other evidence, the person who is receiving child benefit will normally be assumed to be the person with whom the child is living.

5.8 Foster Carers

Where it is supported by Social Services, fostered children, either actual or potential, will be taken into account in deciding on property size eligibility.

5.9 Intra-Estate Transfers

Special provisions are applied to properties on Barnfield, Walpole, and River Heights estates. The aim is to encourage stability and sustainability by encouraging tenants to remain on the estate. Where possible, all flats and maisonettes should be offered first to someone already living on that estate. Houses are not included in the scheme. The usual dwelling occupancy rules apply.

Particular properties can be excluded from the scheme if required for an urgent case or if there is no tenant on the estate who is interested.

Property in this scheme will be included in the advertising scheme, where the residential requirements will be explained.

5.10 Waiting Times

The amount of time any applicant will wait depends on a number of factors. These include the date of an applicant's registration, the priority s/he has and the number of properties of different types and sizes that become available for letting. As demand is much greater than the supply, most property is let to applicants who are in one of the priority categories.

The Council publishes information about its lettings in Greenwich Time, the Council's publication and on the Internet. This shows the date of registration of the applicants who have been housed and provides a good indication of the waiting times for different property types, sizes and areas.

Section 6: Assessing Applications and Awarding Priority

This section explains how assessments are carried out to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly, according to Council policy.

6.1 Initial assessment

On registration of an application further action is usually required to assess a person's needs, before deciding which band(s) an applicant is placed in, and the date of registration/priority that is awarded. An initial assessment will identify what referrals or investigations are required before any decisions are reached.

6.2 Case Review Panel

A regular case review panel of at least three Allocations Managers makes decisions about the following:

- **Emergency transfer requests** – Where a tenant requires rehousing due to domestic violence, hate crime or other serious threat. If the need for priority is proven to the panel, the applicant will be placed in Band B.
- **Additional Preference** – Where any applicant requires emergency assistance in exceptional circumstances, to prevent violence or due to extraordinary medical need. This includes rehousing required to protect a child from harm, as assessed by Children's Services.

All Case Review Panel decisions are based on written information and evidence provided and reasons for decisions are recorded. The applicant will be advised of the decision, or of any further information required, in writing. In every case, applicants will be contacted within three days of the panel meeting with details of the decision, the reasons for it and any conditions attached to it.

6.3 Assessment of emergency transfers and additional preference

Tenants requesting a transfer to avoid domestic violence hate crime or other serious threat must contact their Housing Officer or housing association (if they are a tenant). Non tenants should contact the Housing Options and Support Service at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street.

The officer managing the case will get the information from all relevant sources such as the police, social services and support agencies and present this information to a local panel chaired by the manager. The local panel may decide:

- Rehousing is not the best way to assist the person, or the person does not fit the criteria for rehousing based on their circumstances. Alternative ways to assist the

person will be offered as appropriate. The tenant will be informed of the decision in writing, and be given the right to a review.

- A referral to the Multi Agency Domestic Violence Case Panel (see 6.4.2) is necessary before a decision can be reached. This panel will then make recommendations to the Case Review Panel based upon evidence and information provided by agencies.
- The applicant's circumstances are such that they should be referred to the Case Review Panel, where a decision can be made about whether or not priority is awarded.
- The applicant should be provided with additional preference or homelessness assistance because of serious risk of harm.

6.4 Domestic Violence

6.4.1 Council Policy

The Council is committed to tackling domestic violence and to providing safe options for people experiencing violence. Any person who is homeless due to domestic violence will be assisted according to the Council's homelessness duties, local guidance and policy.

Council and RP tenants experiencing domestic violence will be assisted by their Housing Officer or RP Landlord with advice and assistance to prevent violence, including through Sanctuary or other security measures where appropriate. Tenants who require rehousing due to Domestic Violence will be assessed according to the criteria for 'case review' (see 6.2).

6.4.2 Multi Agency Domestic Violence Case Panel

Anybody requesting rehousing due to domestic violence must be referred to the Multi Agency Domestic Violence Case Panel if any of the following circumstances apply:

- The applicant has previously applied for rehousing or homelessness assistance due to domestic violence (repeat victims)
- There are children living with the applicant and there are concerns for their safety
- The police have not supported rehousing, although the victim is known to them
- A local case panel has recommended rehousing but this has not been supported by the Allocations Case Review Panel, or the Housing Options and Support Manager
- The circumstances are particularly complex and/or involve a number of agencies
- In addition, cases may be referred to the case panel because the local office or agency would benefit from multi agency advice and information to assist them in assessing the case and/or supporting the victim.

6.4.3 Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

Joint tenants who have lost their secure tenancy due to termination by the other tenant, and the alleged reasons is domestic violence **may** not be offered a new tenancy. If there is independent evidence of domestic violence leading to the loss of tenancy, the perpetrator will be evicted as an unlawful occupant and will not be assisted with rehousing. Domestic

violence is considered serious unacceptable behaviour, such that a proven perpetrator will be excluded from the housing register.

Where domestic violence has not been proven through court injunction, police caution or domestic violence related conviction, the applicant will be offered a new tenancy in accordance with the Unlawful Occupants policy.

A proven perpetrator of domestic violence may, in exceptional circumstances, be housed by the Council. Where a perpetrator must be rehoused s/he may be excluded from choice based bidding as set out in 5.5 above.

6.5 Racial, Homophobic and Disability Harassment

The Housing Services Hate Crime Policy and Procedure is used to respond to racial, homophobic and disability related harassment and abuse. If a person experiencing hate crime asks to be rehoused, a local multi agency panel will consider the request according to criteria set out in the Hate Crime Policy. The tenant/applicant is invited to attend the panel, along with a support agency and/or friend. The Council's procedures emphasise the provision of support to victims, taking action against perpetrators, and looking at all available options to resolve problems.

If the local panel recommends rehousing, the case will be referred to the Case Review Panel which monitors local decisions to ensure consistency. An applicant who is given priority will be placed in priority Band B.

6.6 Applicants who are Homeless

6.6.1 The Council's Statutory Duties

The Council has duties to assist homeless people, as set out in the Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.. This includes duties to provide advice and assistance, temporary accommodation or long term accommodation, depending on the applicant and their circumstances.

Where a full homelessness duty is accepted the Council can 'discharge' or end, that duty in a number of ways including through an offer of Council or Housing Association accommodation under Part 6 of the Housing Act.

The Housing Act Part 6 requires the Council to provide reasonable preference to applicants who are homeless applicants and eligible for assistance. This section of the scheme sets out how these duties are met.

- **Unintentionally homeless people in priority need** are included within Priority Band B and able to bid for properties advertised. The Council wants to reduce the numbers of

people living in temporary accommodation, and so direct offers may also be made to homeless households who have not bid successfully through the choice based scheme. Applicants must identify at least 9 housing areas that they will consider, unless there are exceptional reasons. For example if there is a risk of harm to the applicant if they moved to a particular area.

- **Intentionally homeless people** are entitled to reasonable preference **except** where their conduct has established that they are not suitable to be a Council or RP tenant. A person may be provided with reduced preference where they are guilty of anti-Social Behaviour or other misconduct that would have led to them losing their home, if they had been a social housing tenant.
- Any intentionally homeless household who has been evicted by a social landlord, or who would have been evicted if they had been a tenant of a social landlord, will not be entitled to reasonable preference on the housing register. In the most serious cases of anti-social behaviour, the applicant may be excluded from joining the register (see 3.3)
- Intentionally homeless applicants, who remain entitled to assistance because they are not guilty of serious misconduct that would have led to the loss of a social housing tenancy, will be provided with reasonable preference according to their priority need status.
- **Non Priority Homeless Applicants** are entitled to reasonable preference, which is achieved by including them within Band C with a backdated registration of 3 months.

6.6.2 Bidding and Direct Offers

Homeless applicants in Band B are encouraged to bid for properties in the Choice Based Lettings scheme, and may also be made a direct offer according to the Allocation Scheme priorities.

One offer of suitable accommodation will be made. If this is refused the Council will have discharged its duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996. An applicant may request a review as to suitability regardless of whether or not he/she accepts the accommodation.

6.7 Assessment of Medical Needs

The Council provides reasonable preference (Band B) to applicants who must move because they have medical needs and/or disability, **which are seriously affected by the design of their home.** The Council does **not** just assess whether someone is ill or disabled, or how ill they are. **The assessment is of the extent to which their health is affected by their home.** Where someone's ill health is not seriously affected by their home, medical priority will not be awarded.

If an applicant's health is affected by factors that are not inherent to the home, such as the condition of the property or other factor that can be resolved, then medical priority will not be agreed and appropriate referrals will be made to help deal with the cause of the problem.

6.7.1 The Medical Assessment

The housing application form asks if the applicant has a medical problem. Any applicant who indicates that they do have a medical need, will be asked to complete a medical assessment form which asks for more information about their health, and how it is affected by the design of their home. Where an applicant, or a member of their household, develops a medical problem after joining the housing register they must let the Council know so that an assessment can be completed.

All applications involving medical needs are dealt with by the medical team who will decide which of the following actions to take:

If the applicant has ill health or disability affected by disrepair or another problem capable of remedial action, then referral will be made to the agency or service that will take action to resolve the cause of the problem.

If the applicant has health or disability affected by the design of their home, they will be referred to the Council's Medical Adviser. The Medical Adviser will assess the information and make recommendations about whether or not the applicant should have a medical priority due to their health or disability. The medical adviser works to clear guidelines issued by the Council and makes recommendations to the Allocations Manager.

If the applicant or household member is disabled and has mobility needs related to their housing, a referral will be made to the Occupational Therapist (OT) to assess whether the disabled person could remain in their home with adaptations, or whether alternative housing must be offered to meet their needs (see 7.1.2).

The medical adviser will only re-assess an application if there is new information to consider.

6.7.2 Guidelines for the Council's Medical Adviser

The Council has a system for considering large and competing demands for its housing stock and has developed a system to consider medical needs within this context. An applicant who has asked for a medical condition to be taken into account is asked to complete a form to explain his/her medical situation and how this is affected by his/her current housing.

The Council's medical adviser is asked to consider whether to give priority for housing. In considering each application the following criteria and guidelines are used:

- The only grounds for priority are that the applicant's health must be seriously impaired by the inbuilt design of their home e.g. someone with severe mobility problems who cannot cope with stairs or an applicant may need an extra room for medical equipment
- Where someone's health is affected by factors that are not inbuilt to the home, such as the condition of the property or other factors that can be resolved by investment, then

medical priority should not be agreed. The cause of the problem will be referred for a repair or other form of investment

- Where someone's ill health is not related to the home then medical priority should not be agreed
- The decision should either be to agree priority or not
- If priority is agreed in a particular case, the appropriate form should be used by the medical adviser to explain how the applicant's health is seriously impaired by the inbuilt design of their home.
- If priority is not agreed, the medical adviser should say why not.

6.8 Assessment of Insanitary Housing

Insanitary housing is that which is:

- Unfit and/or
- Lacks a bathroom, kitchen or inside WC
- Lacks a cold or hot water supply, electricity, gas or adequate heating
- The property has poor internal or external arrangement

Applications from residents who say they are living in insanitary housing will be referred to the Council's Environmental Health Officer Service, so that they can be inspected and appropriate action taken. Wherever possible the Environmental Health Officer will seek to remedy the disrepair or reason for insanitary conditions. If it is not possible to remedy the cause of insanitary conditions the applicant will receive reasonable preference priority in Band B.

6.9 Severe Overcrowding

Only applicants with children will be considered under the severely overcrowded policy. Applicants will not be awarded priority where it is assessed that they are responsible for creating their own overcrowding. They could be assessed as having caused their own overcrowding, if it is determined that:

- They have moved into private sector accommodation or other accommodation that is too small for their needs, when they could reasonably have been expected to find more suitable accommodation
- They have allowed friends or relatives to reside with them.

Applicants who are severely overcrowded have reasonable preference and are placed in Band B

Overcrowding is identified from information provided on the application form, and will be verified by home visit, or other investigations.

A household is considered severely overcrowded where the group seeking to move includes:

- 3 people in a bedsit and/or a child (under 16) in a bedsit
- 4 people living in one bedroom accommodation
- 5 people living in two bedroom accommodation
- 7 people living in three bedroom accommodation
- 9 people living in four bedroom accommodation
- 11 people living in five bedroom accommodation

A household is also considered severely overcrowded if:

- The living conditions require unrelated families to share a living room, kitchen or bathroom/WC.
- The household is statutorily overcrowded according to legislation.

The following additional criteria are applied in the assessment of severe overcrowding:

- Non family members will not be considered within the household group. Extended family members will be included if they need to live with the family to receive care and support
- In assessing an application, a second living room or parlour is counted as a bedroom.
- If the overcrowding is caused by friends or lodgers moving into a Council property, the housing officer will be informed and the application will be suspended until the situation is investigated.
- Owner occupiers are not included in this policy.

6.10 Decant and Remedial Works

6.10.1 Decant Schemes

When the Council is redeveloping a site, or carrying out substantial repair and improvement programmes, arrangements are made to ensure the rehousing of tenants.. These programmes are delivered according to specific policies designed to meet the need of the scheme and the residents. Tenants who are required to move to enable the Council to demolish or carry out major works to their homes, have reasonable preference due to unsatisfactory housing and are placed within priority Band A.

6.10.2 Other Remedial Works

The following applies where there is no specific scheme in place and a property is identified as requiring remedial works.

If works cannot be completed with the tenant in occupation or if the property is to be demolished, the applicant is given remedial works priority (Band A). Assessment of the

necessity for the tenant to move during remedial works is carried out by a Repairs Centre manager. If there are medical reasons relevant to the decision, then a medical assessment will be carried out before priority is agreed.

On completion of improvement/repair work, the tenant can return to the original property if they wish. During the works, the application will be kept 'active' and the applicant's original date of application will be maintained. Where a mutual exchange takes place from the 'temporary' address, the right to return will be forfeited and any waiting list application will be cancelled. Those confirmed to be in unfit housing by the Environmental Health Service will be given priority. The Allocation policy rules will apply.

6.11 Under Occupation

Applicants who are under-occupying a property which is too large for their needs by 2 or more bedrooms will be awarded reasonable preference and are placed in Band A.

Households will be allocated a property of a size to meet their needs. However, in the case of non – working age households and where there are exceptional circumstances, the Borough may exercise its discretion to allocate a property with an additional bedroom.

The Council operates an Under Occupation Incentive Scheme to encourage Greenwich Council tenants who under occupy their property by at least two bedrooms to move to smaller accommodation. The scheme also assists people moving into over 60's accommodation, who are giving up one bedroom to do so.

Under the scheme the applicant will receive all removal costs plus £350 for each bedroom the Council gains. See also Removal and Disturbance payments in section 9.4.

6.12 Moving from Adapted Property

Applicants living in properties that have been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person, who no longer require those adaptations to the home, have reasonable preference due to unsatisfactory housing conditions and are placed in Band A.

6.13 Move-on Accommodation

The Council works with a range of services and other organisations to provide move on accommodation to people with a medical and/or social need for housing. 'Move-on' housing is provided to somebody who is in a hostel, hospital or other institution, and requires permanent accommodation. Applicants given priority in these circumstances are in Band B, and are entitled to one suitable offer.

The following applicants are provided with move-on priority:

- Patients being discharged from hospital who cannot be discharged to their former home because of their health. Assessment is based upon information provided by the hospital consultant.
- Young Persons leaving care provided by Social Services
- People leaving supported housing or hostel accommodation provided by Hyde Housing Association, NACRO, CARR GOM, Oxleas NHS Trust.
- OPrevious Council tenants who lost their home due to being in prison have to apply for assistance as a homeless person or on the housing register, and will receive no special priority.
- Residential Staff who are employed by the Council to live in a particular property or area as part of their job or are required to vacate their property on leaving a job. Written confirmation of circumstances, are required. The property offered would be a flat or maisonette of a size to fit the household regardless of the type of accommodation currently occupied.

6.14 Relationship Breakdown

Council tenants who are threatened with homelessness due to relationship breakdown may be given reasonable preference in order to assist in the better management of Council homes, and prevent violence.

Applicants are entitled to reasonable preference if:

- They are resident in the borough and have a joint Council tenancy
- They have not perpetrated domestic violence or any other serious breach of tenancy conditions
- They require one bedroom or bedsit accommodation.

Assessment is carried out following investigation by a Allocations Officer, with assistance from the Tenancy Services Officer, and will be based upon evidence supplied by both tenants. If priority is agreed applicants will be placed in band C and their application will be backdated by three months.

6.15 Moving to the locality to avoid hardship

The Council provides reasonable preference to applicants who live outside Greenwich and need to move into the borough to give or receive support, employment or training. However, due to the shortage of housing and demand from Greenwich residents, circumstances where out of borough applicants may be prioritised must be limited. In both the following circumstances, the Council will assess whether there are alternative sources of accommodation available to the applicant, including in the private sector.

6.15.1 Giving or receiving support

The Council will provide reasonable preference to applicants who can demonstrate that:

- They are required to give or receive constant care and attention from a close relative, as evidenced by a doctor's report and supported by the Council's medical adviser.
- It is not possible for the other party to move
- That the Royal Borough of Greenwich is the only location that would be suitable
- That the 'sending' local authority agrees to a reciprocal nomination.

6.15.2 Employment or Training

The Council will provide reasonable preference to applicants who can demonstrate that:

- They have employment or prospective employment which will be lost if they are not provided with housing
- Only a location within the Royal Borough of Greenwich would be suitable and no other.
- That the 'sending' local authority agrees to a reciprocal nomination

6.16 Key Workers

The Council has a scheme for assisting key workers who need to move to the borough to take up employment. The scheme applies to:

- Teachers (referred by Directorate of Education, not schools)
- Nurses (referred by NHS hospitals)
- Social Workers (referred by Director of Adult Services or Children's Services)

Applicants must be:

- Single or childless couples
- Homeless or living outside the borough.

Key workers are placed in Band B, and made one suitable offer of 1 bedroom accommodation

6.17 Unlawful Occupants

The Council provides reasonable preference to people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds under an 'unlawful occupants' policy. This policy applies to direct family members, former joint tenants and registered carers left in occupation of a Council property after the tenancy has ended where the tenant has left or died. The aim is to provide a sensitive service to people who are in housing need, particularly following a family bereavement, but within the overall context of demand for social housing in the borough.

Other unlawful occupants who remain in the property will not be granted the tenancy but will be assessed and considered through the Housing Register (subject to the 5 year residency criteria) and through homelessness procedures.

Where an unlawful occupant who is a direct family member, former joint tenant or registered carer is resident in a Council property after the tenant(s) has left or died s/he will only be offered a tenancy if s/he:

- had lived at the property for a year and would have had succession rights if a prior succession had not already taken place, or
- was a joint tenant when the tenant left or died
- was a carer of long standing (1 year or more) and had lived at the property for a year,

6.18 Ex-Armed Forces personnel

Ex-Armed Forces personnel, who are in housing need following their discharge, will be considered as a reasonable preference category under Band B.

Section 7: Assessment of Housing to Meet Particular Needs

This section explains how assessments and allocations are carried out for accessible and adapted housing, housing for over 50's, and sheltered accommodation.

7.1 Assessment of need for adapted housing

7.1.2 Assessment by Occupational Therapist Service

Applications from disabled people who may require adapted or accessible housing are assessed by the Council's Occupational Therapist (OT) service. The OT will award Accessible Housing Need priority to people who need to move, if they or a household member:

- Is a wheelchair user (including those who use a wheelchair regularly but not all of the time)
- Has a permanent and substantial disability and uses walking aids, sticks, frame, callipers or crutches
- Is a child with a prognosis of severe mobility problems
- Has a progressive degenerative condition and the prognosis is that they will experience severe mobility problems in the near future
- Has severe breathing difficulties, requiring oxygen and/or are exhausted at the slightest exertion.

People with the following medical conditions will usually be eligible for inclusion on the Accessible Housing Need list:

- Multiple Sclerosis
- Motor Neurone Disease
- Parkinson's disease
- Cerebral Palsy
- Severe Stoke
- Muscular Dystrophy

7.1.3 Assessing priority to move

An applicant's need and priority level for a move is assessed according to criteria similar to other applicants, but with particular reference to the needs of disabled applicants

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING: BAND A - Urgent Need

Type	Description
Decant	Where vacant possession of the property is needed for demolition or major repairs/adaptations
Release of adapted or larger property	Where an existing Council or housing association tenant is giving up a larger or adapted property and wants to move to a smaller or non-adapted property
Hospital discharge	Where a person is unable to return to their home from hospital because of its unsuitability
Homeless	Where there is a legal obligation under the homelessness legislation and homelessness is expected within the next 28 days

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING BAND B - Reasonable Preference

Type	Description
Unsuitable	Property is not suitable because of disability and not feasible or too expensive to adapt
Overcrowding	Property is overcrowded
Proximity to carer	Disabled person needs to relocate nearer to carer to enable care/support to be given
Homeless	Where there is a legal obligation under the homeless legislation but homelessness is not expected within 28 days
Domestic violence	Applicants assessed under the DV procedure
Racial, homophobic or disability harassment	Applicants assessed under the racial harassment procedure
Other harassment	Applicants who have reported harassment to Housing Officer or (in the case of non-social housing tenants) the police

Band C includes all other applicants who want to move, but have no reasonable preference priority.

Applicants on the Accessible Housing Need List will be offered property identified as suitable to their needs, which has been adapted or purpose built for wheelchair users or is suitable for adaptation. These properties are initially identified by a Property Services Officer but the Occupational Therapist will make the final decision on whether a property is suitable.

7.2 Over 50's Designated Housing

The Council has a number of blocks that are designated as accommodation for people aged 50 and over. Allocation of properties in these blocks will be limited to people who are 50 and over. Properties are advertised or directly allocated according to the same priority banding rules set out above. Council blocks that are designated for letting to people of 50 and over are listed at Appendix 2.

7.3 Assessment and Allocation of Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing is for people aged 60 and above, who can live independently with support. Assessment for housing does not follow the same criteria as for mainstream housing, and is based upon a person's need for this type of housing and support.

7.3.1 Applications and Assessment

Applicants must be 60 or over although younger applicants will be considered in exceptional circumstances. All applicants are assessed in their own homes using a separate points system. Applications are considered from people living in all tenures including home owners. Assessment considers the need for sheltered housing, and whether the applicant would be able to live independently in this type of accommodation.

7.3.2 Type of accommodation

There are Council and RP schemes within the borough, including three that are specialist schemes for Asian, Black African and Caribbean, and Vietnamese older people.

Council schemes have Scheme Managers available to provide help and assistance during office hours, and when they are not on site the schemes are covered by the 24 hour Community Alarm Service.

Most accommodation is in one-bedroom or bedsit flats and some of have shared bathrooms. There are a small number of two and three bedroom flats for people wishing to share e.g. brothers and sisters, friends or couples who need separate bedrooms. When only one person is left in occupation of a two or three bedroom flat they will be asked to move to smaller accommodation, but not required to do so.

One bedroom two person flats will be allocated to a lone person if there are no suitable couples available.

7.3.3 Sheltered Allocation Policy

Applicants who are assessed as suitable for sheltered accommodation are rehoused according to the following priorities.

- Decant of tenants
- Hospital Discharge
- Transfers within the same block
- Emergency management transfer
- Medical Need
- Homelessness
- Points
- Transfer to another sheltered block

Applicants for sheltered accommodation will not be deferred or have their priority removed if they refuse an offer, but may be suspended from allocation due to rent arrears or other unacceptable behaviour.

Section 8: Other Schemes and Housing Option

This section explains other schemes that are available to assist applicants who want to move

8.1 The Mutual Exchange Scheme

The mutual exchange scheme enables tenants to swap homes within Greenwich, London or elsewhere. The scheme is open to council tenants, housing association and private tenants, but all landlords must give their consent before an exchange can go ahead. Applicants should be aware that tenancy conditions and rights vary with different landlords, and could be less favourable.

To apply for the scheme tenants must complete a Mutual Exchange Registration Form available from the Service Centres. Applicants are registered on the scheme, and can find another tenant to swap, using the Council's website. If a suitable match is found, it is advisable to visit each other's homes and make sure both tenants want to go ahead with the exchange.

8.1.1 Criteria and Conditions for Mutual Exchange

Greenwich Council must approve the exchange if it involves a Council tenant. The following conditions apply:

- The tenant must not be in breach of their tenancy agreement.
- Any rent arrears must be cleared before a mutual exchange takes place.
- Sheltered, adapted and other special needs properties, are not included in the Mutual Exchange Scheme except under special circumstances.
- Introductory tenants do not have the legal right to exchange, but may be allowed to do so if there has been no breach of tenancy. If an exchange is agreed the person would continue as an introductory tenant in the new property for the remainder of the introductory year.

8.1.2 Mutual Exchange Property Size Criteria

Applicants can exchange into smaller accommodation if they wish, but the Council will not consent to an exchange that creates statutory or severe overcrowding, or where the tenant would be significantly under occupying beyond the following;

- **1 Person or couple** -2 bedroom houses, flat or maisonette
- **2 People** -2 or 3 bedroom house, flat or maisonette
- **3 People** - 3 or 4 bedroom house, flat or maisonette
- **4 People** - 4 or 5 bedroom house, flat or maisonette

NOTE: COUPLES ARE COUNTED AS ONE PERSON

8.1.3 Tenant Responsibilities

Once an applicant has found a mutual exchange partner they should be aware of the following:

- As a tenant they are responsible for any repairs that are due to wilful damage, neglect or unauthorised alterations or improvements.
- After homes have been exchanged; there may be a limit to the repairs that will be done by the landlord. They may refuse to repair damage known about before the exchange.
- Greenwich Council will not carry out any decorations to the home and applicants will not be entitled to a decorations allowance.
- Applicants must be satisfied that the property selected is right for them and is in good repair. The Council cannot accept responsibility for any difficulties arising after an exchange.

8.1.4 Council Approval

The Council must approve all exchanges within six weeks of receipt of all necessary documents. Staff will advise applicants before this deadline to confirm whether the mutual exchange can go ahead. If we refuse the exchange, the applicant is able to request a review of the decision.

8.1.5 Outstanding Housing Applications

If an applicant has a housing application registered with the Council, this will be cancelled once the exchange has been completed. If the applicant wishes to move from the new home, they will need to complete a new housing form and their new situation will be assessed.

8.2 HOMES (Housing Organisations Mobility and Exchange Systems)

This scheme enables applicants to move to other parts of London and the rest of the country. Anyone living within the borough can apply to be nominated. A strong connection with the receiving area is usually essential (job or family). The rent arrears policy applies.

It is up to the receiving landlord to decide whether they participate in the scheme and, if so, which types of property they will include. Greenwich Council does not put houses or large family sized accommodation into the scheme, and requests for the most popular areas in the borough are seldom met. (The Homes Scheme is currently under review).

8.3 Reciprocal agreements

The Council may reach a reciprocal agreement with another Council or RP landlord to assist an applicant to move.. This involves the Council housing an applicant nominated, in return for a Greenwich applicant being assisted by the other landlord. Agreement to assist

on a reciprocal basis is usually on a like for like basis and applicants are given priority band B.

If sheltered housing is requested the assessment should be completed first.

8.4 LAWN (to be renamed Move UK)

This is a scheme that offers people the chance to move to other parts of the country where there is a lower demand for property. It means people who may otherwise have a very long wait for a home, can be rehoused more quickly if they decide to move to one of these areas.

8.5. Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes

8.5.1 Shared Ownership Schemes

Shared Ownership involves buying part of a property from a housing association, and paying rent for the other part. The proportion that is owned can be increased over the years if the resident wishes and can afford it.

The Home buy scheme enables the buyer to find a home themselves, anywhere in England, and pay for 75% of its market value with the housing association owning the remaining 25%. The 25% share is paid back to the Housing Association if and when the property is sold. All low cost home ownership schemes in Greenwich are managed through Tower Homes.

8.5.2 Key Worker Living

Affordable housing to rent and buy is made available to key workers, such as teachers, NHS staff, social workers, or police.

8.5.3 Criteria for Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes

To qualify applicants must have sufficient income and savings to secure and pay a mortgage and rent, and to pay moving and other associated costs. Applicants are given priority for available housing if they are:

- A Council or housing association tenant
- On the housing register
- A key worker
- Already living or working in the borough

Section 9: Invitations to View and New Tenancies

This section explains the arrangements for moving, and types of tenancy that may be offered.

9.1 Invitation to View

When an applicant is selected for allocation following a successful bid through Greenwich Homes, or by direct allocation, the Council will send an 'invitation to view' letter. The letter will say where and when the applicant must go to view the property. Failure to attend is counted as a refusal of an offer, so it is very important that the applicant lets the Allocations Service know if they are unable to attend for any reason.

9.1.2 Multiple Viewings

Under the Allocations Policy;

- Up to 3 applicants will be invited to view a property
- An applicant can only be invited to view one property, irrespective of whether they have bid successfully for more than one property.

9.2 Vacant Possession

On accepting the offer of a new tenancy, Council tenants **must** terminate (end) their existing tenancy and return the keys to the Council, providing vacant possession. Tenants who fail to terminate a tenancy where they are leaving the property will remain liable for rent and any damage to the property after they leave. Properties must be left empty and must not have been damaged by the outgoing tenant. Anybody living in the property that was not included in the transfer application, must make their own housing arrangements.

9.3 Types of Tenancy Offered

The type of tenancy offered depends on whether the applicant is already a tenant, and whether the property is owned by the Council a housing association.

9.3.1 Council Tenancies

Existing Council or housing association tenants moving to a Council property will be offered a **Secure Tenancy**.

Applicants who are not currently Council or housing association tenants will be offered an **Introductory Tenancy**. Introductory tenants have a trial period of 12 months in which they must not do anything which is not allowed by the **tenancy conditions**, or they lose the tenancy. Introductory Tenants do not have the right to:

- Take in lodgers
- Carry out improvements
- Mutual Exchange
- Right to Buy

9.3.2 Housing Association Tenancies

Applicants moving into a housing association home will be offered an Assured Tenancy or an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. Assured tenants have many of the same rights as secure tenants. The biggest difference is that Assured tenants do not have the right to buy their home.

Some housing associations offer new tenants an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, which may be called a 'starter tenancy'. This is for a trial period of 12 months, and can be brought to an end if the tenant does not abide by the tenancy conditions.

9.4. Removal and Disturbance Payments

The Council will make payments to assist with removal and disturbance costs where an applicant is moving according to the following criteria:

- Under Occupation Incentive Scheme
- Remedial Works
- Domestic Violence or Hate Crime Emergency Transfer

Removal costs may include:

- Removal expenses within a 15 mile radius of the present property, or to any other London Borough. If moving further away, the Council may only make a contribution to this cost.
- Disconnection and reconnection of fixed gas and electrical appliances such as cookers and washing machines
- Reconnection of telephone if one was installed at the old address, and the cost of extra phone extensions on a like for like basis
- Redirection of mail
- Cost of altering soft furnishings (curtains and carpets). Or half the second hand value of soft furnishings and other movable fixtures if they cannot be reused
- Money lost through the forced sale of fittings which cannot be used in the new property
- Reconnection of cable television, refitting of alarms and fitting of television aerial
- Extra travel expenses incurred in viewing properties

The cost of new school uniforms if a change of school occurs.

Appendix I: Reasonable Preference Table

Appendix I: Reasonable Preference Table		
Reasonable Preference Category	Applicants considered	Description and where to find guidance
Unsatisfactory housing conditions	Council tenant decants	Property required for demolition or major repairs (6.10)
	Council tenants under occupying	Tenants giving up a property that is too small for their needs (6.11)
	Council tenants adapted property	Tenants occupying a property that has been adapted where the adaption is no longer required (6.12)

Band B Reasonable Preference		
Reasonable Preference Category	Applicants considered	Description and where to find guidance
Homelessness	Homeless and in priority need	Households assessed as homeless and in priority need (6.6)
Need to move on medical and welfare grounds	Medical	Medical need seriously affected by the design of the home (6.7)
	Domestic violence	Need to move to avoid domestic violence (6.4)
	Racial, homophobic and disability	Need to move to avoid racial, homophobic and disability harassment (6.5)
	Emergency transfers	Tenants who must move to avoid serious risk (6.3)
	Care leavers	Young people leaving local authority care (6.13)
	Move –on	Move on from hostels, prison, supported housing and other special (6.13)
	Unlawful occupants	People left in Council properties after the tenancy ends, subject to policy (6.17)
	Residential staff	Council staff who must move to do their job or because they are leaving a job (6.13)
	Hospital discharge	People who cannot return to their home from hospital (6.13)
Overcrowded or insanitary housing	Severe overcrowding	Households that are severely overcrowded (6.9)
	Insanitary housing	Households living in insanitary housing (6.8)

Band B Reasonable Preference		
Reasonable Preference Category	Applicants considered	Description and where to find guidance
Armed Services Personnel	Armed Services Personnel	Armed Services Personnel and their families who are in housing need following discharge from the forces and who have a connection with the borough such as having been stationed here or family in RBG. (6.18)

Band C Reasonable Preference		
Reasonable Preference Category	Applicants considered	Description and where to find guidance
	People who are homeless but not in priority need	Households who are homeless but not in priority need. (6.6)
	Relationship breakdown	Joint tenants who must leave their Council tenancy due to a breakdown of relationship (6.14)
	All applicants	All applicants to the Housing Register

Appendix 2: Over 50's Designated Blocks

The following blocks are designated for people aged 50 and over. See section 7.2 for more information

<p>Eltham</p> <p>Tattersall Close</p> <p>Wayfield Link</p> <p>Teynham House (G/1st/2nd floor)</p> <p>Darland House (G/1st/2nd floor)</p> <p>Wooton House (G/1st floor)</p>	<p>Coldharbour</p> <p>James Newman Court – 1-47 (G/1st/2nd floor)</p> <p>The Mound – 54-73 (G/1st/2nd/3rd floor)</p> <p>Brooks Close – 1-27 (G/1st/2nd floor)</p>
<p>Ferrier/Blackheath</p> <p>Moorhead Way (2-48)</p> <p>Tudway Road (1-12, 25-36,49-60,73 –84)</p> <p>Romero Square (50-61)</p> <p>Ebdon Way (38-49)</p> <p>Gallus Square (128-139) (all G/1st floor)</p> <p>Corelli Estate - Corelli Road – 3-59a (G/1st Floor)</p> <p>Lestock House (G/1st floor)</p> <p>Dursley Road</p> <p>Wheststone Road</p> <p>Hargood Road</p> <p>Holburne Close</p>	<p>Greenwich</p> <p>Woodville Close</p> <p>Jervis court (G/1st/2nd floor)</p> <p>Armada Court (G/1st floor)</p> <p>Lockyer House (G/1st floor)</p> <p>Tom Smith Close</p> <p>Ada Kennedy Court</p>
<p>Charlton</p> <p>Barney Close(13-33)(47-69)(79-133) (G/1st/2nd floor)</p>	<p>Woolwich</p> <p>Troy Court</p> <p>Clevely Close</p> <p>Chapman Court</p> <p>Gill Court</p>
<p>Plumstead</p> <p>Alabama Street (69-93c), Plumstead</p> <p>Heavitree Close in Plumstead (flats 1-18 and bungalows 19-29)</p>	<p>Abbey Wood</p> <p>Andwell Close - 1-10</p> <p>Eynsham Drive - 130-136</p> <p>Rosedale Close - 1-4</p> <p>Finchale Road - 42-56</p> <p>Godstow Road - 19-49</p> <p>Queensborough House - 1-6</p> <p>Grovebury Road - 43-51</p>

Appendix 3: Useful Contacts for Information and Advice

The Access & Allocations Service
3rd Floor, The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street,
London I8 6HQ

Telephone: 020 8921 2941

Fax: 020 8854 7212

Textphone: 020 8921 2996 and 2657

The telephone service is available between the following times:

- Monday – Thursday 9. a.m. - 5.30 p.m.
- Friday 9. a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

Our Reception Service is open:

- Monday - Friday 9.30 a.m. – 4. p.m.