

# A summary of our housing allocation scheme



Not for profit landlords like the council, housing associations, and housing trusts rent out almost 60,000 homes in Southwark.

Some landlords have their own policies for deciding who gets priority for available homes; but most homes are allocated to people using Southwark Council's housing allocation scheme.

## **Clear and fair**

The demand for housing in Southwark is very high and it is therefore important that we have rules to help those in greatest need. The housing allocation scheme is used to ensure our homes are offered fairly to those we and the law have assessed as being in the greatest need.

## **Local connection**

With the exception of Armed Forces personnel, any applicant will be required to meet the local connection criteria in order to qualify to join the housing register for an allocation. A local connection will be established if:

- a) You have lived in Southwark for the last five years
- b) You work in the borough
- c) You want to live near to a close relative who has lived in Southwark for more than five years and receive or provide support/care
- d) There is another very specific reason why you need to live in Southwark (for example severe social or medical needs)
- e) Homeless people placed in Southwark in temporary accommodation by another local authority: whilst there is still a homeless duty owed by another local authority these people will not normally be considered as meeting the local connection criteria.

# How we decide priority: the housing bands

When you register for rehousing, you are asked about your housing history and legal status. The law says the council cannot offer a home to certain people from abroad. You would also be ineligible for rehousing if your housing history includes behaviour that is considered to be unacceptable.

All eligible applicants are then put into a rehousing band; depending on how much they need to move and other circumstances. The higher your band, the more chance you have of a home.

We record the date that each applicant went into that band. This is your award date. We compare award dates when people from the same band want the same home.



## Band 1

- Applicants who have a statutory right of succession and wish to succeed to a Southwark Council or housing association property. However the property is not suitable for their household type due to under occupation
- Tenants of Southwark Council who have to move, as their home requires major works within six weeks
- Applicants who are under occupying their accommodation which is owned by Southwark Council or a housing association
- Applicants who are statutorily overcrowded as defined by part X of the Housing Act 1985, and have not caused this statutory overcrowding by a deliberate act
- Emergency landlord request transfer as defined by section 5.11 of the full housing allocation scheme, available on the council website
- Applicants who cannot leave hospital because they have no suitable accommodation elsewhere and/or require specially adapted accommodation
- Applicants who are being discharged from the Armed Forces who have sustained serious injury, illness, medical condition, or disability during service which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service. It will also cover serving former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.



## Band 2

- Applicants who have a severe medical priority as determined by the medical panel
- Applicants who have an urgent need to move as decided by the social welfare panel
- Applicants who permanently lack one or all of these essential facilities – hot water, heating, a kitchen, internal toilet and bathroom
- Private sector tenants who are required to vacate their home as a result of enforcement action by the local authority
- Southwark care leavers are granted Band 2 priority and permitted to bid for studio flats only. This is due to the high demand for all property types in Southwark
- Applicants who are occupying partnership agency accommodation and who have an agreed move on. This is commonly known as hostel move on accommodation.
- Council or housing association tenant vacating specially adapted homes
- Applicants who are part of a multi-agency public protection agreement (MAPPA)
- Serious threat to the wellbeing of a child and their accommodation is a contributory factor to the risk. These are cases where an emergency move is required to mitigate the risk to the child as confirmed by Southwark Council's Children's Services
- Applicants who have an agreed fostering or adoption agreement in place with Southwark Council, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child

- Applicants who could not be expected to find their own accommodation, such as young adults with learning disabilities who wish to leave the family home so that they can live independently within the community
- Applicants who are in housing need and being discharged from the Armed Forces such as bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces
- Secure or assured tenants who have lived at the tenancy for five years or more, have no related housing debt and have not breached the terms of the tenancy agreement.

### **Band 3**

- Those who are homeless and who Southwark Council have a statutory duty to accommodate under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- Applicants who accept a property in the private rented sector through sections 148 and 149 of the Localism Act 2011
- Overcrowded but not statutorily overcrowded as defined by part 10 of the 1985 Housing Act
- Applicants with moderate health related issues where there is a clear objective to move.

### **Band 4**

- Applicants who are homeless, but to whom the authority does not owe a duty to house under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. For example they may be intentionally homeless or be without a priority need. Such applicants are to be placed in Band 4, and are given priority by being awarded one star
- All other applicants.

## **Regeneration schemes**

The allocation scheme includes provisions to rehouse residents who are part of a regeneration scheme. This may include rehousing residents to new build properties or prioritising applicants for available properties on our Homesearch bidding system.

## **Priority star system**

Within each band, applicants are prioritised, first, by reference to a priority star system. This operates as follows:

One priority star will be awarded for each of the following where applicable

1. People owed a statutory homelessness duty under either s193(2) or s195(2) Housing Act 1996
2. People occupying unsanitary or statutorily overcrowded housing (as defined by part 10 of the Housing Act 1985) or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions in accordance with hazards identified through the housing health safety rating scheme as confirmed by Southwark Council
3. People who need to move on severe medical or severe welfare grounds
4. People who need to move to a particular locality in the area of the authority where failure to meet their needs would be detrimental to their health and wellbeing and cause severe hardship
5. A working household
6. Applicants who are undertaking a voluntary contribution.

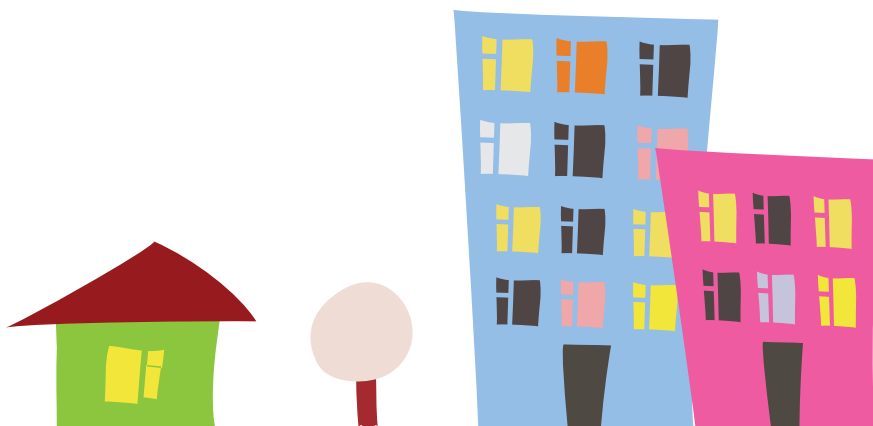
## The award date

Your award date is the date you first got the level of priority that put you into your current housing band. This might be the same as the registration date when you first registered for rehousing - but not always.

Your award date can be different to your registration date if you go into a different priority band because your circumstances change, or because the housing rules change.

## Better chances

If two people from the same priority band want the same home, it goes to the one with the highest number of stars. If both being equal then it will go to the person with the earlier award date. If they have the same award date, it goes to the one with the earliest registration date. So the earlier your award date and registration date, the better your chance of getting a home.





## Getting extra priority

You can be awarded additional priority if you:

- Are a working household; or
- You pass our community contribution test.

Also to qualify for additional priority you must also pass our good resident test. We check that you don't have housing debts, and have not acted antisocially, or broken a previous tenancy agreement for example.

### Working household

You are a working household if:

- You or anyone moving with you has a job - it can be permanent, temporary, or self-employed; and
- That person is aged 18 or over; and
- They work for at least 16 hours a week; and
- They have worked for at least nine out of the last 12 months.

### Community contribution

You pass the community contribution test if you, or anyone moving with you:

- Have lived as an adult (18 and over) in one of our rehousing areas for three years continuously - now or in the past; or
- You undertake voluntary work for at least ten hours per month, and have done so for at least six months continuously.

## Reduced priority

In certain circumstances we reduce someone's rehousing priority to a low band (Band 4). This could be because:

- You refuse three reasonable offers of accommodation made through Homesearch. Further information can be found in our refusals policy, available at **[www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk](http://www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk)**
- You have behaved inappropriately - you may have rent arrears, have broken a tenancy agreement, or acted antisocially in the past for example; or
- You are homeless, but you have done something deliberately or neglected to do something that has caused you to lose your home. You may have been evicted for antisocial behaviour or not paying your rent; or the council believes you did not need to leave your previous home.

If your priority is reduced like this, you will go into Band 4



## **Choosing a home**

We give housing applicants as much choice as possible by using a choice based lettings system. The vast majority of homes that are available through the council's allocation scheme are advertised each week through the choice based lettings scheme.

## **Homes you really want**

The only way to get a home in Southwark is to bid for it. There's no money involved; a bid is simply the way you express an interest in that particular property.

You can make one bid during the bidding period however this can be withdrawn at any point before midnight on a Sunday. Only bid for homes you really want. If you bid for homes and then turn them down, you may end up with a reduced housing priority in future.

## **Bedroom eligibility**

When considering an applicant's bedroom need, a child is someone who is aged 16 and under and therefore will be considered eligible for a house. Applicants with children over this age will only be considered for flats or maisonettes.

Households with children under 16 can place bids for flats on any floor.

The table overleaf sets out how Southwark Council allocates accommodation:

Household makeup	Bedroom assessment
Single person	Bedsit/studio flat 1 bedroom flat
Couple and applicant who is pregnant	1 bedroom flat
Single pensioner or applicant who requires ground floor accommodation	1 bedroom flat or bungalow
Pensioners above the pension credit age who require ground floor accommodation due to supported and proven medical reasons	1/2 bedroom flat or bungalow
1 child family	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
2 child family of same sex or opposite sex if child under 10 years of age	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children of same sex under 16	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
2 child family with children of opposite sex and over the age of 10	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
3 child family	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
4 child family depending on family make up	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house 4 bedroom house
5 child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house
6+ child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house

## How to bid for a home

By far the best way to see homes and bid for them is on the choice based lettings website. Visit **[www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk](http://www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk)** to view all available council and partner housing association properties. You can see the property types, size, maps, rent level and a photograph of a similar property before placing your bid.

## How Southwark Council's choice based lettings scheme works

Available homes are advertised from midnight on a Wednesday until midnight on a Sunday every week.

Your final queue position won't be confirmed until bidding closes. Make sure you have access to your phone the following week as we will call you to invite you to view if you are first, second or third in line for the property. Things move very quickly so please make sure you are available for viewing.

If the property has been advertised using the choice based lettings and housing allocation rules, the home is offered to any bidders from Band 1 first; starting with the one who has the highest number of stars, then who has been in the band the longest - that's the person with the earliest award date.

If there's no applicant in Band 1, it's offered to anyone in Band 2 who has bid for it (starting with the bidder with the earliest award date) and so on down the bands until it's offered to a bidder who accepts it.



## **Your chance of a home**

Your chance of a home depends on six main things:

1. The housing band you're in - the higher the band, the better your chances
2. The number of stars you have in regards to the priority star system
3. How long you've been in that band - called your award date. The earlier this date, the better your chances
4. The type and size of home you're eligible for. Some properties are more readily available than others
5. The area you want. In some areas, homes come up very often - but in others there's nothing available for a long time
6. How many other people go for a home when it's advertised.

## **Who is not eligible for housing?**

Anybody over 16 can apply for a home that's allocated using the council's housing rules. Everyone who registers is asked about their housing history and legal status.

The law states that we are not allowed to offer a home to certain people from abroad. This includes some people who are British citizens but are subject to immigration control.

We also don't offer homes to people who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour.



Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Rent arrears
- Breaking a tenancy agreement with a not for profit landlord, or causing serious damage to a property
- Being guilty of serious antisocial behaviour or domestic abuse
- Getting a tenancy illegally - by giving false information or paying money for example
- Having lost a home that came with a job because of inappropriate behaviour
- Having an unspent criminal conviction that would make the person a significant risk to local people.

## **Eligible for a mutual exchange?**

Due to the demand for social housing, waiting times for properties are getting longer. If you are an existing tenant of the council in permanent accommodation or a tenant of one of our housing association partners you could find a suitable home much quicker through a mutual exchange.

For further information on mutual exchanges:

Email: **[exchangesandmobility@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:exchangesandmobility@southwark.gov.uk)**

Visit: **[www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk](http://www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk)**

You also can register for an exchange at **[www.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.houseexchange.org.uk)**



To access our full housing allocation policy please visit  
our website [www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)