

# Lettings Policy

**A guide to housing lettings in Haringey**

**Version 11.0 (24 August 2006)**



**This Lettings Policy sets out how council housing is allocated to people.**

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# Executive Summary

- 1.0 Every council has to produce and publish a housing lettings policy <sup>1</sup>. This is Haringey's Lettings Policy. It shows:
  - how to apply for housing in Haringey
  - how we decide who to let homes to
  - how we offer choice
  - how we make offers of housing
- 2.0 The policy reflects the legal requirements placed upon the council <sup>2</sup> and in addition draws upon regulations and guidance and good practice. <sup>3</sup>
- 3.0 The policy sets out how the Council works with the private sector and partners such as housing associations to address homelessness, overcrowding and the need to develop safe, diverse neighbourhoods. The Borough faces severe housing shortages.
- 4.0 The policy sets out how a points system is used to ensure fairness and openness in allocating homes and should be considered alongside new services such as Prevention and Options and the Reduction in Temporary Accommodation strategy.
- 5.0 There is a high level of housing need locally. The policy sets out a number of limited but clear priorities. The number of people who will be directly housed by the Council will be limited to those with the most severe housing needs. Tackling overcrowding is a high priority. Applicants with low levels of need will be advised of other options they can consider.
- 6.0 Preventing homelessness, offering choice and increasing the range of ways to meet housing need means placing an emphasis upon applicants with the most severe housing needs. It requires a range of options to be available to other people.
- 7.0 The close working relationship with Social Services is reflected in the policy. It will ensure that older and vulnerable people have their needs addressed in a fair and consistent way.
- 8.0 By 2010 Haringey will reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50%. This policy is the key to achieving that target.
- 9.0 The policy reflects the commitment to create greater choice, through the introduction of Choice Based Lettings for most applicants. It responds to everyone in a fair, open and consistent way. The policy is backed up by procedures.
- 10.0 The Lettings Policy will be reviewed regularly including consideration of the way the policy assists the promotion of choice and mobility across the North London sub region.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 167 Housing Act 1996 requires a scheme to be in place

Section 168 Housing Act 1996 requires the scheme to be published

<sup>2</sup> Housing Act 1996 amended by the Homelessness Act 2002

<sup>3</sup> The main guidance relating to Lettings is the Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance 2002 This is supplemented by various Statutory Instruments (Regulations)

# Introduction

This document sets out Haringey Council's Lettings Scheme. It is the allocation scheme for determining priorities for the letting of Council homes and nominations to Registered Social Landlords.

This policy fully complies with all legal requirements and reflects recent changes to the law arising from the Homelessness Act 2002 and various Statutory Instruments. It also reflects caselaw and has regard to the Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation issued by the Government in May 2002.

## The Challenge facing Haringey

Haringey contains some of the most deprived wards in the Country. Almost 30% of Haringey's population live in areas that are amongst the 10% most deprived in the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> The borough has relatively high levels of unemployment and a high level of inequality in health reflected in high levels of vulnerability such as mental health. 11.5% of households have incomes below £10,000<sup>5</sup> leading to significant numbers of residents relying upon social housing. It is this level of deprivation when coupled to the ethnic and culturally diverse nature of the borough, and the implications of this for family income and household size that provides the background to this Lettings policy. The main challenge for the policy is how to address high levels of severe housing need in a fair and transparent way with homes being allocated to people with the greatest need. According to the Housing Needs Survey Update 2005 there is a shortfall of 4387 affordable homes.<sup>6</sup> In 2004/5 the level of homeless applications was running at 145% of the total social housing lettings and of the applicants 90% were from Black and Minority Ethnic households. All the evidence points to a borough and a housing service under severe pressure. This Lettings Scheme helps implement the Council's commitment to:

- Prevent homelessness
- Increase options for access to good housing for homeless people
- Increase choice for residents in housing need
- Meet the needs of specific groups such as vulnerable and older people or residents from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- Establishing a fair and open way of allocating social housing
- Meet its wider commitments to creating safe, diverse neighbourhoods.
- Reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation

## Our Priorities

The policy has been developed in line with relevant legislation, guidance and good practice. The law says to whom we can and can't allocate housing. It allows Haringey to give reasonable preference to particular groups of people to whom housing can be allocated.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Indices of Deprivation 2004, DCLG.

<sup>5</sup> GLA CACI September 2005

<sup>6</sup> Housing Needs Survey Update 2005

<sup>7</sup> Section 167 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

The high levels of housing need locally mean that the policy focuses upon meeting the housing needs of:

### **1. *People facing severe overcrowding***

Addressing overcrowding locally is a top priority. According to the 2001 Census there are 20,455 households in Haringey who are suffering from overcrowding which equates to 22% of all households in the borough.<sup>8</sup> More than 10% of households living in social housing are overcrowded with 4.4% severely overcrowded. Many living in the private sector also suffer with nearly 8% overcrowded.

### **2. *People with Medical requirements***

The policy considers people with medical needs a high priority. The aim is to make sure that disabled or chronically ill applicants, including those with children with disabilities, are able to obtain housing that allows them a good quality of living. In responding to the medical needs of applicants the Council seeks to balance such needs against other housing pressures.

### **3. *Vulnerable People***

Adults vulnerable due to mental health issues or learning disability are a further focus of the policy. Addressing the housing requirements of people with complex needs is a priority. This policy highlights the importance of ensuring that vulnerable and excluded groups are able to access Choice Based Lettings in accordance with good practice.<sup>9</sup> Haringey has adopted the following definition of vulnerable adults<sup>10</sup> :

*“A person over the age of 18 years who:*

- Is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who*
- Is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself*
- Is or may be unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.”*

### **4. *Older People***

The Lettings Policy reflects the priority Haringey Older People’s Service (OPS) gives to supported housing. The aim of OPS is to provide an individual social care, support, advice and advocacy service within a housing management context, relevant to the needs of older people from the full range of communities and cultures in Haringey. The objective of the supported housing service is to help older people to maintain their independence and live at home as long as practical. The wider challenge is to slow down deterioration and consequent loss of confidence and self esteem. The Lettings Policy compliments the supported housing service and reflects the close working between housing services, housing providers, health and social services in addressing the needs of older people.

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<sup>8</sup> 2001 Census

<sup>9</sup> Pilot Based Lettings: An Evaluation, ODPM (2004)

<sup>10</sup> Policy & Procedure for Protecting vulnerable Adults. LB Haringey (2002)

## Equalities

Throughout its work, Haringey Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone. We accept that the Council is not free of unintended institutional discrimination. We will work to eradicate it. We aim to ensure equal access to our services by all citizens on the basis of need and to provide services in a manner that is sensitive to the individual whatever their background. We will represent the needs of our diverse communities to other agencies and make equal opportunities a key guiding principle in all our work with our partners. We will ensure that our workforce reflects the community it serves. We will take positive action to realise our equality of opportunity policy. We have a duty to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin or race, gender, HIV status, marital status, region or belief, responsibility for dependents, sexual orientation or unrelated criminal convictions.

## Discretionary Powers

The Lettings Policy cannot cover every eventuality. In special cases with exceptional needs, the **Head of Rehousing ( Strategy and Needs)** has discretionary power to award additional priority and approve offers of housing taking into account all factors relevant to housing and social needs.

In the various sections of the policy, reference is made to the rules determining priority and eligibility for housing. In all these instances, subject to any legal constraints, discretionary powers may be used to deal with special cases which may need to be treated in an exceptional way.

The points scheme set out in the policy may be varied, as required, to reflect the meeting of priorities.

## Chapter 1: Who can be considered for housing?

Any person may approach the Council and ask to join the Housing List

The reality of the severe lack of social housing lettings is that only a very small number of people will be offered social rented housing.

Applicants eligible for housing are considered according to their level of housing need. Housing need is measured by a points system that reflects this Lettings policy.

All decisions made will be put in writing and provided to the applicant.

There are also two groups of people who are not eligible to apply for council housing. These are people:

- covered by immigration rules.
- guilty of unacceptable behaviour

### **People covered by Immigration rules**

Applicants from abroad who are subject to immigration control are ineligible for allocations. The Secretary of State has prescribed classes of people who are subject to immigration control but are nonetheless to be eligible for allocation.

The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Amendment) England Regulations 2004 set out that some people who have a right to enter a Country (Such as EU Citizens) may not be eligible for housing if they are not habitually resident or not here exercising EEA rights (e.g. right to work)

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

‘Unacceptable behaviour’ is behaviour that would be likely to result in the council gaining a possession order against you or your family, even if you are not actually Haringey Council tenants. Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- owing substantial rent arrears (to any Landlord)
- causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors (anyone with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order)
- being convicted for using your home for illegal or immoral purposes (e.g. prostitution or drug dealing)
- committing an arrestable offence in or near your home
- being violent towards your partner or family
- allowing the condition of your home to deteriorate
- getting your tenancy by deception (for example, by giving untrue information)
- paying money to illegally obtain a Haringey Council tenancy.



## Applications from Home Owners

Housing applications from home owners are considered. However the following factors will be taken into account:

- Whether an applicant can reasonably be expected to remain in accommodation taking into account medical, social and other needs.
- The equity available if the property were sold and whether this would provide sufficient funds for the owner to buy or rent alternative suitable accommodation.
- Income, savings and/or other investments

The Council will assess whether sufficient funds are available to secure alternative suitable accommodation, taking into account the market value of the type of accommodation required.

Where there are medical problems, applications will be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where it is not possible to adapt the current accommodation to meet the needs of the owner-occupiers medical condition.
- Where it is too expensive to adapt the existing accommodation to meet the needs of the owner occupiers medical condition and they cannot afford to buy or rent suitable alternative housing
- The sale of the property would not enable the owner occupier to purchase or rent an alternative property suitable to their needs.

## Four Categories of Priority

The Council has to give priority to applicants who fall within categories of need defined by the law. The priorities reflect local needs and the legal requirement to give *'reasonable preference'*, *'additional preference'* or *'local preference'* to certain people who apply.

The Council has adopted four broad categories of housing need. The points system reflects these. Each is divided into priority areas.

The four categories of need, adopted by the policy allows clarity with respect to the different priority groups. Priority given to each group in the Point's scheme reflects the legal and guidance requirements.

The four categories are:

- Families and Children
- Property
- Care and Health
- Stable Communities

## Chapter 2: Families and Children

### *The Homeless.*

Homeless households are a high priority for the Council. The Council, primarily seeks to prevent homelessness.

It has adopted a Prevention and Options policy and has introduced a new service to prevent homelessness. The aim is to help homeless households find alternative housing.

If alternative options are not available and homelessness cannot be prevented then households may be eligible for a Council or housing association house subject to them having sufficient points. Homeless households will be allocated the following number of points:

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Homeless in Priority Need, not intentionally homeless.	To help households who have become homeless, are in Priority Need and in temporary accommodation to obtain settled accommodation.	350
2	Homeless, in Priority Need, but homeless intentionally.	This would meet the legal duty under Section 193(2) to people who are homeless with a Priority Need, but made themselves homeless (Intentional homeless).	200
3	Homeless or threatened with homelessness, but not in Priority Need.	This allows the Council to offer help to households who are homeless, but do not have a Priority Need. This meets duties under Section 195(5)(a).	100
4	Homeless or threatened with homelessness in Priority Need, but intentional homelessness.	This allows the Council to offer help to households who are homeless, have a Priority Need but are intentionally homeless. This meets duties under Section 195(5)(b).	100

### *Prevention of Homelessness*

Preventing homelessness is a key objective of the proposed new Lettings Policy. The points in this section help people to avoid homelessness by looking to other options.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Homeless at Home with 1 child.	To encourage people threatened with homelessness, in priority need, to stay in the parental home and to be rewarded for doing so. (For every 6 months)	200
2	Homeless at Home with 2 children	To encourage people threatened with homelessness, in priority need, to stay in the parental home and to be rewarded for doing so. (For every 6 months)	150
3	Out of Borough	To encourage people to move to a new area.	100
4	Out of London	To encourage people to move to a new area.	100
5	Mediation	Successful completion of mediation course. Points for staying in parental accommodation (For every 6	100

		months)	
6	Family Support	Points to reflect a need to move closer to other family members who will provide support.	50
7	Foster Carers/Kinship	This will allow the role of carers and foster parents to be recognised.	100

### *Assured Shorthold Tenancies*

These points encourage applicants to remain in private sector property

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Retention of private sector AST	To encourage households to remain in AST with a private landlord. (This does not relate to ASTs secured by the Council for households in Priority Need)	50 per annum

### *Living in Temporary accommodation*

The Council wants to reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation. The points for residing in such accommodation aim to help households move on to permanent housing.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Moving out of temporary accommodation	To help households move from temporary to permanent accommodation.	50 per annum

### *Violence and Harassment*

Families or individuals facing violence or harassment require a strong and high priority response from the Council.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Severe Harassment/Violence (Urgent Move)	Where a person/household requires an urgent move because of severe violence and/or harassment.	200
2	Harassment/Violence (Desirable Move)	Where it is desirable to move a person/household because of violence and/or harassment.	100
3	Witness Protection.	A move in order to secure a witness's safety	250

### *Children in Need*

These points reflect the Council's duties to Children.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Children and Young People unable to leave hospital.	A household would receive points to reflect the unsuitable nature of the parental home.	400
2	Child Protection.	Where a parent and child should be moved due to the child being in need or where a child is placed on the Child Protection Register and a more suitable property will reduce risk to the child.	250

### ***Relationship Breakdown***

In general, where a relationship breakdown has occurred between couples and one or both partners is a council tenant, one or both partners will receive 50 points providing:

- Both partners have been living in the accommodation since the commencement of the tenancy (irrespective of whether both partners held a joint tenancy)
- There has been no violence or threat of violence
- Under-occupation of the accommodation will not result from rehousing just one of the former partners.

Under this policy the term ‘couples’ refers to heterosexual, lesbian and gay relationships.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Relationship Breakdown	To support people to find new accommodation following the breakdown of a relationship.	50

## Chapter 3: Property

This section in the points scheme aims to address problems associated with a property.

### *Overcrowding*

The draft scheme reflects the clear policy commitment to address overcrowding. The statutory definition is very limited. The Council uses the English Survey of Housing definition of overcrowding and this uses the lack of bedrooms

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	1 bedroom short.	To reflect level of overcrowding	100
	2 bedrooms short.	To reflect level of overcrowding	200
	3 bedrooms short.	To reflect level of overcrowding	300
	4 bedrooms short.	To reflect level of overcrowding	400
2	Shared bathroom.	To reflect sharing of facilities	30
	Shared WC.	To reflect sharing of facilities	20
	Shared Kitchen.	To reflect sharing of facilities	30
	Shared Living room.	To reflect sharing of facilities	20

### *Poor Quality Housing*

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Insanitary Conditions	To tackle accommodation that poses an ongoing threat to a person or households health. Examples include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infected drinking water</li> <li>• Insect or animal infestation</li> <li>• Being exposed to untreated sewerage.</li> </ul>	200

### *Under Occupation*

These points encourage existing tenants to move to a smaller property. This should be considered alongside other incentives to move. The Council provides a range of financial incentives to encourage households to move to more suitable property.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Give up 1 room	To encourage tenants to move to smaller properties	200
2	Give up 2 rooms	To encourage tenants to move to smaller properties	300
3	Give up 3 rooms	To encourage tenants to move to smaller properties	400

## Chapter 4: Care and Health

### *Vulnerable People*

These points reflect the Council's duties to vulnerable adults and compliment the medical points scheme.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Mental Health with Support.	To help households with mental health challenges obtain housing subject to them being supported in such accommodation.	150
2	Drug & Alcohol challenges.	To help households where a person with drug or alcohol challenges undertakes and completes course of rehabilitation.	150
3	Learning Disability.	To help people with Learning Disability, who reside with parents to have own tenancy with support.	150
4	Complex Needs	To support people aged 55 and over who have complex needs and need specialist accommodation e.g. Disability, declining health, severe mobility or mental deterioration.	150

### *Medical*

The Council gives medical points to reflect how unsuitable an applicants current accommodation is. If there are medical problems, but the property is suitable for their medical needs, no points will be given.

### *Composite Test*

When considering the medical needs of a person the impact on the whole household will be considered.

No	Category	Aim	Points
	Category A	To address exceptional, urgent and/or life threatening situations that would be addressed by an urgent move to a different property.	300

**Category A:** A category A may be granted to people who have an urgent need to move for medical reasons. This might include a terminally ill person who needs larger accommodation for a carer to reside with them, or someone whose life may be at risk as a result of the property they live in.

No	Category	Aim	Points
	Category B	Where a different property would address health, mobility and disability problems facing a household.	150

**Category B:** This covers people with health, mobility or disability needs who require a home with improved access to facilities or mobility. This covers people whose home is not suitable because they have medical, mobility or disability needs and their existing home is not accessible or near to medical or family support.

#### ***Disability Facilities Grant***

Adapting homes so that disabled or residents with mobility problems can reside in them is important. The Council may use the Disability Facilities Grant to fund such activity. However where the cost of adaptations is above £25,000 for a property then the applicant will be considered for a transfer with Category B medical points being awarded.

No	Category	Aim	Points
	Category C	Home not suitable in the long term	50 per annum

**Category C:** This relates to people who have long term medical needs that will require them to move from their existing property. Customers with medical conditions such as arthritis, loss of mobility in limbs etc. They may require a ground floor property but currently reside in a house with stairs or a flat

# Chapter 5: Stable Communities

## *Local Connection*

The Council is committed to developing stable inclusive communities. The Lettings policy has a key role in achieving this strategic aim. An appropriate level of priority is given to applications that can demonstrate a local connection. A local connection is considered as an applicant:

- Who has lived in the Borough for at least 6 months in the last 12 months or 3 of the last 5 years or
- Having permanent employment within the Borough or
- Having a close relative, for instance a parent, sibling or child living in the Borough who is and has been living in the Borough for the last 5 years.

## *Transfers*

The Council will allocate points to recognise the important role 'good neighbours' can play in creating stable communities. Where a tenant applies for a transfer and they have:

- A rent account that has not been in arrears for the previous 3 years.
- Not been the subject of Possession proceedings for rent arrears
- Not been the subject of Possession proceedings for anti-social behaviour

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Local Connection	To reflect the importance of stable inclusive communities	75
2	Good Neighbour Transfers	To reflect a tenant meeting their tenancy conditions	50

## *Time on the Waiting List*

The Council also provides an annual uplift to recognise time on the Housing Register.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Time on Housing Register	To provide an annual uplift.	24 points per year

## *Management Transfers*

Management Transfers are used to address problems of emergency and special housing problems. Full details of the Councils Management Transfer scheme are set out in the procedures that underpin this policy.

## *Decants and Major Works*

Where an estate or property requires improvement work to bring it up to the Decent homes or other appropriate standard points will be awarded to reflect the degree of impact on the tenants life. These will help the person move if they wish to do so.



No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Decant	To help a tenant move where work cannot be done without a move	300
2	Major Works	To help the tenant move where they are concerned at the impact of major works on their home	50

### *Independent Living*

The following points recognise that groups of people need stable settled accommodation.

No	Category	Aim	Points
1	Care Leavers.	To ensure accommodation with support	200
2	Ex Offenders	To ensure people leaving prison are able to access stable accommodation.	150
3	Nomination from independent housing scheme.	To support a vulnerable person moving from supported housing to greater independence with 'own' tenancy.	150
4	16 & 17 Year olds.	To provide secure housing at age 18.	100

### *Teenage Parents*

The borough has a high level of teenage pregnancies. The support and options to help young parents are set out in the Council's '*Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Strategy*'. It places a strong emphasis upon semi independent housing options where the young person cannot remain with parents. The support comes from Supporting People (A funding scheme)

### *Other Categories*

No	Category	Aim	Points
3	Move on Quota	To help people move from temporary hostel based accommodation to long term housing	150
4	Shared Hostel Move on	To help people move from a temporary hostel containing shared facilities to long term housing	200
5	Service Tenants	To take account of a service tenancy that is coming to an end	300
6	Special Circumstances	This would allow points to go to a person who does not qualify under any other category	200
7	Leaving Supported Housing Projects	To help people move from Supported Living Projects to independent living.	300

## Chapter 6: How to apply for housing in Haringey

To apply for housing requires an applicant to complete a relevant application form. These vary according to the tenancy or housing position the applicant is in:

**Table 1: Application Forms for Housing in Haringey**

Applicant	Form	Where available
Homes for Haringey Tenant	Transfer Form	Homes for Haringey Local Offices <a href="http://www.homesforharingey.org">www.homesforharingey.org</a> <a href="http://www.haringey.gov.uk">www.haringey.gov.uk</a>
Housing Association Tenant	Housing Application Form	Tenants of housing associations need to approach their own landlord.
Other Applicants	Housing Application Form	Homes for Haringey Local Offices <a href="http://www.homesforharingey.org">www.homesforharingey.org</a> <a href="http://www.haringey.gov.uk">www.haringey.gov.uk</a> Prevention and Options Service, Apex House.

### Help for Applicants completing Application forms

It is the policy of Haringey Council to help people with the completion of Application forms where they have:

- Language needs
- Literacy needs
- Other Health and care needs.
- Where the applicant has a caseworker.

### Data protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 (the Act) is designed to protect personal data about living individuals (Data Subjects). The Act also places obligations on those organisations that process personal data (Data Controllers). As a Data Controller, Haringey Council is committed to complying with this legislation by applying the Principles of Good information handling across all its services.

### Tenancy Audit Scheme (TAS)

It is the requirement of Haringey Council, as part of its wider challenge to stop fraud to photograph all applicants and to keep a record for identification purposes.

### Information Check

All applications must be supported with relevant documents. All supporting documents, as far as possible, must be originals. Without this information Haringey cannot process an application. The Council reserves the right to make enquiries into your application.

# Chapter 7: Choice- The heart of the Lettings Policy

## **Our Commitment to you**

People applying for housing should be able to choose where they live. This Lettings policy gives priority to people with the greatest housing need, but also places choice at the heart of the way we work. The Council has moved to a Choice Based Lettings scheme for most lettings.

## **Home Connections**

Haringey is part of the Home Connections scheme. This is the North London choice based lettings scheme. When properties become available, they are advertised widely and applicants are invited to bid. The system allows applicants to bid for properties which they would like to be offered. Applicants on the Housing Register and existing tenants can bid for property. People can bid for as many properties as they like.

A nomination agreement is in place between the council and its housing association partners to ensure the best use of available homes via the Home Connections framework.

## **Exceptional Circumstances**

All allocations of permanent housing stock will be made this way, except in exceptional circumstances. These could include:

- Where there are serious and urgent child or public protection issues.
- If an applicant falls under the National Witness Mobility Scheme.
- If it may be costly to the Council if an applicant is not moved.
- Where homes are significantly adapted for use by vulnerable persons or with a disability.
- Where properties are designated for use by the Older persons Service
- Where a property is difficult to let
- Allocations to temporary accommodation
- Allocations to any homes which the council requires for specific purposes.
- In any interim period where either the Council is in organisational change
- Where CBL may lead to detriment being suffered by any groups(s)/persons.

## **Fraud**

Applicants will be closely checked, and evidence requested, by the Council before an offer is agreed. This means all relevant supporting documents and information supplied will be checked and appropriate home visits made. We will make sure you are legally entitled to housing. Where evidence is not provided the offer of housing will be withdrawn. If evidence of false information or any related fraud becomes known after the applicant has moved in or the transfer taken place, the Council will recover the property through the Courts and consider prosecution.

### ***Declaration on Fraud***

The law <sup>(11)</sup> very clearly states that it is an offence to make false statements, withhold information, or fail to disclose any change in circumstances. Haringey will take appropriate action if fraud is suspected.

### **What if I refuse the offer?**

Applicants made offers under Home Connections are not expected to refuse the offer, as they have asked to be considered for the property. All applicants included in the scheme will be provided with information to ensure they understand the scheme and the requirement for them to be pro-active. If a property is requested and the applicant later discovers that there is someone living locally that is a threat to them or their household, they may refuse the property within 24 hours of signing the tenancy.

Please note that refusing a suitable offer may lead to the Council discharging any legal obligation it has to rehouse an applicant.

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(11) Section 214 of the Housing Act 1996

# Chapter 8: Other Housing Options

## Prevention and Options Service

This Lettings Policy has clearly set out a number of priorities.

For applicants who are threatened with homelessness or suffer from lower levels of need the Council has introduced the Prevention and Options service.

This service advises residents on all available housing options as well as working hard to prevent homelessness through schemes such as:

- Homeless at Home and mediation
- Helping secure private sector lettings
- Helping secure home improvements to allow people to remain in residence.

The amount of social housing available each year is extremely limited. The Council has developed its Prevention and Options service to advise applicants on the Housing Register, or people in danger of homelessness, of alternative options. This section describes some alternative ways of existing council and housing association tenants, and in some cases those on the housing register securing accommodation. People's needs and circumstances are considered before an offer is made.

**Table 2: Mobility Scheme options**

Mobility Option	Description
Homeswap Scheme	HOMESWAP (Housing Organisation Mobility and Exchange Services) is a national scheme. It allows councils and housing associations to put people forward for each other's housing.
Seaside and Country Homes	The Seaside and Country Homes scheme allows council tenants and housing association tenants, aged 60 or over, to give up their council properties and move to the coast or countryside.
Anchor Trust Retirement Homes	The Anchor Trust is a housing association that provides sheltered housing in many parts of the country. This is accommodation for older people, with the services of a warden if needed.
Moving out of London	<p>Moving out of London may be an option. Some towns and cities have social and affordable housing to rent or buy. You can apply to move out of London if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haringey Council tenant</li> <li>• Haringey housing association tenant</li> <li>• Homeless household living in temporary accommodation provided by Haringey Council</li> <li>• Homeless household accepted as 'homeless at home'</li> <li>• Household registered for housing.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 9: Reviews and Complaints

All applicants have a right to appeal under the Housing Act 1996 <sup>(12)</sup>. This means that they have:

- a) The right of review of any decision not to give a preference under the policy.
- b) The right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of an applicant's case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation
- c) The right to a review or request any decision to treat an applicant as ineligible for any reason..

Homeless applicants also have an additional right of review of the suitability of any offer under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996. There are three other appeals against the offers of accommodation that are available where the applicant does not have a statutory review. These are

1. Council tenants
2. Housing Register applicants that Haringey have not accepted a homelessness duty
3. Homeless applicants who applied before 1<sup>st</sup> April 1997.

### Complaints

For applicants concerned at the quality of the service they received the opportunity to make a complaint exists. Haringey operates a three-stage procedure for dealing with complaints:

#### ***Stage 1 Local Resolution.***

When we receive your complaint, we will try to sort out the problem straight away. If we can't, we will write to you within 2 working days to let you know who is dealing with your complaint. We reply in writing to you within 15 working days

#### ***Stage 2 Service Investigation***

If you are unhappy with our Stage 1 reply, you are entitled to have your complaint considered by a senior manager in the relevant service. You should contact the Directorate complaints officer to explain why you are unhappy with the Stage 1 response.

#### ***Stage 3 Independent Review***

If you are unhappy with our stage 2 reply, the Central Feedback Team (formerly Corporate Complaints' Team) can conduct an investigation. The Central Feedback Team is independent of the service departments and will carry out an impartial investigation of your complaint on behalf of the Chief Executive.

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(12) Section 167(4a) (b) or Section 160A (9) of the Housing Act 1996.

## **Chapter 10: Applicants Rights**

### **Applicants for housing are entitled to:**

- free advice and information about making a housing application
- help with their application if they require it.
- have their application considered by us
- have their application kept confidential
- ask for information to help them to judge their chances of being offered accommodation including whether appropriate accommodation is likely to become available and how long they might have to wait
- be informed of any decision made and the facts of the case
- receive in writing the Council decision not to consider a person for housing because of unacceptable behaviour by them and the reasons for the decision