

## Overcrowding in Islington

We provide a range of advice and assistance to Islington residents regarding their housing and specifically run two outreach projects with Islington Council to provide accessible housing advice to residents. A significant number of enquiries we receive relate to residents in the Borough who are seeking to be moved to more appropriate accommodation due to overcrowding.

One of the major ways in which to achieve a move to larger size appropriate premises is to apply to join the housing register of LBI. The council uses a choice based lettings scheme and points are awarded to residents based upon their circumstances and in line with the Council’s Housing Allocation Scheme.

We comment below on the workings of the scheme and some generic issues that arise constantly.

Not meeting the average threshold of points to be able to successfully bid for a larger property:

Our experience is that residents living in severely overcrowded conditions are highly unlikely to be able to successfully bid for size appropriate accommodation.

Allocations schemes are required under the Housing Act 1996 to be framed to secure that reasonable preference is given to overcrowded households.

**The following points are awarded under LB Islington’s allocations scheme for overcrowding:**

<b>Type of Overcrowding</b>	<b>Points Awarded</b>
Opposite sex overcrowding; where two people of the opposite sex have to share a bedroom and one is 10 years or older (unless they are over 16 and living as a couple.)	10 points
Where there is more than one occurrence additional points will be given per occurrence	5 points
For each additional bedroom required	20 points
Additional points for households lacking 2 or more bedrooms (per household).	30 points

One of the main problems that we see on outreach is that overcrowding alone is unlikely to result in the tenant having sufficient points to be able to bid for and move to larger accommodation.

Council literature confirms the following average points were required in 2020/21 to bid for alternative accommodation:

2 bedrooms – 226

3 bedrooms – 252

4+ bedrooms – 289

### **Case study – Mr H**

LB Islington secure tenant since 2013. Lives with wife and 3 children. 1 bedroom property. The following points have been awarded:

Overcrowding	Bedroom Lacking	40
Overcrowding	Opposite Sex	20
Overcrowding	Overcrowding	30
	Severe Overcrowding	100
	Residence	
		<b>TOTAL 190</b>

The bedroom need is 3 bedrooms. Mr H is therefore unlikely to be able to bid for a suitably sized property given he would require 252 points.

We seek in such cases to see whether there are any other issues faced by the tenant that may result in further points and improve the chances of bidding e.g. a medical problem, a welfare/social issue/a disrepair/decant issues, harassment/ASB from a neighbour. However, some tenants have no such problems, only the overcrowding, and so there is little prospect of them moving.

The Lack of available larger properties – 4 plus bed rooms. The need for joined up working between Housing Options, social services and the disrepair team.

Even if medical and welfare points are awarded, for larger households with disabled members seeking to move to more size appropriate accommodation it is virtually impossible to obtain rehousing through the Housing Allocations Scheme. The availability of larger properties is very much limited and highly sought after. This can leave families stuck in unsuitable and severally overcrowded conditions indefinitely.

### **Case Studies:**

1. A couple live in a two bed flat with their four children (one of whom is disabled) and an elderly disabled relative. They are unable to cope in severely overcrowded

conditions. Social services have assessed and recommended special equipment and adaptations but these cannot be carried out or used in the current accommodation. The couple are no longer able to cope with caring for the elderly relative and social services are currently assessing him for residential care. As a result of the overcrowding the property is subject to condensation dampness. Although they have points with which to bid, 4 bed level access properties rarely become available.

2. A single parent of six children, two of whom are disabled, lives in a 3 bed flat which is severely affected by damp. The two double bed rooms are no longer habitable due to the damp. The tenants two sons sleep in the single room where the damp is not as severe. Four of the children and the tenant sleep in the living room on sofas and on the floor. Ms. B has a total of over 430 points with which to bid but has not been able to bid successfully as yet. The bed need is six bedrooms. Ms. B will accept 4 bed rooms because 5 and 6 bedrooms are highly unlikely to become available. The council has agreed to carry out the work but the family cannot remain in situ and would need to be decanted whilst the work is carried out.

We are of the view that such scenarios require joined up working from all departments involved to reach a resolution and that the council should in such severe cases consider making direct offers.

#### Condensation in overcrowded homes:

Condensation in severely overcrowded accommodation is common and is usually aggravated, if not caused by overcrowding. This is often recognized by an award of welfare points but sometimes only after our involvement and submissions to this effect. When tenants make comments regarding condensation they can sometimes be wrongly informed this is not something for which rehousing points can be awarded and is a disrepair issue.