

Draft Housing Allocations in Islington consultation questions

There is a massive shortage of council and housing association housing in the UK; the problem is bigger in London than anywhere else. In Islington, we have just under 16,000 households on our housing register, yet we can only house approximately less than 6% of households every year, which has been declining in recent years. House prices and rents in the private sector have risen more than incomes, therefore placing even greater demand on scarce housing.

Therefore, with the demand for housing increasing and the supply of available council and housing association accommodation reducing Islington Council's residents are facing a housing crisis.

Why do we need the allocations scheme?

The council is required by law to have a housing allocations scheme. The allocations scheme sets out the eligibility and qualification criteria for households to be placed on the council's housing register. The housing allocations scheme must set out the criteria for how households will receive different priority points from other households with different needs and provide priority to specific residents.

Therefore, we must decide who gets priority and the allocations scheme is how we do this. Longer term, we are using every tool at our disposal to increase the supply of all kinds of homes across the borough, including building 750 new council homes for social rent over the next 4 years. We are also aiming to ensure we can provide as much assistance to residents and provide access to alternative housing options and solutions.

How does the allocations scheme work?

The council currently operates a choice-based lettings system that allows eligible residents to bid on available properties that become available each week.

When someone applies to join the housing register, we assess their application and award priority points. The higher number of priority points a household is awarded increases the prospects of being rehoused into council or housing association accommodation.

Demand

The following table explains the demand and supply of council and housing association rented accommodation in Islington over the last 12 months:

Type of accommodation	Number of households on the register	Supply	% housed
Studio and 1 bedroom	6,370	486	8%
2 – bedroom	2,593	347	13%
3 – bedroom	1,479	124	8%
4 – bedroom	507	22	4%
5 – bedroom	181	7	4%
6 – bedroom or larger	79	1	1%

There has been a general increase in the demand for council and housing association rented accommodation over the last three years, due to COVID 19, the financial fallout of Brexit, the cost of living crisis, increased Domestic Abuse, and increased homelessness etc. but at the same time there has been a reduction in the supply of council and housing association rented accommodation. As of

the 1st October 2022, there are 922 homeless households living in temporary accommodation (bed and breakfast accommodation, hostel's, private rented temporary accommodation mainly outside of Islington). This type of accommodation is not suitable or affordable for Islington's residents. Therefore, urgent action is required to address these trends.

The table below shows the total points currently required to secure council and housing association rented accommodation and the % of households on the housing register who have currently been awarded these points.

Type of accommodation	Points required	% of households on the register with these points
Studio/1 bedroom	200	9%
2 bedroom	238	15%
3 bedroom	277	8%
4 bedroom or larger	343	7%

Why do we need to change the scheme?

We last changed the scheme in 2017. Then we had almost double the number of homes becoming available for rented accommodation than we do today. We want to create a simpler and more transparent housing register suitable for the situation in Islington today. There have also been some changes to the law that we need to consider.

Why are we consulting?

We know that having a safe and secure home is one of the most important things in life. We also know that we make better decisions when we listen to residents, and customers, so we genuinely want to know what you think. We will publish the results of this consultation and explain how we plan to use your feedback by the end of January 2023.

How did we make these changes?

There has never been more demand for rented accommodation in Islington. We're proposing the following key changes to make the housing allocations scheme clearer and fairer, but we want to know what you think of the changes.

Please place the proposed changes document here

What are we proposing to change?

1. You will only have a connection if you have lived in Islington for the last five consecutive years.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

2. Unacceptable behaviour

Generally, applicants or members of their household who have committed or been involved in unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be council tenants will not be accepted onto the Housing Register.

Do you agree we should not allow people who have been the perpetrator of domestic abuse, violent, coercive, or controlling behaviour towards a resident of the borough on to Housing Register?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

3. Households who have sufficient financial resources to own or rent accommodation.

Applicants who are considered to have sufficient financial resources to buy or rent suitable accommodation in London Borough of Islington will not qualify for the register. 'Sufficient financial resources' are defined as sufficient capital to buy; or sufficient income to raise a mortgage to buy, or a combination of both; and sufficient income to rent. How an applicant will be assessed to determine if they have sufficient financial resources is set out below:

The income and savings limits set are a) Applicants who have total savings, investments and/or assets of £ 16,000 or more b) Applicants whose household's total gross income from all sources exceeds an annual income of £90,000. '

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

4. Waiting time points

It is proposed to remove the waiting time points from all housing applications.

This is to prevent applicants without significant housing need who have accrued a high level of waiting time points (over the years) leapfrogging applicants who are in severe housing need. The length of time waiting will be reflected in date of registration.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

5. Dividing households

A council tenant may request one or more separate properties for their authorised household members. The council will only agree to this request where:

- the tenant and the authorised household members move to one - bedroom properties.
- the number of one-bedroom properties required does not exceed the number of bedrooms in the original larger home.

- the tenant and household member are rehoused simultaneously

Shared residency of children

Where children are subject to a shared residency arrangement the children are only considered to need one home of adequate size. Where either parent has a home of adequate size the remaining parent will be assessed as having overnight access only and no additional bedrooms will be agreed for the children.

Households occupying more than one tenancy

Where a family unit is not currently residing together the assessment will be based on the part of the household that occupies accommodation that provides them with the most suitable housing providing there is a reasonable expectation that they should reside together. The residency qualification will be based on that part of the household with the longest residency in the borough.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

6. Medical points

We propose to increase the priority points from 150 to 200 for category A medical priority points for life-limiting, life threatening or progressive condition, serving members of the armed force with a disability and Hospital discharge.

We are proposing that Category B medical priority points remain at 80 points for applicants at risk and housebound and applicants' health is severely affected by their current accommodation

There are no proposed changes to category C medical priority point totalling 40 points

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

7. Management Transfers

These points are only awarded to council tenants where a move is necessary on management grounds. Points may be awarded as follows:

150 points may be awarded:

- Where there is evidence to indicate that the tenant is currently at risk of serious harm from a third-party perpetrator(s). For example, risk of possible homicide, serious injury, assault, or abuse including domestic or sexual violence
- where it can be evidenced that the risks can only be managed effectively by moving the tenant elsewhere

- where there is a corresponding safety plan in place setting out how the new address will be kept confidential, minimising the risks of the perpetrator (s) finding the victim/survivor

These points will be reviewed every six months.

120 points may be awarded:

- Where there is no current risk from a third-party perpetrator, but where there are other risks serious enough to jeopardise the sustainment of the tenancy. Examples include (this is not an exhaustive list, and each case should be considered on its own merit / evidence):
- A tenant has a history of being subjected to abuse, neglect, or other serious harm at the tenancy. Whilst this is now historic (i.e., there is no current risk from a third party perpetrator) the tenant is experiencing serious and ongoing post-traumatic stress to the extent that the tenancy is in jeopardy
- A tenant has severe and enduring mental health issues and has developed paranoid / delusional thoughts about the property or neighbours, to the extent that living there is having a serious impact on their ability to manage the tenancy or stay well.
- Long running neighbour disputes where both parties are equally hostile to each other, where there is a clearly evidenced high level of distress but where the issues are not serious enough on either side to warrant strong enforcement action
- to applicants who release an adapted property where such an applicant no longer requires their current home and will therefore be releasing an adapted property by moving and are in unsatisfactory housing within 166A(3)(c)

60 points may be awarded for example:

- Where there are other, less serious risks or concerns that jeopardise the sustainability of the tenancy and where officers can evidence that a move will resolve the issues (all cases will be considered on their individual merits)

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

8. Points awarded from previous Allocation Scheme (Retention Points)

This section has been removed:

All applications to be re-assessed and therefore these points will no longer be applicable

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

9. Relationship breakdown

This section has been removed:

There is a growing increase in high needs single vulnerable applicants who require housing. This should be removed due to the severe shortage of social housing and the increased demand.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

10. New generation scheme

New generation points will only be awarded to households when an applicant has lived continuously as an agreed member of the household of an Islington resident for the five years prior to the date of application, the applicant must not have been previously housed by the council and proof of residence will be required.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

11. Domestic Abuse

We want to increase priority for Domestic Abuse households and therefore we are proposing to award 30 additional points for people fleeing domestic violence and abuse that have been assessed by MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

12. Prevention of homelessness (page 30)

Applicants who were owed under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 a prevention duty (section 195(2)) or relief duty (section 189B (2)) who have accepted a private sector tenancy solution will be awarded 30 points. Also, applicants who would normally be offered a section 193 (2) main housing duty and who have accepted a private sector tenancy solution will be awarded 70 points.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

13. Supported Choice

Where supported choice lettings are made an applicant will be given access to the choice based lettings system for a minimum of four weeks. If they are not successful within this time they will be

made an offer of a suitable property based on their assessed need for accommodation rather than two offers.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

14. Applicants not bidding

The council will review all applications where no bid has been placed on a regular basis. Applicants will be contacted to make sure that they understand how to bid and to ensure that they will be able to make future bids.

Therefore, applicants who:

- persistently bid and do not attend viewings
- applicants who consistently accept and later refuse properties or applicants who fail to bid for more than twelve months may be removed from the Housing Register.
- These applicants will be required to reapply if they consider they still have a housing need. Any decision to remove an applicant from the housing register is subject to review

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

15 New homes on council estates

The council is committed to ensuring that its new homes are meeting the needs of the local community by prioritising existing secure council tenants currently living on the estate on which they are being built. Where we construct new homes on existing estates, the local lettings of these new homes will be in accordance with the lettings plan for the individual scheme for up to 100% of the allocations.

Where local lettings plans are drawn up the following will apply to the local letting's allocations:

- Applicants must be secure council tenants living on the estate who meet the bidding threshold
- Applicants must fulfil the size and property requirements for the new homes, but under-occupiers will be able to bid for a property with an extra bedroom
- Applicants with the same number of points will be prioritised based on the length of time on the housing register
- Wheelchair adapted properties will be restricted to applicants who require such properties.

- Ground floor properties will be restricted to applicants with an assessed need for ground floor accommodation.
- Properties built to 'lifetime homes' standard which is a property that can be easily adapted for wheelchair use will be allocated to applicants assessed as needing this type of accommodation

Remaining properties subject to local lettings will be allocated to assured/secure social housing tenants with an assessed housing need living in the local ward. After local lettings on the estate and ward, remaining properties will be let according to the council's general Housing Allocation Scheme.

The Service Director of Housing Needs and Strategy can exercise discretion to include more than one estate and ward in the local letting's allocation

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

16 All new social rented housing

Islington Council also wants to make sure local people benefit from other, new social housing. Where new homes are built for social rent the local lettings of these new homes will be in accordance with the Local Lettings Plan for the individual scheme for up to 100% of the allocations.

Where local lettings plans are drawn up the following will apply to the local letting's allocations:

- Applicants must be assured/secure council tenants living in the ward who meet the bidding threshold
- Applicants must fulfil the size and property requirements for the new homes
- Applicants with the same number of points will be prioritised based on the length of time on the housing register
- Wheelchair adapted properties will be restricted to applicants who require such properties.
- Ground floor properties will be restricted to applicants with an assessed need for ground floor accommodation.
- Properties built to 'lifetime homes' standard which is a property that can be easily adapted for wheelchair use will be allocated to applicants assessed as needing this type of accommodation

After local lettings in the ward, remaining properties will be let according to the council's general Housing Allocation Scheme. The Service Director of Housing Needs and Strategy can exercise discretion to include more than one ward in the local letting's allocation.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

17 Intra Estate Transfer

This section has been removed:

The reason for this proposed removal is due to the severe shortage of housing and the increased demand in high needs cases.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

18 Keyworker housing

This section has been removed:

The reason for this proposed removal is due to the severe shortage of housing and the increased demand in high needs cases.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

19 Supported housing move on new points allocation

100 points may be awarded to applicants in supported housing where it is in the council's wider strategic interest for these applicants to move on from supported housing Examples where this may occur include:

- The applicant is in supported accommodation that they no longer need, and that the council urgently requires that accommodation for other applicants
- The supported accommodation scheme is closing or changing use
- The applicant has multiple complex needs and has a demonstrable need for settled accommodation in borough which they cannot reasonably be expected to find for themselves in the near future.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?

20 Annual Lettings Plans

We currently advertise properties through our Choice Based Lettings scheme in which residents can bid for properties that meet their needs i.e., bedroom entitlement, adaptations, and older persons dwellings.

What are we proposing to change?

We aim to produce an Annual Lettings Plan; this will set annual targets for property types across all priority needs points and ensure applicants in the highest priority are re-housed as soon as possible through active support from the council. This lettings plan will also highlight the reason for the households being accommodated, the percentage of lettings to each property type and the number of properties used as temporary accommodation.

Do you agree with the change?

Yes No Not sure

Do you have any comments on this?