

Southwark Council's housing allocation scheme

Rules for allocating social rented housing

2025

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1.0. Allocation of social rented housing

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

- 1.1. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing following the policy and procedure set out in this Scheme including any supporting Annual Lettings Plans or Local Lettings Plans. Decisions about the allocation of social rented housing shall be taken by officers acting under delegated decision-making provisions in the Council's Constitution and the Housing Scheme of Management
- 1.2. Southwark Council is a provider of social rented housing. Information on Southwark Council's social rented housing stock and rents can be viewed on the Council's website.
- 1.3. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing, which is low-cost rental accommodation, and make it available for rent at below the market rate, to people whose housing needs are not adequately served by the commercial housing market.
- 1.4. Southwark Council shall allocate the following types of social rented housing –
 - a. General needs housing. This is the most common type of social rented housing. It can be allocated to any eligible person with a need for social rented housing, or
 - b. Supported housing/older persons housing. This type of social rented housing has special design facilities, or features, targeted at specific persons, including those requiring support, for example, housing designed for older people.
- 1.5. Southwark Council shall allocate social housing to be let at the following rent rates –
 - a. Social housing, let at a social rent rate. This is the most common type of rent rate. It is set in accordance with a national formula that takes account of relative local earnings, and the relative value for the property and the number of bedrooms it has, or
 - b. Social housing, let at an affordable rent rate. Where the rent to be paid by tenants can be no more than 80% of the market value of the property, or
 - c. Social housing, let at an intermediate rent. Often part of a specific named scheme, such as the key worker scheme approved by Southwark Council. Intermediate rent must not exceed 80% of current market rate,
- 1.6. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing by –
 - a. Selecting a household on Southwark Council's housing register, to be a secure or introductory tenant of social rented housing owned by Southwark Council, including when Southwark Council decides an existing tenant or licensee shall become a secure tenant, or

- b. Nominating a household on Southwark Council's housing register, to be an assured tenant of social rented housing held by a private registered provider of social housing.
- 1.7. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing to tenants seeking a transfer of social rented housing, in line with the rules of this Scheme. Tenants in Southwark who under-occupy their social rented housing that seek a transfer to downsize to a smaller home that meets their bed size need, shall be given priority for an allocation of social rented housing and may be exempt from some disqualification rules relating to outstanding rent or service charge arrears and earnings and savings.
- 1.8. Southwark Council shall make objective decisions about the allocation of social rented housing. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing as quickly as possible, to minimise void periods and reduce waiting times.
- 1.9. Southwark Council carries out an analysis of its housing register and the lettings of social rented housing it makes (and lettings made by private registered providers that own and or manage stock in Southwark), to make sure the needs of tenants, and households on the housing register, inform the rules for allocating social rented housing.
- 1.10. Southwark Council want to make sure tenancies are sustainable and communities are settled, viable and inclusive. Southwark Council will, in general, give people choice over social rented housing they are allocated, while ensuring the primary purpose of the stock, which is to meet housing need. When allocating social rented housing, Southwark Council shall, in general, offer households on the housing register, an opportunity to express their preference on the types of property they might be allocated and a choice of accommodation. Southwark Council reserves the right to make a direct let to manage the risk posed by some people, or to households in Band E who are not allowed to bid, or for other management reasons. A direct let is when a person is not offered a choice of accommodation.
- 1.11. An advertising system is incorporated into this Scheme. People on the housing register with the exception of those in Band E, will be able to make a bid for advertised homes that meet their needs. Southwark Council shall take preferences of households on the housing register into account when allocating social rented housing (see chapter 10 Allocation).
- 1.12. Alongside this, Southwark Council will support tenants, households on the housing register and prospective applicants to choose the housing option which is best for them. They shall include promoting a wide range of options within Southwark and elsewhere (such as, low-cost homeownership, mutual exchange, the private rented

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

- I.13. Southwark Council shall seek to make best use of its social rented housing stock. Social rented housing that is intended for households with specific needs (e.g. accessible housing, older persons housing, etc) will be allocated to households that have a need for such housing, such as a household which includes a wheelchair user who requires a specially adapted home. Southwark Council's rules for allocating social rented housing play a part in its broader strategic approach to housing, by helping to make best use of existing housing and enabling housing needs to be met.
- I.14. This Scheme sets out how households can apply to join Southwark Council's housing register (see chapter 05 Housing register and chapter 06 Operation of the housing register), how decisions will be made about applications (see chapter 07 Decisions and rights to review), and the procedure to be followed when a review of a decision is requested (see chapter 08 Procedure on a review).

2.0. Other rules outside of this Scheme

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

- 2.1. Transfer of tenancies instigated by Southwark Council for management reasons (known as management transfers), for example, due to stock investment or asset management reasons, or tenancy and estate management reasons, are not covered by this Scheme.
- 2.3. Opportunities for Southwark Council tenants to exchange their tenancy with another tenant, known as mutual exchange, are not covered by this scheme.
- 2.4. Decisions made by Southwark Council, about introductory and secure tenancies, relating to succession, devolution or assignment of a tenancy following the death of a tenant, assignment by exchange of a tenancy, transfer of a tenancy from one tenant to another or court orders requiring a transfer of a tenancy, are not covered by this scheme.

3.0. Eligibility

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

- 3.1. Southwark Council shall not allocate social rented housing to persons from abroad, who are not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing. Joint tenancies shall not be offered to any persons who are persons from abroad.
- 3.2. Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing to persons from abroad only when the law allows.
- 3.3. Southwark Council shall not allocate social rented housing to persons from abroad who are not entitled to Universal Credit or Housing Benefit (regardless as to whether such persons would make a claim for Universal Credit or Housing Benefit).
- 3.4. Southwark Council shall not make decisions about the eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing for its tenants seeking a transfer of social rented housing, due to tenants being exempt from eligibility rules.
- 3.5. Southwark Council shall inform each person who applies to join the housing register, whether or not they are eligible for an allocation of social rented housing. When Southwark Council decide a person is not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, they will be provided with an explanation as to how this decision was made.
- 3.6. Southwark Council shall provide people with a written decision about their eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing. Southwark Council shall inform a person that a decision about their eligibility has been issued, by any means or method agreed, when a person initially makes an application to join the housing register.
- 3.7. Southwark Council shall make a decision about eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing, when any person who applies to join its housing register and, again when any person who is accepted to join the housing register are subsequently considered by Southwark Council for an allocation of social rented housing. When making a decision about whether or not a person is eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, Southwark Council shall assess (as relevant) a person's (and that of their family members):
 - a. Nationality.
 - b. Economic activity.
 - c. Compliance with worker registration schemes.
 - d. Immigration status.
 - e. Entitlement to public funds.

- f. Where they usually live and where they are living when they make an application to join the housing register.
- 3.8. Southwark Council shall not make a decision about a person's eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing, if a person withdraws their application to join Southwark Council's housing register.
- 3.9. Southwark Council employees responsible for making decisions about eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing shall be provided with training about housing allocation law and practice.
- 3.10. Southwark Council shall make sure that language and interpreting assistance is available for people who have difficulty speaking or reading English.
- 3.11. Southwark Council shall inform persons who are from abroad but are nonetheless eligible for an allocation of social rented housing when they are accepted to join the housing register, that changes to their immigration status could affect their eligibility for an allocation of social rented housing.
- 3.12. Southwark Council shall inform persons who it is decided are ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing.

4.0 Qualifying persons

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

- 4.1. Southwark Council shall only allocate social rented housing to people who satisfy the qualifying criteria set out in this section.
- 4.2. Southwark Council have decided that to qualify for an allocation of social rented housing, people must be:
 - a. Capable of holding a tenancy; and
 - b. Not guilty of past unacceptable behaviour; and
 - c. Connected to the London Borough of Southwark according to specific criteria; and
 - d. Not have sufficient income or savings to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market.
- 4.3. At least one person must be a qualifying person to join the housing register when two or more people are making a joint application to be allocated social rented housing.
- 4.4. A person is not a qualifying person when they are incapable of holding a tenancy, due to being:
 - a. Aged under 18 years; or
 - b. Aged over 18 years and lack mental capacity.
- 4.5. Exceptions apply to people who are incapable of holding a tenancy agreement, when they are:
 - a. Aged 16/17 years or age, but have a suitable guarantor (e.g. Southwark Council's Children Services) that can hold a tenancy on their behalf until they are aged 18 years, or
 - b. Aged over 18 years lacking mental capacity but have a suitable guarantor (e.g. Southwark Council's Adults Social Care) who can hold a tenancy on their behalf.
- 4.6. A person (including anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) is not a qualifying person when they are not normally resident in the Borough of Southwark for a minimum of five consecutive years, by their own choice.
- 4.7. A person (including anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) is not a qualifying person when they do not have close family (defined as adult children or parents) who are resident in the Borough of Southwark for a minimum of five consecutive years by their own choice.

- 4.8 A person is not a qualifying person when they (and/or anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) are guilty of past unacceptable behaviour that was serious enough that it could have been reasonable to allow Southwark Council to grant a possession order had the applicant been a tenant at the time the behaviour occurred (regardless of whether they were a tenant of Southwark Council when the unacceptable behaviour occurred), and the persons behaviour remains unacceptable. Unacceptable behaviour that makes an applicant unsuitable to be a tenant, includes:
- a. Breaches of tenancy conditions, for example:
 - i. Having outstanding rent or service charge arrears, or property related recharges connected to a tenancy (see exceptions below); or
 - ii. Causing nuisance or annoyance (or allowing persons visiting them to cause nuisance or annoyance):
 - a) to others living in or visiting the neighbourhood of their home,
 - b) to employees (or contractors of) Southwark Council carrying out housing management functions, or
 - iii. Having an unspent conviction for
 - a) allowing their home to be used for immoral or illegal purposes; or
 - b) an offence committed in their home or nearby to their home; or
 - iv. Violence or threats of violence towards another person that caused them (an applicant) to leave the home they were living at together (with a perpetrator), with the intention of (an applicant) not returning; or
 - v. Damaging or neglecting their home; or
 - vi. Damaging or neglecting furniture in their home provided by their landlord; or
 - vii. Deliberately making a false statement to be granted a tenancy by Southwark Council (or another landlord); or
 - viii. Paying money or receiving money as part of a mutual exchange; or
 - ix. Being guilty of conduct that makes it inappropriate to continue living in their home, due to the home being part of a building used for non-housing purposes (e.g. a property situated in the grounds of a school or a public park).
 - b. Having unspent convictions or having breached an injunction for serious anti-social behaviour, for example:
 - i. Entry to a dwelling house that has been subject to a closure order; or
 - ii. Noise nuisance and environmental legislation; or
 - iii. Violent offences; or
 - iv. Offences against property; or
 - v. Encouraging or assisting the causing of serious antisocial behaviour; or

vi. Conduct causing nuisance to the landlord.

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

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

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

- a) Members of the Armed Forces community who are:
 - i. Currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces, or were serving in the Regular Armed Forces at any time in the five years prior to making an application to join Southwark Council's housing register; or
 - ii. Bereaved, spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Armed Forces, where:
 - the bereaved, spouse or civil partner has recently ceased to be entitled to, or will cease to be entitled to, reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation, following the death of their service personnel spouse, or civil partner, and

- the death was wholly or partially attributable to the service; or
- iii. existing or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to their service; or
- iv. divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence; or
- v. adult children of currently serving members of the Armed Forces who may no longer be able to remain the family home; or
- b. escaping violence, harm or harassment; or
- c. escaping domestic abuse, or are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the Borough of Southwark, having escaped domestic abuse; or
- d. looked after children owed a duty by Southwark Council who were placed outside of Southwark who are ready to leave care; or
- e. homeless, within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 section 175, and currently living in the Borough of Southwark and are not owed a homelessness duty by any other Council; or
- f. owed a homelessness duty by Southwark Council, and were housed temporarily outside of the Borough of Southwark; or
- g. needing to be nearer to special medical or support services which are available only in the Borough of Southwark; or
- h. returning to the Borough of Southwark, where they previously lived for a considerable length of time, following a period of imprisonment or hospitalisation; or
- i. intending to move into the Borough of Southwark because there is a need to live in the Borough to provide care to a relative or a need to receive care from a relative, that
 - i. would enable a relative to continue living independently and prevent the need for a relative to move into residential or specialist accommodation, or
 - ii. reduce the distance or travel time to the relative to whom they will be giving or receiving, support, and
 - iii. there is a need to give or receive support daily for at least one hour per day.
- j. a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation in England, or an assured tenant of housing accommodation in England held by a private registered provider, who is intending to move into the Borough of Southwark because there is a need to live in the Borough because the person:
 - i. works in the district of the local housing authority, or
 - ii. has been offered work in the district of the local housing authority, and

- iii. the authority is satisfied that the relevant person has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work, and the work is not:
 - short-term or marginal in nature, or
 - ancillary to work in another district, or
 - voluntary work, and
 - iv. the allocation involves a transfer of housing accommodation for that person from the district of another local housing authority in England.
 - k. A key worker in a profession or group specified by Southwark Council for an allocation of accommodation within a key worker housing scheme designated for key workers by Southwark Council.
- 4.11. A person is not a qualifying person when their earnings and/or saving and/or assets, together with those of the other main earner in the household, allow them to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market, as determined by the Council.
- 4.12 Exceptions to the earnings, savings and assets criteria, apply to people who –
- a. have a home that they could not raise sufficient equity, including through sale of the home, to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation; or
 - b. are elderly, who cannot stay in their own home and need to move into sheltered accommodation, and they could not raise sufficient equity, including through sale of the home, to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation; or
 - c. are elderly, whose home is no longer suitable for them to continue to occupy, and they could not raise sufficient equity, including through sale of the home, to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation; or
 - d. have a home that is in poor condition of repair, and continued occupation of the home may endanger the health of a person (including anyone who normally lives with them or who it is proposed will live with them) and there are no reasonable steps that can be taken by the person to prevent the danger or the person does not have the resources to rectify the problem and are not in control and will not financially benefit from the sale of the home;; or
 - e. have been deserted by the main wage earner following a relationship breakdown and may become homeless, and are not in control of and will not financially benefit from the sale of the home; or
 - f. it is probable that occupying the home will lead to abuse from someone currently living in the home or who previously lived with them in that home or elsewhere, and are not in control and will not financially benefit from the sale of the home; or
 - g. are Armed Forces personnel or their families, in relation to a lump sum compensation received for injury or disability sustained during active service with Regular or Reserve Forces; or

- h. are a young person leaving care, or a former care leaver, who is in receipt of funds paid to them as a result of compensation relating to the reason why they were a looked after child and/or as a result of experiences while a looked after child.
- i. foster carers and adopters, special guardians, and family and friend carers approved by Southwark Council (who have taken on the care of a child because their parents are unable to provide care); or
- j. are a social housing tenant under-occupying their current home (by the local housing allowance size criteria) and intend to downsize to a smaller home suitable to their needs.

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

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

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

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

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

submitted by people applying to join the housing register. Examples of evidence include:

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

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

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5.0. Housing Register

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

- 5.1. Southwark Council has established and maintains a housing register of persons who are eligible and qualifying for an allocation of social rented housing, known as the housing register.
- 5.2. Southwark Council keeps the housing register in an electronic format on a software system provided by a third-party organisation. People applying to join the housing register will be provided with an online individual user account, linked to a software system used by Southwark Council to administer the allocation of social rented housing.
- 5.3. Southwark Council maintains a single housing register for people applying for an allocation of social rented housing, including social housing tenants seeking to transfer the tenancy from their current home to another home. Entries on the housing register for people applying for an allocation of social rented housing, and for social housing tenants seeking to transfer their tenancy, can be distinguished.
- 5.4. Southwark Council's housing register contains information about each person's entry on it, such as –
 - a. the number of bedrooms required
 - b. qualifying criteria, including
 - i. Grounds to establish a local connection
 - ii. Amount of any rent arrears owed
 - c. any reasonable preference groups a person might be in, due to being:
 - i. homeless
 - ii. owed a homelessness duty
 - iii. occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
 - iv. needing to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
 - v. needing to move to a particular locality in the Borough of Southwark, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)
 - d. any additional preference a person might be given, including due to being in a reasonable preference group and:
 - i. having an urgent housing need
 - ii. being a member of the Armed Forces community (either serving or having served)
 - e. choice based lettings activity

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

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

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6.0. Operation of the housing register

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

- 6.1. Southwark Council shall put a person on the housing register if they apply to be put on it and they are eligible for an allocation of social rented housing and are a qualifying person.
- 6.2. Southwark Council shall only put a person on the housing register when they make an application to join it. Applications to join the housing register shall be made on a standard online form, which shall be accompanied by guidance that are easy to understand and in plain language.
- 6.3. Southwark Council shall notify a person when they have put them on the housing register.
- 6.4. Southwark Council shall amend a person's entry on the housing register, whenever there is a change in their circumstances, or when there is an alteration to Southwark Council rules for allocating social rented housing. Southwark Council shall review the housing register regularly to make sure information held about each person is up to date. Southwark Council shall operate an annual rolling review, contacting people on the housing register to provide them an opportunity to confirm whether or not their housing needs have changed and to see if they still wish to remain on the housing register. Southwark Council shall notify a person when their entry on the housing register is amended, explaining the reasons for any amendment.
- 6.5. Southwark Council shall remove a person from the housing register, in the following circumstances –
 - a. A person is no longer eligible or qualifying to be allocated social rented housing; or
 - b. A person requests to be removed from the housing register; or
 - c. A person dies; or
 - d. A person fails to respond to a first request and a follow-up request for a review of information held about them on the housing register, or other correspondence, within a reasonable period of time, typically 28 calendar days; or
 - e. A person fails to bid on a suitable property within a 12-month period; or
 - f. A person unreasonably refuses three suitable offers of accommodation; or
 - g. A person would no longer qualify for an allocation of social housing; or
 - h. A person has moved away or no longer needs or wants to be housed by Southwark Council.

- 6.6. Southwark Council shall notify a person when they are removed from the housing register, explaining the reasons for the removal. Southwark Council shall reinstate a person to the housing register, if they get back in contact within six months and are eligible and qualifying for an allocation of social housing, and the person shall not need to complete a new application form. When Southwark Council reinstate a person to the housing register under these circumstances, they shall keep a date of application as for the original application or any change in circumstances that resulted an increase in priority that moved the application to a higher band.
- 6.7. Southwark Council shall consider every application received to join the housing register, provided it is made in accordance with the rules of this Scheme.
- 6.8. A person applying to join Southwark Council's housing register is required to provide sufficient detail about their personal circumstances, to enable Southwark Council to assess their housing need, or to identify people whose circumstances suggest further investigation may be needed. Southwark Council shall liaise with other local authorities, other landlords and other agencies (e.g. adult social services, children services, NHS trusts, prisons and probation) to verify a person's circumstances and their housing needs. When carrying out this liaison, Southwark Council will do so in accordance with information sharing protocols. Southwark Council shall liaise with medical and welfare experts when assessing a person's application where it suggests they have a medical or welfare need.

7.0 Decisions and reviews

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

- 7.1. Southwark Council shall notify a person of their decision and of the reason for it when:
- a. a person applies to be put on the housing register, explaining if they are:
 - i. Eligible or ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing, and/or
 - ii. A qualifying or not a qualifying person; or
 - b. Southwark Council removes a person from the housing register, explaining:
 - i. why they are now a person who is no longer eligible or qualifying to be allocated social rented housing; or
 - ii. they have failed to respond to a first request and a follow-up request for a review of information held about them on the housing register, or other correspondence, within a reasonable period of time, typically 28 calendar days; or
 - iii. they have moved away or no longer need or want to be housed by Southwark Council, and/or
 - iv. otherwise being removed.
 - c. Southwark Council make any decision about the facts of a person's application, which are taken into account when considering whether to allocate a home to them.
- 7.2. Southwark Council shall, when notifying a person that they are ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing, explain whether this is because:
- i. a person is subject to immigration control within the meaning of asylum and immigration law, or
 - ii. because of other legislation that stipulates specified persons from abroad are ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing.
- 7.3. Southwark Council shall, when notifying a person that they are not a qualifying person, explain whether this is because:
- i. they or a member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of Southwark Council and in the circumstances at the time that the application has been considered, they are unsuitable to be a tenant of Southwark Council due to that behaviour, or
 - ii. any other reasons why they are not qualifying person.
- 7.4. A person can themselves request to be removed from the housing register. They can do so by notifying Southwark Council. Southwark Council shall confirm receipt of such a notification and also confirm when the request has been acted on.

- 7.5. Southwark Council shall inform a person of their right to request a review of a decision:
- a. not to put a person on the housing register who has applied to be put on it, due to them being:
 - i. ineligible for an allocation of social rented housing, or
 - ii. not a qualifying person, or
 - b. to remove a person from the housing register (for example, because they believe their application has been unreasonably cancelled).
 - c. on any other facts of their case which have been taken into account when considering whether to allocate social rented housing to them, including:
 - i. the extent of choice they are entitled to
 - ii. the priority awarded and whether or not this is a fair reflection of their housing needs,
 - iii. they have been unfairly suspended or their application has been unreasonably cancelled.
 - iv. the number offers refused.
 - v. offence related to information given or withheld by them
 - vi. fraudulent or incorrect allocations
- 7.6 A person must make a request for a review before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which they are notified of Southwark Council's decision and reasons. Southwark Council, may, in exceptional circumstances, allow a person a longer period to make a request for a review.
- 7.7 A person cannot request a review of a decision reached on an earlier review.
- 7.8 Upon receipt of a review request, Southwark Council shall carry out a review of their decision.
- 7.9 Southwark Council shall notify a person when a review of a decision commences.
- 7.10 Southwark Council shall notify people of the formal complaints procedure that is in place, including service standards and time frames for the processing of complaints, so people know what to expect. People will be informed of their right to make a complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

8.0 Review procedure

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

- 8.1. Southwark Council shall carry out a review of a decision as per the procedure set out below.
- 8.2. Southwark Council shall appoint an employee of the local authority of an appropriate seniority to that of the employee who made the original decision, who was not involved in the original decision, to carry out the review.
- 8.3. Southwark Council shall, at its discretion, allow a person an oral hearing and allow a person to be represented by a third-party of their choosing at any such hearing.
- 8.4. Southwark Council shall notify the person concerned of the decision on the review, via their individual user account.
- 8.5. Southwark Council shall, when a review decision is to confirm the original decision, notify a person of the reasons for the review decision.
- 8.6. Southwark Council shall complete a review of a decision and notify a person of the decision, within 56 days of receiving the review request. Southwark Council may make an agreement with the person who requested the review to extend the period of time in which the review shall be completed.

9.0 Applications and information

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

Applications for an allocation of social rented housing

- 9.1 Southwark Council shall provide advice and information, free of charge, to people in the Borough of Southwark, about the right to make an application to join the housing register. This shall include information about:
- Application procedures,
 - Qualification and prioritisation criteria,
 - How to apply for advertised vacancies,
 - How people on the housing register are selected for an allocation,
 - Advertising criteria (e.g. priority for adapted homes is given to people or those with disabilities.), and
 - Review procedures.
- 9.2 Southwark Council shall provide guidance that are easy to understand and in a plain language, to help a person complete their application to join the housing register. Southwark Council shall only request information and evidence needed to assess whether a person is eligible and qualifies to join the housing register and priority for housing. Appropriate evidence could include:
- A contract of employment
 - Wage/salary slips covering a certain period of time, or bank statements
 - Tax and benefits information, for example proof that a person is in receipt of welfare benefits.
- 9.3 Southwark Council shall provide any assistance necessary, free of charge, to people in the Borough of Southwark who are likely to have difficulty without assistance to make an application to join the housing register. Southwark Council shall obtain information from applications completed by people applying to join the housing register, to assess and determine if they are likely to have:
- Priority under the rules of this scheme;
 - Difficulty in making an application or choosing their accommodation without assistance;
 - Disability access or support needs.
- 9.4 Southwark Council shall, when identifying such people, make further enquiries as to what assistance they might require. For example, assistance may be provided to people with physical or mental impairments, people who may have difficulty in living independently in the community without care and or support, etc.

- 9.5 Southwark Council shall work together with other relevant agencies and providers, to ensure people can make an application to join the housing register and consider support requirements at different stages of the allocation process. This extends to people who do not have access to, or are unable to, use a computer or the internet. Southwark Council, together with social services, prisons, probation and relevant health bodies and professionals, other housing providers, the voluntary sector, carers and user groups, shall identify people who are likely to require intensive support throughout the process, such as assistance to choose accommodation that is appropriate to their needs, and make sure that suitable assistance is available. Southwark Council shall provide assistance itself or rely on other organisations and individuals to provide assistance.
- 9.6 Southwark Council shall provide access to translation and interpreting services for people whose first language is not English. Where there is a significant number of speakers of a particular language, Southwark Council might publish information in that language.
- 9.7 Southwark Council shall provide information in other accessible formats for people with various communication needs, for example people with learning disabilities, people with literacy issues and people with a visual or hearing impairment. This might include large print, British Sign Language (BSL), braille or audio.
- 9.8 Southwark Council shall provide information to people who are likely to have difficulty accessing information, for example, via outreach work, home visits etc.
- 9.10 Southwark Council shall provide user-friendly information about its housing allocation scheme via the Council's website, and in printed hardcopy form upon request.
- 9.11 Southwark Council shall provide information to a person when they apply to join the housing register, explaining how their application will be treated, how much priority they might be given to be allocated a home and whether a home appropriate for their needs is likely to be made available to them and if so, how long it is likely to be before such a home becomes available for allocation to them.
- 9.12 Southwark Council shall make available general information about the profile of social rented housing stock in the Borough of Southwark. This might include the type, size and location of the stock, how old it is, and how frequently it is likely to become available.
- 9.13 Southwark Council shall provide information about appropriate housing options which might be available to people in the Borough of Southwark. This information shall be made available when people apply to join the housing register and more

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

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

- 9.14 Southwark Council shall provide information to people when they first join the housing register, that a choice-based system is being used to help allocate homes, so they know how the system works and to assist them to participate successfully in bidding for homes being advertised as available to let.
- 9.15 Southwark Council shall provide generalised information, via the scheme website, about homes which have been allocated through its housing allocation scheme, to help people on the housing register make decisions about what sort of homes to bid for. This information might specify the number of bids received for a property and give an indication of the reason why the property was allocated to the successful person and the level of priority they had under the scheme (e.g. band and waiting time).
- 9.16 Southwark Council shall provide generalised information, via the scheme website, about the number of any direct lettings made.
- 9.17 Southwark Council shall provide information, via the scheme website, on estimated waiting times by area and property type.
- 9.18 Southwark Council shall provide people on the housing register, information about particular vacancies which are advertised. Along with vacancies being advertised for the scheme web pages, details of vacancies shall be sent in the post or provided over the telephone, to people who cannot use a website. As much as possible the scheme web pages shall be accessible for people who have visual impairment or learning disabilities. As much as possible, this information shall be provided using symbols and maps. This information shall also be provided in large print, braille, made in an audio format, and be translated upon request. This information shall help people to determine:
- a. Whether they are entitled to bid for a property
 - b. Whether a property meets their needs and any other requirements
 - c. What their likelihood of success would be if they made a bid for a property
 - d. Basic details about a property such as:
 - i. Location
 - ii. Type (e.g. flat, house, etc)

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

Information about the housing register

- 9.19 Southwark Council shall, upon request, allow a person to see the entry relating to themselves on the housing register and provide a copy of it free of charge.
- 9.20 Southwark Council shall not, without the consent of a person, share any information about them that is included on the housing register, other than as set out at 9.22. Southwark Council shall share information about a person (with their consent,) on the housing register, for example, to ensure that a person is properly assisted to participate in bidding for a home that is advertised by the scheme and that they are housed properly.
- 9.21 Southwark Council shall share personal information without consent if a lawful basis for this can be identified, for example if a person's safety is at risk. Southwark Council shall determine on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to share information regarding safeguarding concerns, including, but not limited to concerns about domestic abuse, with other agencies (such as private registered providers). Where there is a need to share data without consent, this shall be done in accordance with UK data protection law.
- 9.22 Southwark Council shall, when seeking references from a person's current and former landlords, only do so with a person's consent.
- 9.23 Southwark Council shall adopt information sharing protocols to make sure that it and other agencies are clear about the type of information which shall be shared, with whom and for what purposes. Southwark Council shall adopt information sharing protocols with organisations such as social services, other statutory agencies and voluntary agencies. Southwark Council shall when devising information sharing protocols, and when passing on information about individuals on the housing register, be mindful of responsibilities under data protection legislation.

- 9.24 Southwark Council shall inform people when they apply to join the housing register and when they join the housing register, of their right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, if they believe the data has been shared without their consent.
- 9.25 Southwark Council shall obtain from applications, information to monitor the fairness of allocations and compliance with equal opportunity requirements, including information about ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation.
- 9.26 Southwark Council shall inform people when they apply to join the housing register and again when they join the housing register, of their right to make a complaint to the Equality and Human Rights Commission if they believe they have been discriminated against when decisions about the allocation of social rented housing have been made.
- 9.27 Southwark Council shall, once an application is submitted, keep people informed about what happens next. This might include:
- a. sending confirmation that the application has been received, when it will be verified and what checks will be made
 - b. asking for any information that has not been supplied by the person making the application and giving a clear timescale for providing it and making them aware of how it may affect their application if they fail to provide it.
 - c. advising people that they must inform Southwark Council about any changes in circumstances that could affect their application and level of priority
 - d. explaining Southwark Council will be in contact with them and the contacts they can expect throughout an allocation process
- 9.28 Southwark Council shall, once an application has been verified, inform the applicant about the outcome. When a decision is made that a person can join the housing register, that person shall be informed about the level of priority they have been awarded, and that they should notify Southwark Council about any changes in circumstances which could affect their application and their level of priority.
- 9.29 Southwark Council shall, once in receipt of all relevant information from the person applying to join the housing register, aim to verify applications within 33 working days.
- 9.30 People applying to join Southwark Council's housing register shall be asked to sign a declaration that the information they have provided is correct to their knowledge. People will be advised that Southwark Council shall raise action in the court for recovery of possession where a tenancy has been given on the basis of false information supplied by the person.

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

10.0 Allocations

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

Choice

- 10.1 Southwark Council shall prioritise people on the housing register, and allocate homes, following the procedure set out in this chapter. Decisions about allocations will be made by Southwark Council employees tasked with administering housing allocation functions.
- 10.2 Southwark Council shall offer people on the housing register a choice of a home that might be allocated to them. People will be able to apply (referred to as 'bidding') for particular homes which are advertised as vacant on the housing allocation scheme website. This will allow people to express their preference for a home they wish to be allocated. Southwark Council shall, whenever possible, take such preferences into account when allocating housing.
- 10.3 Southwark Council shall operate an 'open advertising' approach whereby all people on the housing register, and members of the wider population, can find out about vacancies which are advertised on the housing allocation scheme website.
- 10.4 Where housing designated for a specific purpose (e.g. housing for older people, accessible housing adapted for disabled people, housing for people sleeping rough, etc) is advertised alongside other homes, it will be made clear that only bids from those people with relevant housing and/or support needs will be accepted for it. This shall be done, for example, by making clear in the details of the advertisement, only certain categories of people will be considered for the homes.
- 10.5 Southwark Council shall work together with other relevant agencies and providers to ensure people can bid for homes. This extends to people who do not have access to or are unable to use a computer or the internet. People that may have difficulty in bidding for homes without assistance, for example due to physical or mental impairments, shall have access to necessary assistance to make a bid for a property.
- 10.6 Southwark Council reserves the right to reject a bid on grounds of risk. People shall be informed of the reasons for such decisions and be informed of the properties they can bid for. People who pose a risk to themselves, to other individuals, or are at risk

from other individuals, for example due to sexual or violent offences, shall be restricted in the homes that they can bid for.

10.7 Southwark Council reserves the right to make a direct let to manage the risk posed by some people or for other management reasons. A direct let is when a person is not offered a choice of accommodation. Examples of when a direct let might be made, include (the following list is illustrative only and is not intended to be exhaustive):

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

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

- a. has the highest priority under the scheme, and
- b. has been at that level of priority the longest (either at the date when the applicant was first accepted to join the housing register or the date of any subsequent change in priority when a higher priority is awarded), and
- c. matches the lettings criteria for that home (e.g. the type of home, its size and bedroom needs of the household, its location, etc), or
- d. matches any quotas in place set out in an annual or local lettings plans.

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

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

individuals or groups. Common reasons for bypassing a person on the housing register might include:

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

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

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

Offers of a home and refusals

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

10.13 Southwark Council shall on occasions, use its discretion and make an allocation outside the rules of this scheme. Southwark Council shall when using its discretion, make sure that a person has an exceptional level of need, greater than others on the

housing register or that the circumstances are so extreme or unusual that they would not be adequately prioritised for a home. Southwark Council does not expect to need to exercise discretion on a regular basis. Southwark Council shall keep clear audit trails when discretion has been used and record the reasons for an allocation. There shall be a clear authorisation processes in place, with authorisation by a senior officer.

- 10.14 Southwark Council shall make suitable and sustainable allocations where there is a good probability of providing a long-term and stable solution for a person on the housing register and surrounding neighbours. Southwark Council shall wherever possible make sure that allocations do not lead to housing management problems and instead will result in a sustainable tenancy. Southwark Council shall make use of sensitive allocations (sometimes known as sensitive lettings). Instead of automatically allocating a property to a person at the top of a list, careful consideration shall be given to the suitability of a person for a vacancy, based on the information about that person and knowledge of the property, its location or neighbours. Southwark Council shall balance a range of factors including a person's housing need, their suitability for a home, and needs of prospective neighbours. For example, allocating a hard to let home which may exacerbate problems which led a person to become homeless previously, or placing a person with social or other problems in the same area, which can cause problems for both those from the area itself and for housing management, shall be kept in mind when allocating homes to any person on the housing register. Southwark Council shall only use a sensitive allocations approach where there are good reasons for doing so and shall keep a record of why decisions were made, to make sure the decisions are transparent and the decision maker is accountable. Southwark Council shall monitor the use of sensitive allocations.
- 10.15 Southwark Council shall allow people a reasonable period of time to make a decision about any home offered to them, providing them with an opportunity to view the home before making a decision. Southwark Council shall allow sufficient time for people who require additional assistance and/or support to arrange for an adviser or an advocate (who may be a friend or family member) to accompany them when viewing a home and to take advice in making their decision to accept or reject an offer.
- 10.16 Applicants shall be allowed to refuse up to three homes allocated to them. After which, they shall be removed from the register for a period of 12 months. This approach is designed to minimise the time loss in making offers that are not accepted. People on the housing register shall be reminded of the limit to the number of offers made, when an offer of housing is made to them. When Southwark Council makes initial contact with a person to see if they're interested in a particular home, if they are not, for example because they are currently unwell, or the

property is too far from their child's school, Southwark Council might choose to bypass the person on such an occasion.

People owed a homelessness duty

- 10.17 People owed a homelessness duty needing advice and assistance to bid shall be provided with it. There will be a limit to the period during which they can bid, this will be based on the time it would normally take before an opportunity to bid on a suitable home becomes available for someone with similar priority under the scheme.
- 10.18 An assessment will take place to examine why a person owed a homelessness duty, has failed to bid for a suitable home. If they were incapable of making a bid without advice and assistance, Southwark Council shall consider extending the period during which they can make a bid and shall arrange for any advice and assistance needed to help them bid. If Southwark Council decides a person will no longer be able to bid for properties, they will be made aware of this and of the fact that a direct let will be made.
- 10.19 People who are owed a homelessness duty have the right to refuse a suitable housing allocation. If a person does refuse a suitable offer (within the meaning of the term set out Housing Act 1996 part 7 – Homelessness), Southwark Council shall make them aware that its duty of homelessness assistance has come to an end. People shall be allowed to remain on the housing register if they continue to be eligible and qualify, although they will no longer be given the same level of priority due to being owed a homelessness duty. Instead, their housing needs will be reassessed and any priority given will be based on their housing needs at this time.

Disabled people

- 10.20 Housing which has been designed or adapted to meet the needs of disabled people will be advertised via the scheme. It shall be prioritised for people who have access needs. This will be explained in the advertising criteria. Disabled people can bid for accessible vacancies, and for accommodation that does not currently meet their needs, when Southwark Council has assessed that it is reasonable and practical to adapt the home to meet those needs.
- 10.21 When an accessible property is advertised, the advertisement shall give sufficient information about the level of adaptations and/or accessibility features in the accommodation, so that people can make an informed decision on whether or not to bid for a particular property. Information shall be included about external access to the property (e.g. whether there is a ramp up to the property and whether there is accessible parking nearby).

- 10.22 Southwark Council shall develop and maintain a database of accessible Council properties within the Borough. Disabled people shall be informed about the time they are likely to wait for any type of property to become available. Such information shall be provided to assist disabled people to decide whether or not to bid for a particular home which is advertised.
- 10.23 Southwark Council shall provide disabled people with additional assistance and support, depending on the nature and degree of their disability, if required. Southwark Council shall advise individual disabled people when a suitable accessible property is about to be, or has been, advertised.

Restricting choice

- 10.24 Southwark Council shall attach advertising criteria to particular homes, specifying that only applicants that meet certain criteria may bid for that particular home, or that applicants that meet certain criteria will be given preference for that particular home. Advertising criteria will be used for:
- a. when local lettings policies are being used to achieve housing management and other housing policy objectives; or
 - b. to match people with access needs to accessible accommodation, or
 - c. when there is an age restriction for the property, such as only households over 55 years of age.
- 10.25 Southwark Council shall not allow every person to express an interest in or be considered for any, and every, available home to let. People shall not be permitted to bid for homes, which would result in statutory overcrowding or under occupation (on a case-by-case basis, under occupancy might be allowed, for example where Southwark Council wishes to bring down the child density ratio on an estate). Therefore, couples and single people will not usually be permitted to bid for a home that has more than one bedroom. Southwark Council shall provide information when a property is advertised, to assist people in establishing whether they are entitled to express an interest in a particular home available to let. Southwark Council shall make the final decision on whether it is appropriate to allocate any particular home to any particular person. When doing so the following shall be taken into account:
- a. provision type (e.g. a home is housing for older people and person has no need for such housing, or a home is general needs housing and a person has a need for supported housing or housing for older people, etc).
 - b. rent type and charge (e.g. a person cannot afford to pay the rent and/or all other property related charges for a home).
 - c. unit size (e.g. a person and their household would be overcrowded or would under-occupy a home).

- d. letting criteria restrictions (e.g. a home must be allocated to disabled people with accessibility needs).
- e. condition of the home (e.g. repairs and maintenance need to be carried out to a home and these cannot be completed while a home is occupied, or any repairs and maintenance required cannot be completed within a reasonable period of time after the person might otherwise have moved into a home).
- f. accessibility (e.g. it is not possible to make necessary adaptations, either at all or within a reasonable period of time after a person might have otherwise moved into a home).
- g. location (e.g. a home would result in a person or members of their household being at risk to or from others).

Prioritisation

- 10.26 Southwark Council shall when allocating homes, give a preference to people in the following order of bands, A, B, C, D and E with A being the highest priority and E the lowest.
- 10.27 People who might fall into more than one band shall be placed in the band that gives them the greatest priority.
- 10.28 Where an applicant does not fall specifically within the wording of Bands A to E, but does have a housing need, Southwark Council shall on occasions, use its discretion and make an allocation outside the rules of this scheme. Southwark Council does not expect to need to exercise this discretion on a regular basis. Southwark Council shall keep clear audit trails when discretion has been used and record the reasons for an allocation. There shall be a clear authorisation processes in place, with authorisation by a senior officer.
- 10.29 Southwark Council shall, when making decisions about prioritisation, disregard a persons' household members if such household members are ineligible for an allocation of social housing.

Band A

- I. People occupying insanitary or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions, that are assessed as posing a significant risk to health and safety, and repair works cannot be completed within a reasonable period of time, or the property cannot be made safe at all, relating to the following types of hazards:
 - a. Structurally unstable; or
 - b. Rising or penetrating damp and/or mould; or
 - c. Unsatisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and for heating; or

- d. Unsatisfactory thermal insulation; or
 - e. Inadequate piped supply of wholesome water available within the house; or
 - f. A lack of sink provided and/or an unsatisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house; or
 - g. A lack of water closet or waterless closet available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house and suitably located within the house; or
 - h. A lack of a fixed bath or shower and a wash-hand basin, each provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water and suitably located within the house; or
 - i. An ineffective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water; or
 - j. A lack of supply of electricity, and/or noncompliance with the relevant requirements in relation to the electrical installation for the purposes of that supply; or
 - k. Unsatisfactory facilities for the cooking of food within the house; or
 - l. Unsatisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings.
2. People occupying overcrowded housing, by three or more bedrooms (by the Bedroom Standard criteria) and have not caused this overcrowding by a deliberate act.
 3. People (or someone from their household) with a particular need for settled accommodation on urgent medical or welfare grounds, due to:
 - a. Condition is expected to be terminal and re-housing is required due to unsuitable accommodation or to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care; or
 - b. Condition is life threatening and existing accommodation is a major contributory factor; or
 - c. Planned discharge from hospital is imminent and there is no accommodation available that is reasonable to occupy.
 4. People with who are members of the Armed Forces community, who are accorded reasonable preference and are:
 - a. Former members of the Regular Armed Forces (including those who are close to leaving or have recently left the Regular Armed Forces; or
 - b. Serving in the Regular Armed Forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness (including mental ill health) or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to the person's service, including those who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation; or
 - c. Serving or have served in the reserve forces and suffering from a serious injury, illness (including mental ill health) or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to the person's service; or

- d. Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Armed Forces where the bereaved spouses or civil partners have recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their partner whose death was attributable, wholly or partially to that service.
- 5. People with a need for accommodation, who are a child leaving the care of Southwark Council.
- 6. People who are tenants of Southwark Council, or a private registered provider, and living in Southwark, under-occupying their home (by the local housing allowance size criteria) who wish to transfer to a smaller property suitable for their needs.
- 7. People who have lost their current home as a result of a disaster, such as a fire, flood or other emergency.
- 8. People who are social housing tenants in Southwark, accepted by Southwark Council as needing to leave their home to facilitate an area regeneration scheme.
- 9. People who are non-dependent adults, who normally live with social housing tenants in Southwark who have been accepted by Southwark Council as needing to leave their home to facilitate an area regeneration scheme, at the discretion of the Strategic Director of Housing.
- 10. People who have been accepted, at the discretion of a Senior Officer, to join a Housing First scheme (commissioned by Southwark Council).

Band B

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

3. People occupying insanitary, or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions, for example due to:
 - a. Lacking bathroom or kitchen; or
 - b. Lacking inside WC; or
 - c. Lacking cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or adequate heating; or
 - d. Property in disrepair; or
 - e. Poor internal or external arrangements.
4. People occupying overcrowded housing, by two bedrooms (by the bedroom standard).
5. People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability), due to:
 - a. A mental illness or disorder (including serving members of the regular and reserve Armed Forces and veterans with mental ill health; or
 - b. A physical or learning disability or sensory impairment; or
 - c. Chronic or progressive medical conditions (e.g. MS, HIV/AIDS); or
 - d. Infirmary due to old age; or
 - e. The need to give or receive care; or
 - f. The need to recover from the effect of violence or threat of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse (e.g. victims of domestic abuse); or
 - g. The need to recover from the effects of racist incidents; or
 - h. Ability to fend for self, restricted for other reasons; or
 - i. Young people at risk (i.e. child(ren) in need, 16–17-year-olds, lone parents under 18); or
 - j. People with an assessed learning difficulty; or
 - k. Need for adapted housing and/or extra care facilities, bedroom or bathroom; or
 - l. Need improved heating (on medical grounds); or
 - m. Need sheltered housing (on medical grounds); or
 - n. Need ground floor accommodation (on medical grounds); or
 - o. Need to be near friends/relatives or medical facility (on medical grounds); or
 - p. The need to move, following hospitalisation or long-term care; or
 - q. Being ready to make a planned move from supported housing (commissioned by Southwark Council), where they are provided with care, support or supervision in;
 - i. Resettlement accommodation; or
 - ii. A managed property; or
 - iii. A hostel for homeless people; or
 - r. Moving on from a drug or alcohol recovery programme; or

- s. Being vulnerable (e.g. having learning disabilities) and not expected to be able to find their own accommodation, who wish to live independently in the community, with appropriate care and support.
- 6. People with a need for accommodation, who are foster carers and adopters, special guardians, and family and friend carers (who have taken on the care of a child because their parents are unable to provide care), who need a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child, approved by Southwark Council.
- 7. People who need to move to a particular locality in Borough of Southwark, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others), for example due to accessing specialised medical treatment.

Band C

- 1. People who are owed a homelessness duty (by Southwark Council) under section 193(2), duty owed to persons with priority need who are not intentionally homeless, to ensure accommodation is available for occupation by the person.
- 2. People occupying overcrowded housing, by one bedroom (by the bedroom standard).
- 3. People who are members of the Armed Forces community, who are:
 - a. Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Regular Armed Forces service personnel, who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence; or
 - b. Adult children of Regular Armed Forces service personnel, who may no longer be able to remain in the family home.
- 4. People occupying housing which is temporary or occupied on insecure terms, who have unmet housing needs that cannot be met by any other housing options that are available, for example due to:
 - a. Family or friends being able to accommodate only for a temporary period; or
 - b. Social or private rented tenancy coming to an end; or
 - c. Non-violent relationship breakdown; or
 - d. Required to leave asylum support accommodation.
- 5. People who are former care leavers who have unmet housing needs that cannot be met by any other housing options that are available.

Band D

1. People who are owed a homelessness duty (by Southwark Council) under section:
 - a. 189(B)(2), initial (relief) duty (by Southwark Council); or,
 - b. 190(2), duty owed to persons becoming intentionally homeless, to ensure that accommodation is available for occupation for a reasonable period while a person finds accommodation to live in; or
 - c. 195(2), duty in cases of threatened homelessness, to take reasonable steps to help a person to ensure their accommodation does not cease to be available for their occupation.)
2. People who are experiencing homelessness (within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 Part 7 Homelessness) within the Borough of Southwark, that have either not made an application for homelessness assistance, have withdrawn their application for homelessness assistance, or any homelessness duty of assistance owed has ended, including:
 - a. No fixed abode; or
 - b. Living with friends; or
 - c. Rough sleeping; or
 - d. Homeless upon departure from prison.

Band E

Applicants placed in Band E will not be able to bid for properties advertised through Choice Based Lettings.

1. People who are secure tenants of Southwark Council seeking a transfer, who are not entitled to a reasonable preference for an allocation of social rented housing (i.e. they would not be placed in any of the above bands).
2. Any other person who is eligible for an allocation of social rented housing and who qualifies to join the housing register.

Bedroom criteria

- 10.30 Southwark Council shall when deciding if a person's household is overcrowded make an assessment against the UK Government's Bedroom Standard, which allows a separate bedroom each for:
- a. Adult couple
 - b. Any remaining adult aged 21 years or over
 - c. Two males aged 10 to 20 years
 - d. One male aged 10 to 20 years and one male aged 9 years or under
 - e. One male aged 10-20 years if there are no males aged 0-9 years to pair with him
 - f. Two females aged 10 to 20 years
 - g. One female aged 10 to 20 years and one female aged 9 years or under

- h. One female aged 10-20 years if there are no females aged 0-9 years to pair with her
- i. Two children aged 9 years or under regardless of sex
- j. Any remaining child aged 9 years or under

10.31 Southwark Council shall when deciding if a person's household is under-occupied make an assessment against the UK Government's Local Housing Allowance bedroom criteria, which allows a separate bedroom each for:

- a. Any Adult couple
- b. Any person aged 16 or over
- c. Two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under
- d. Two children aged 9 years or under
- e. A member of a couple who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition
- f. A child who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition
- g. Any other child
- h. A foster child (if a person is an approved foster parent)
- i. A non-resident carer providing overnight care to a person or a member of their household (one room is allowed, regardless of the number of carers who stay overnight).

Quotas

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

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

10.33 Quotas shall be based on information Southwark Council has gathered on housing need and demand in the Borough of Southwark based on the profile of people on the housing register. Southwark Council shall consider:

- a. The size and composition of the housing register, including the housing needs people have, and
 - b. The type of stock and vacancies which are likely to become available.
- 10.35 Southwark Council shall operate an Annual Lettings Plan alongside this main scheme, to act as an additional set of circumstances which will be considered, or rules which will be applied. Decisions on the details of these circumstances and rules will be made by Elected Members of the Council. Southwark Council shall monitor who is being allocated properties and publish information on performance against quotas that have been set.
- 10.36 Southwark Council shall operate local lettings plans alongside this main scheme, to act as an additional set of circumstances which will be considered, or rules which will be applied. Decisions on the details of these circumstances and rules will be made by a Senior officer.
- 10.37 Local letting policies will be used to allocate particular homes to applicants of a particular description and achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives, for example:
 - a. To deal with concentrations of deprivation or create more mixed communities, by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for people who are in employment or to enable people to take up employment.
 - b. To deal sensitively with lettings on new development sites including giving priority to those with a local connection to the electoral ward area
 - c. To make sure that properties which are particularly suited to being made accessible (e.g. ground floor flats) are prioritised for those with access needs
 - d. To deal with allocations of designated key worker housing to specific types of key workers as specified by Southwark Council from time to time, through a distinct application process.
- 10.38 Southwark Council shall publish local lettings policies as separate policy documents, which may be revoked or revised by Southwark Council as appropriate.
- 10.39 Southwark Council shall monitor and review local lettings policies regularly, as to their effectiveness, and to determine if they are still appropriate and necessary.

Modifying and altering this scheme

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

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

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11.0 Information about this allocation scheme

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

- 11.1 Southwark Council shall publish a summary of this housing allocation scheme and provide a copy of the summary free of charge to any person who requests one. A copy of the summary is available to download from the Council website. Copies of the scheme summary can also be requested by contacting Southwark Council's Housing Allocation service.
- 11.2 Southwark Council shall make available a copy of this scheme for inspection at our office, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH. Southwark Council shall, upon request from a person, and the payment of a reasonable fee to cover the cost of printing, provide a printed copy of the scheme.
- 11.3 Southwark Council shall, when making a significant change to the scheme, which would affect a large number of people on the housing register, notify them of the change. Southwark Council shall consult on significant changes to the scheme. Southwark Council shall engage with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. Adult Social Care, Children Services, health services, community justice services, voluntary organisations, etc), as well as people on the housing register, tenants, the general public, anyone who is affected by the way social housing shall be allocated and anyone who is affected by the way Southwark Council shall allocate social rented housing. The approach taken to consult will depend on the nature and extent of the changes that are being proposed to be made. This might involve:
 - a. A small sounding board group of tenants and people on the housing register
 - b. A tenant scrutiny panel.
 - c. Surveys

12.0 Co-operation with private registered providers

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

- 12.1 Southwark Council shall work together with private register providers that own and manage stock in the borough of Southwark, to make best use of the available social housing in the local authority area. Southwark Council shall make requests to private registered providers, for them to offer an allocation of social housing to people on Southwark Council's housing register.
- 12.2 Southwark Council shall comply with requirements set out in a nomination agreement with a private registered provider, when making requests for social rented housing to be made available to persons from Southwark Council's housing register.
- 12.3 Nomination agreements shall set out the proportion of letting that will be made available by private register providers that own or manage stock in the Borough of Southwark, to Southwark Council. Nomination agreements shall set out any criteria which has been adopted for accepting or rejecting nominations and how any disputes shall be resolved. Southwark Council shall monitor and regularly review nomination agreements, to demonstrate that obligations are being met and to ensure they reflect changing needs and demand.
- 12.4 Southwark Council shall, when making nominations to a private registered provider, make sure the details of a nominated person are accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date and in particular provide information about any vulnerability, support needs and arrangements for support, where this information is available.
- 12.5 Southwark Council shall also agree information sharing protocols with private register providers who own or manage stock in the borough of Southwark, covering issues such as rent arrears, antisocial behaviour and support needs.

13.0 Guidance

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

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

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I 4.0 False statements and withholding information

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

- I 4.1 Southwark Council shall consider, when a person knowingly makes a false statement on a housing register application or in response to a request for further information in support of an application (including during review proceedings), as a reason for disqualification from joining the housing register.
- I 4.2 Southwark Council shall look at the circumstances of each person rather than applying a blanket approach about whether to institute criminal proceedings against a person who has given false information or withheld information.

15.0 Elected members

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

- 15.1 Elected members of Southwark Council shall not be part of a decision-making body at the time an allocation decision is made, when either the accommodation concerned is situated in their electoral ward or the person subject to the decision has their sole or main residence there.
- 15.2 Elected members shall be permitted to represent their constituents to any decision-making body, such as seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents and be permitted to participate in the decision-making bodies deliberations prior to a decision.
- 15.3 Elected members shall not attempt to confer an advantage on any person seeking an allocation of social rented housing. Elected members shall ensure compliance with Southwark Council's Code of Conduct and shall consider whether they are required to declare an interest before participating in such deliberations. Elected members shall obtain advice from Southwark Council's Monitoring Officer, should there be any doubt.
- 15.4 Elected members shall be involved in policy decisions that affect the generality of social rented housing in their electoral ward.
- 15.5 Elected members shall be responsible for determining allocation policies and monitoring the implementation of Southwark Council's housing allocation scheme, to ensure the operation of the scheme is open and accountable and systems are compliant with Southwark Council's policy objectives.