

Accommodation Placement Policy for Homeless Households (Updated September 2019)

Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 This Accommodation Placement Policy sets out Westminster City Council's policy for prioritising homeless households for temporary accommodation and private rented sector offers according to its location. This policy does not apply to offers of long-term accommodation under Part VI of the Act.
- 1.2 It covers temporary accommodation for households who are accepted as homeless under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 and private rented sector offers (PRSOs) to discharge the main housing duty under provisions enacted by the Localism Act 2011.
- 1.3 This policy does not cover interim temporary accommodation for homeless households where this is required under section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 while inquiries are carried out.

Section 2: Key Principles

- 2.1 In accordance with legislation and statutory guidance, the council seeks to accommodate homeless households in Westminster as far as reasonably practicable. However, as there is a serious shortfall of accommodation in borough to meet housing need, it will not be reasonably practicable to provide accommodation within Westminster to every household and there will be an increasing need to use accommodation that may be at some distance from the borough.
- 2.2 Because of the limited supply of accommodation in both Band 1 and Band 2 (defined below), accommodation within these bands will be allocated to homeless households with a compelling need for it.
- 2.3 This policy is intended to ensure that we prioritise those who have the greatest need to be in or close to a particular location.
- 2.4 In addition, the council assesses the suitability of every offer of accommodation that is made to individual homeless households, in line with legal requirements, including legislation and regulation, associated case law and statutory guidance.

- 2.5 Where there is a particular reason why the household should not be housed in an area (for example, due to a risk of violence), this will be taken into account when assessing suitability.
- 2.6 The council will support people to relocate outside London (Band 3 as defined below), and support will be tailored to the needs of the individual household. Support may be offered to other households moving to properties in other bands if it is needed.

Section 3: Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 The impacts of this policy will be monitored and reported on annually as part of the Supply and Allocations report approved by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for housing each year. The policy will be reviewed after it has been in operation for twelve months (and annually thereafter) and the outcome will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Section 4: Accommodation Bands and Priority Categories

Accommodation Bands

- 4.1 All properties provided for use as s.193 temporary accommodation or private rented sector offers are banded in the following areas:
- **Band 1:** Westminster and the Local Area
 - Within Westminster; or
 - Within an adjacent borough to Westminster City Council (Kensington & Chelsea, Camden, City of London, Brent, Wandsworth or Lambeth)
 - **Band 2:** Greater London (within a London Borough)
 - **Band 3:** Other Areas Beyond Band 2

Priority Categories

- 4.2 The priority categories stated in the table below are a guide to placements and how suitable properties in Band 1 and Band 2 should be prioritised. Individual decisions about placements will also take account of the availability of suitable property in the bands. Any special circumstances demonstrating a compelling need for accommodation within either of these bands will also be considered.

- 4.3 Band 1 covers Westminster and adjoining boroughs, however some households within Band 1 who have a compelling need to remain in Westminster will be prioritised for properties in borough. This will be assessed on a case by case basis having regard to whether the reasons for awarding Band 1 priority demonstrate a compelling need to remain in Westminster.
- 4.4 Where a household is awarded Band 2 priority, the council has the discretion to offer accommodation outside Greater London where this is within a reasonable commuting distance of the school, college or workplace (as applicable).
- 4.5 Priority banding is not a guarantee of placement within the relevant area and is subject to suitable accommodation being available.
- 4.6 Households will be required to provide documentary evidence that they fall within a priority category. The Council's Medical Adviser may also need to assess the applicants' circumstances, where appropriate.

Accommodation Band	Priority Category
<p>Band 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Westminster; or • Within an adjacent borough to Westminster City Council (Kensington & Chelsea, Camden, City of London, Brent; Wandsworth or Lambeth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households where at least one member has a severe health condition or disability (including a severe mental health condition) that is long-term and requires intensive and specialised medical treatment/ aftercare that is either (a) only available in Westminster or (b) where a transfer of care would create serious risk to their safety or the sustainability of the treatment or care • Households where at least one member is receiving support through a commissioned care package or package of health care options provided in Westminster, where a transfer of care would create serious risk to their safety or the sustainability of the care • Households where at least one of the children has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan, is receiving education or educational support in Westminster and where it is demonstrated that a placement elsewhere would be seriously detrimental to their well-being • Households with a child where Family Services has demonstrated serious concerns about the child and is working with them intensively • Households whose circumstances come under one of the council's protocol arrangements between Housing and Family or Adult's services or where there is a recommendation through a joint assessment with Adult's or Family services • Households which include a registered Westminster City Council approved foster carer who is fostering a Westminster looked after child • Households which (a) include a Westminster City Council approved person who is caring for a Westminster looked after child, (b) include a Westminster child that is subject to a Westminster Special Guardianship Order or (c) have a private fostering arrangement with a carer resident in Westminster where they have notified the council • Households where at least one person can demonstrate that (a) they have a longstanding arrangement (or if the arrangement has started more recently, that it is likely to be longstanding) to provide high levels of care and support to another person in Westminster who is not part of the resident household and the cared for person would be likely to require statutory health and social support if the care ceased and (b) that they would be unable to commute to fulfill their caring duties • Households where at least one person can demonstrate that (a) they have a longstanding arrangement (or if the arrangement has started more recently, that it is likely to be longstanding) to receive high levels of long term care from another person in Westminster who is not part of the resident household and would be likely to require statutory health and social support if the care ceased and (b) that the carer would be unable to commute to fulfill their caring duties
<p>Band 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with at least one child in their final year of Key Stage 4 (generally Year 11) or in Key Stage 5 (A levels or equivalent Level 3 vocational courses, such as BTECs, or GCSE re-sits in English and Maths) at a school or further education college in London • Where the applicant or their partner is accepted by the council as being in employment and has been working continuously for a period of at least six months in Westminster/ a Band 1 borough under a written contract of employment (permanent or temporary) which requires at least 16 hours a week. Parents who are on parental leave but who intend to return to work will also be considered under the criterion • Households already living in temporary accommodation that are required to move due to housing renewal as set out in the Policy for Tenants in Housing Renewal Areas
<p>Band 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other locations beyond Band 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other homeless households may be offered accommodation beyond Band 2

Section 5: Support for employment within Greater London

- 5.1 Where an applicant or their partner is accepted by the council as being in employment in the rest of Greater London and has been so working continuously for a period of at least six months under a written contract of employment (permanent or temporary) which requires at least 16 hours a week, the council will aim to place them within a reasonable commuting distance to their place of work, where possible. This includes parents who are on parental leave but who intend to return to work.