

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

**POLICY FOR TENANTS IN HOUSING
RENEWAL AREAS**

August 2019

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SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2010 the Council published a Housing Renewal Strategy¹ that set out plans for housing renewal over a number of years and a number of programmes are underway. A key aim of the strategy is to increase the supply and quality of affordable housing. In 2015, a Housing Strategy Direction of Travel Statement was published, which set out the Council's intentions to deliver existing housing renewal programmes and to work towards housing renewal becoming business as usual.
- 1.2 In the housing renewal areas there will be new social, intermediate and private housing. In order to implement housing renewal some homes occupied by tenants will have been identified for redevelopment. This Policy sets out the rehousing options, headline financial compensation and the general processes that will be followed when homes occupied by council tenants need to be acquired (in Section 2). It also sets out the general approach that will be taken when homes occupied by other tenants need to be acquired (in Section 3).
- 1.3 The Council will actively engage with residents and residents' groups throughout the housing renewal process and in relation to each individual scheme. The Council will make every effort to ensure that all affected residents are fully informed about the specific rehousing options and procedures that apply to them, and more detailed information will be provided for each scheme.
- 1.4 There is a glossary at the back which explains some of the terminology in this Policy. Other relevant definitions are in this Section.
- 1.5 This Policy makes reference to the Housing Allocation Scheme and it should be read in conjunction with it. The Allocation Scheme is updated from time to time and it can be found at the link below:

www.westminster.gov.uk/how-we-allocate-housing

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http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/wcc_housing_renewal_report2010_lowres.pdf

2. Who this Policy applies to and when it will be implemented

- 2.1 This Policy applies to tenants in the housing renewal area where:
- 2.1.1 Their properties have been identified for acquisition *and*
 - 2.1.2 The Cabinet Member responsible for Regeneration has made a decision that housing renewal should proceed, subject to obtaining any necessary planning consents.
- 2.2 Tenants will be advised when the Policy is implemented. As housing renewal may be undertaken in phases, the Policy may be implemented in phases.

3. Key definitions

- 3.1 ***Definition of the Housing Renewal Area***
Each Housing Renewal Area will be identified in either a Cabinet Member or a Cabinet Report by reference to a plan. The boundaries of the Housing Renewal Area may be subsequently changed by the Cabinet Member or the Cabinet. The size of the Housing Renewal Area will differ between schemes, in some cases it may be part of an estate or a single estate, while in others it may be more than one estate or a whole area.
- 3.2 Current Housing Renewal Areas are the Church Street Area, and the Tollgate Gardens and Ebury Bridge Estates. Others may be determined in future.
- 3.3 ***Definitions of different tenants***
- 3.4 **Council tenants**
There are different types of council tenants:
- 3.5 ***Secure tenants in general needs housing***
These are tenants of public bodies such as the Council. Their secure tenancies can only be ended with a court order. The rights and obligations of secure tenants are set out in the 1985 Housing Act. The majority of council tenants are secure tenants.
- 3.6 ***Secure tenants in Community Supportive Housing (also known as sheltered housing)***
These tenants are exactly the same as in 3.5 above, the only difference is that they are living in housing that is generally designated for older people, aged 60 or over. This housing will generally have communal facilities and a warden.

3.7 *Flexible tenants*

Flexible tenancies were created under the Localism Act 2011. A flexible tenancy is a type of secure tenancy and contains many of the same features. The main differences are: that it lasts for a fixed period, rather than running on indefinitely; and if the landlord applies for possession at the end of the fixed period, the Court has to grant it, as long as all the correct procedures have been followed. From 2014 the majority of tenancies issued by the Council have been flexible tenancies and the Council's Tenancy Policy sets out when a new tenancy will be granted at the end of the fixed term (Older people in Community Supportive Housing are not offered flexible tenancies). The Tenancy Policy can be found here:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

3.8 *Introductory tenants*

The 1996 Housing Act allows councils to issue introductory tenancies for twelve months, to new tenants (i.e. those that have never been a council tenant), before offering them with secure or flexible tenancies and the Council has adopted this approach. At the end of the introductory period as long as there has been no breach of the tenancy agreement all introductory tenants will become flexible or secure tenants.

3.9 **Registered provider (housing association) tenants**

In Westminster there are a small number of **Westminster Community Homes tenants** living in housing renewal areas. This is a registered provider that is owned by the Council and it offers assured tenancies. Assured tenancies are similar to secure tenancies (described above) but the rights and obligations are set out in different legislation. The rehousing rights and options in Section 2 also apply to tenants of Westminster Community Homes.

3.10 **Other tenants that might be living in the housing renewal area**

3.11 *Private rented tenants*

These are tenants of private landlords, which in the housing renewal area will be leaseholders that have decided to rent out their properties. There are different types of private tenancies but the most common is an assured shorthold tenancy. An assured shorthold tenancy can be brought to an end after any fixed period has expired by the landlord giving the tenant two months' notice, or the tenant giving the landlord one month's notice.

3.12 *Temporary accommodation tenants*

Households that have been accepted as homeless by the Council are generally offered temporary accommodation, with an assured shorthold or insecure tenancy, before they move into more permanent housing.

Sometimes the Council uses its permanent housing stock for temporary accommodation, or it can use property rented from a private landlord.

SECTION 2: COUNCIL TENANTS

4. Overall approach

- 4.1 This Section also applies to assured tenants of Westminster Community Homes.
- 4.2 ***Approach to rehousing***
The Council wants to ensure that council tenants affected by housing renewal can remain in the local area and retain their local links and networks. **Council tenants will have a right to remain in the housing renewal area by moving directly into one of the new social homes, or they will have a right to return to a new social home, if the new homes are not ready to move into straight away.** The new social home will not necessarily be in exactly the same location as the current one.
- 4.3 In some limited circumstances, council tenants will not have a right to remain or return to the housing renewal area and these are set out in 6.6 – 6.9.
- 4.4 Other rehousing options are also available for those that choose them.
- 4.5 A fair and transparent approach to rehousing will be taken. Every effort will be made for tenants to have the same or similar tenancy rights and rent levels in the new homes, as far as is possible.
- 4.6 ***Approach to advice, support and information***
The Council is committed to working closely with secure tenants in ways suited to their needs, in order to communicate and implement this Policy. It is recognised that having to move can be stressful and tenants will be given sufficient time to choose their rehousing option and they will be supported throughout the process of moving. There will be named officer/s they can contact and they will also be able to speak to an independent advisor.
- 4.7 Additional assistance will be provided to vulnerable tenants and the Council may work with third parties, including family members, social services and health practitioners to identify and address any special needs.

4.8 ***Approach to possession proceedings and Compulsory Purchase***

The Council is committed to moving tenants by agreement and for tenants to have enough rehousing options to meet their needs. If it is not possible for an agreement to be reached however, the Council may apply to the court for a possession order or it may use its powers of Compulsory Purchase.

4.9 ***Approach to fraud***

Any false applications for rehousing will be taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

4.10 ***Discretion***

There may be limited circumstances when the relevant Director, or duly delegated persons, may exercise discretion in relation to this Policy due to exceptional individual circumstances and they will do this by taking into account all the relevant information.

4.11 ***Appeals***

Tenants can appeal to the relevant Director or to a senior officer nominated by them about how this Policy has been applied to their personal circumstances. Appeals must be made by email or in writing within 21 days of written notification of the decision which the tenant seeks to challenge. The appeal needs to set out the reason why the tenant believes that the decision is not in line with the Policy. The Council will offer reasonable assistance to any tenant who cannot make an appeal by email or in writing. A decision about the appeal will be made within 21 days of it being made, using the evidence provided. The deadline for making a decision about the appeal may be extended where further information is needed.

4.12 If the appeal is successful a new decision will be made. If the appeal is unsuccessful the Council's original decision will remain. The tenant will however be advised how to get independent advice on the options open to them.

5. Financial entitlements – statutory compensation for council tenants

5.1 Tenants will be entitled to claim two sorts of payment:

- **A home loss payment** – to compensate them for having to move at a time which is not of their choosing
- **A disturbance payment** – to cover all the reasonable costs of moving.

5.2 Further detailed information will be available about the financial assistance that can be claimed and when it will be provided.

5.3 ***The Home loss payment***

Every tenant that has been living in their home as their main residence for twelve months, prior to the date they move, will receive a home loss payment. This is a statutory payment and the amount is set by government.

5.4 Only one payment will be made to joint tenants. Should a dispute arise between joint tenants, spouses or civil partners (or persons living with the tenant as a spouse or civil partner), tenants are encouraged to seek legal advice to resolve it.

5.5 In some cases, the Council may choose to make a home loss payment to tenants that had been living in their homes for less than twelve months prior to the date of the move and decisions in these situations will be made on a case by case basis.

5.6 The Council may seek to recover any rent arrears from the home loss payment.

5.7 ***Disturbance payments***

Tenants have a statutory right to receive a payment to cover all the reasonable costs of moving. Examples of the types of costs that can be claimed include: (but are not restricted to)

- Removal costs - for vulnerable residents this can also include additional support, such as furniture packing and unpacking
- Redirection of mail for up to three months
- Telephone and internet disconnection and reconnection
- Disconnection of television aerials or satellite dishes connected to an existing television. Reconnection will only be covered with the landlord's approval
- Washing machine, cooker, dishwasher and plumbed fridge disconnection and reconnections (these will generally be carried out by the Council's removal firm)
- Refitting of existing curtains and carpets. Where this is not possible the payment will cover new equivalent curtains and carpets
- Dismantling and re-fitting of resident owned fitted units (such as kitchen units and wardrobes)
- Any extra costs of new school uniforms – for example if any children in the household have to go to a new school due to the move.

5.8 Many of the services covered by a disturbance payment will be arranged by the Council using its own suppliers, so tenants will not need to arrange them, pay for them or to claim a disturbance payment for them. Tenants will be advised where this is the case and of the processes involved.

5.9 Tenants will be advised of the process that applies when they need to arrange and pay for services themselves. All items claimed for, and the amount, will need to be agreed in advance with the Council and quotes will need to be

provided from legitimate suppliers. Receipts and invoices will need to be supplied before the payment can be made.

- 5.10 If a tenant has opted to return to the Housing Renewal Area, but needs to move away temporarily while the new homes are built, they will be entitled to two disturbance payments.
- 5.11 Where the Council has agreed to offer more than one home i.e. has agreed a “family split”, disturbance payments will be considered on all the moves and decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

6. Rehousing options for council tenants

- 6.1 This Section applies to introductory, secure or flexible council tenants and Westminster Community Homes tenants (see the definitions in 3.4 – 3.9). The Cabinet Member and Director responsible for Regeneration at the Council will decide when the process of rehousing tenants should start and tenants will be advised of all the relevant timescales and processes.
- 6.2 Every effort will be made to inform tenants about their options at the earliest stage, such as through newsletters, surgeries and one to one discussions. A council officer will be available to answer questions about these options and tenants can also discuss them with an independent advisor.
- 6.3 Housing renewal can happen in different ways, sometimes it will occur in a number of phases over a number of years or it can involve a whole estate being demolished at once. However, in all cases, tenants will have the right to a new home in the housing renewal area, unless one of the exceptions in 6.6 – 6.9 applies. This does not mean to a home in exactly the same location, on the same floor or with the same aspect as their current home.
- 6.4 ***Options for council tenants***

Every tenant, including those in community supportive housing, has the right to a new social home in the Housing Renewal Area. They can:

Option 1: Move straight into one of the new social homes, if this is possible

About the new home

- The new home will be of the size needed, which means it could be bigger or smaller than the current home. The information in 7.3 – 7.13 sets out how the size of the new home will be assessed. A secure tenancy will be offered to existing secure tenants so they will retain the same tenancy rights as far as is possible
- A new flexible tenancy will be offered to existing flexible tenants in line with the Council's Tenancy Policy
- An introductory tenant will generally be offered either a flexible or a secure tenancy in line with the Council's Tenancy Policy
- Westminster Community Homes tenants will be offered secure tenancies
- It will be the same type of home as the current one i.e. if it is Community Supportive Housing then further Community Supportive Housing will be offered. The rent will be set in line with the national formula so it shouldn't be significantly different from the rent in the original home (but it might be higher)

Information about rent and service charges at the new homes will be shared with tenants as soon as it is available

Option 2: Move into another social home in Westminster for a temporary period, but then move into one of the new social homes in the Housing Renewal Area when they are ready

About the temporary home

- The new home will be of the size needed, which means it could be bigger or smaller than the current home. The information in 7.3 – 7.13 sets out how the size of the new home will be assessed
- A secure tenancy will be offered to existing secure tenants so they will retain the same tenancy rights as far as is possible
- A new flexible tenancy will be offered to existing flexible tenants in line with the Council's Tenancy Policy
- An introductory tenant will generally be offered either a flexible or a secure tenancy in line with the Council's Tenancy Policy
- Westminster Community Homes tenants may be offered a secure or assured tenancy for their temporary move
- It will be the same type of home as the current one i.e. if it is Community Supportive Housing then further Community Supportive Housing will be offered
- The rent will be set in line with the national formula so it shouldn't be significantly different from the rent in the original home (but it might be different)
- Tenants will have the right to stay in the temporary home if they change their mind about moving again

Tenants can choose to move into a property offered by a registered provider during this period but should note that the tenancy terms will be different.

About the new home

See above in Option 1

Tenants that don't want to move into one of the new homes can:

Option 3: Move into another social home in Westminster, this might be in the same general area, or in another part of Westminster. It could also be into Community Supportive Housing (sheltered housing) for those that are eligible and 60 or over.

About the new home

- The new home will be of the size needed, which means it could be bigger or smaller than the current home. The information in 7.3 – 7.13 sets out how the size of the new home will be assessed
- A secure tenancy will be offered to existing secure tenants so they will retain the same tenancy rights as far as is possible
- A new flexible tenancy will be offered to existing flexible tenants in line with the Council's Tenancy Policy
- An introductory tenant will generally be offered either a flexible or a secure tenancy in line with the Council's Tenancy Policy
- Westminster Community Homes tenants may be offered a secure or assured tenancy
- It will be the same type of home as the current one i.e. if it is Community Supportive Housing then further Community Supportive Housing will be offered
- The rent will be set in line with the national formula so it shouldn't be significantly different from the rent in the original home (but it might be different)

Tenants can choose to move into a property offered by a registered provider during this period but should note that the tenancy terms will be different

(The Council can also try to help tenants move elsewhere, if they want to, through one of the mobility schemes, for example there is a Seaside and Country Homes Scheme to help older people move outside London)

For tenants that want to become home owners:

Option 4: Tenants will have high priority for any new intermediate homes (see the definition of intermediate housing in the Glossary) built in the housing renewal area and which are for sale, so they can get on the housing ladder

To qualify for this option, tenants will need to be eligible for "intermediate housing" and be able to afford to buy the new intermediate homes. Information about eligibility is at:

www.homeownershipwestminster.co.uk/

About the new home

- This will be a type of low cost home ownership such as shared ownership

6.5 Every effort will be made by the Council to come to an agreement with tenants about their rehousing but if one cannot be reached possession action may be taken in order to enable housing renewal to go ahead.

6.6 **Exceptions**

There may be times when these options cannot be offered, or offered in full, as set out below.

6.7 *Where there has been a change in circumstances*

The new homes, in the Housing Renewal Area, are being built taking into account residents' needs. The Council appreciates that people's circumstances change and will always try and accommodate them in the new scheme. However there will be a point where a new home of the size and type needed cannot be offered as the plans have been finalised. Tenants will be advised of all the relevant timescales relating to this and they should advise the Council of any changes in circumstances as soon as possible.

6.8 *Where there is a need for specialist housing*

A new home in the Housing Renewal Area cannot be guaranteed to tenants that now need specialist housing, where it is not part of the redevelopment. Specialist housing is defined in the Glossary and includes, for example, supported housing for young people or people with mental health issues. Where it is being provided, tenants will be prioritised for it and if it is not being provided, they will be advised about making an application.

6.9 *Where a tenancy has been lost*

For all of the options, if the tenant at any point loses their tenancy, (i.e. the Court grants possession of it) due to a breach of the tenancy agreement they will no longer be eligible for any of the rehousing options.

7. **The rehousing process**

Summary of the stages

- **Stage 1: The Housing Needs Survey** – at this stage the tenant considers their options and the Council finds out about who is in the household, the type of new home needed and any particular needs the tenant has
- **Stage 2: The Assessment** – at this stage a detailed assessment is undertaken of the size and type of new home needed
- **Stage 3: Rehousing begins** – at this stage the option chosen is confirmed in writing and generally cannot be changed. Rehousing will then start.

7.1 **Stage 1: The Housing Needs Survey**

Every tenant will be visited and given the opportunity to discuss their rehousing options and to ask questions. They will be advised how they can access independent advice. They will also be asked to complete a Housing

Needs Survey, to help the Council understand their needs and the type of new housing which will be needed. The Survey will cover:

- Who is in the household
- If any household members have any medical issues or disabilities which will affect their rehousing. These will need to be assessed by the Council's Medical Assessor
- The preferred location for the new home if they are not opting to return
- Anything else that might affect their rehousing such as the location of employment, schools or any support services
- If the household needs any additional support to move (which may mean they are eligible for an enhanced Disturbance Payment)
- Which of the options they have chosen.

7.2 Checks will be carried out where necessary and tenants may be asked to provide additional information. These surveys may be updated from time to time.

7.3 ***Stage 2: The Assessment***

Using the information from the last Housing Needs Survey, the Housing Allocation Scheme and relevant legislation, an assessment will be carried out of the size and type of new home that is needed. At this stage the tenant may be asked to provide more information and evidence about household members and how long they have been living with them.

7.4 *The size of the new social home*

The same size property will not automatically be offered and the size of the new property will be based on what is needed. The size will be assessed by using the Housing Allocation Scheme and referring to the Council's Bedroom Standard. It will depend on:

- The household members that are eligible to be included in the assessment
- The household size and the ages of any children and adults
- Any medical needs of the household.

7.5 Household members that are eligible to be included in the assessment

In line with the Council's Allocation Scheme the following people can be included:

- Secure/joint tenants of the Council
- Household members originally housed with the tenant by the Council
- The long-term, co-habiting partner of the tenant
- Dependent children who normally reside with the tenant on a permanent basis
- Adult relatives, including adult sons and daughters of the tenant, who were originally re-housed by the Council into the current accommodation and their dependent children who normally reside with them. Their spouses and/or

partners, that were **not** part of the original household, will only be included where they did not cause overcrowding when they moved in. Adult relatives (originally re-housed with the tenant) that have not been living with the tenant continuously will only be considered part of the household if they have resided there for five years continuously, before confirmation by the Council that their home will be subject to regeneration (unless they are students living away on a temporary basis, are detained in an institution or hospital, are in the armed services or are serving a custodial sentence and in all cases there is an intention to return)

- Carers, where it has been agreed they need to be rehoused with the tenant.

7.6 Everyone else, not included in 7.5 above, will be **excluded** from being part of the assessment and this includes:

- Friends, lodgers and sub-tenants living with the tenant
- Anyone else that moved in that did not form part of the original household, including relatives
- Children of the tenant whose main/principal home is elsewhere
- Any other person the Council, in its discretion deems ineligible.

7.7 Some flexibility may be applied to this criteria (in 7.5 and 7.6) for older family members of the tenant/s (aged 60 or over), that would normally be excluded from the assessment. They may be included in the assessment where they did not cause overcrowding when they moved in. Decisions about this will be made on case by case basis and will take into account the length of time the older family member had been residing in the household and whether other housing is available to them.

7.8 The household size and the ages of household members

Once the household members that are eligible to be included in the assessment are worked out, the size of the home needed can be determined. This will generally be assessed in line with the Council's Bedroom Standard in the Allocation Scheme.

7.9 Single people, who are living in one bedroom homes and would normally only be eligible for a studio, will be offered homes with one bedroom. Single people already living in a studio may be offered another studio. Couples are entitled to a one bedroom property.

7.10 Larger households will be offered homes with a living room, kitchen, (or a combined living room and kitchen), bathroom/WC and the appropriate number of bedrooms. The following table shows how the number of bedrooms is worked out for eligible household members:

	Each of the following will be offered ONE BEDROOM
Adults	The tenant and any spouse or partner
	Adult household members and any spouse or partner (unless they are siblings – see below)
	Two siblings of the same sex where the age gap is ten years or less (where there is more than a ten year age gap two bedrooms will be offered)
Children	Two children of the opposite sex under 10
	Two children of the same sex under 16
	Two children of the same sex where one or both is over the age of 16 and where the age gap is 10 years or less
	One child (that is not included in the categories above)

- 7.11 Overcrowded households will be offered larger properties which meet their needs and households that are under occupying will generally be offered smaller properties. Tenants that move to smaller homes because they are under occupying will be eligible for a Cash Incentive Payment, if they meet the criteria set out in the Housing Allocation Scheme.
- 7.12 Households that are under occupying may be offered one additional bedroom, above their assessed needs, for their permanent move, if there is available supply and where this is the case they will not be eligible for a Cash Incentive Payment.
- 7.13 In some cases, households needing homes with two bedrooms or more might be offered separate properties. This is known as “splitting” the household. This will be considered and agreed on a case by case basis. Where it is agreed, the original tenant will be offered an equivalent tenancy to the one they have now and they will have the right to a new home in the Housing Renewal Area, if this is their choice. Household members that have not held a tenancy before will be offered tenancies in line with the Council’s Tenancy Policy and this will generally be an introductory tenancy followed by a flexible tenancy (see 3.7 and 3.8). They will not be eligible for a new home in the Housing Renewal Area.
- 7.14 The type of new social home
The Council’s Medical Advisor will assess if the household needs a certain sort of property such as a level access one, or one that is suitable for a wheelchair user. All necessary aids and adaptations will be replaced in the new home.
- 7.15 *Joint tenants*
Should there be a dispute between joint tenants, who are spouses or civil partners (or persons living with the tenant as a spouse or civil partner), tenants are encouraged to seek legal advice.

7.16 *Priority for rehousing*

Anyone that needs to move due to housing renewal will generally have the highest priority to move in the Housing Allocation Scheme, so they will have sufficient points to be prioritised ahead of other groups needing housing.

7.17 *Priority for the new build social homes in the Housing Renewal Area*

Returning tenants, who have had to move away, will have the **first priority** for these (i.e. those selecting Option 2) and other households that need to move will have **second priority** (i.e. where Option 1 is possible). Where two households are interested in the same property, the length of time they had lived at their original home will be used to decide who it should be offered to, with the tenant that had lived there the longest, being offered the property.

7.18 A Local Lettings Plan will be developed to decide how the remaining new build homes will be allocated and this will be consulted on.

7.19 *Priority for other moves*

As stated above, anyone that needs to move due to housing renewal will generally have the highest priority to move in the Housing Allocation Scheme, so they will have sufficient points to be prioritised ahead of other groups needing housing.

7.20 The supply of housing for the temporary moves for Option 2 and for the permanent move for Option 3 in the local area may be limited. Those with the highest needs will be prioritised for the supply that is available by the award of additional points or priority. These will be awarded where:

- An application has been made to a primary or secondary school for a qualifying member of the household, and a move away from the local area could result in them not being chosen for it. (This only applies where the current address is in the catchment area)
- A qualifying member of the household is receiving a specialist medical service and would be unable to continue to travel there due to their age, vulnerability and/or a disability
- The tenant is in Community Supportive Housing and is particularly vulnerable due to their age or health
- There are other exceptional reasons.

7.21 **Stage 3: Rehousing begins**

A letter will firstly be sent to the tenant setting out:

- Their rehousing choice. At this stage the option chosen is generally binding, although for Option 2 tenants will be able to remain in the temporary home if they wish
- All the relevant timescales, such as when rehousing will start and when it needs to be completed – called the “Rehousing Period” and when the new homes are likely to be ready (if Option 1 is chosen)
- How the homes will be allocated and when the “Bidding Period” will start and finish (see 7.22 – 7.23 for further information)
- That they should let the Council know about any change in their circumstances
- How to apply for home loss and disturbance payments
- Any other relevant information.

7.22 Whichever option is chosen, tenants will generally be able to bid for the new homes through choice based lettings, during a “Bidding Period”. If more than one household is interested in the same property, and they have equal priority for it, the length of time at their current address will be used to decide who it should be offered to. During this period direct offers may also be made to secure a property for a tenant, but they do not have to accept it. Tenants will always be able to view alternative properties before they accept them.

7.23 Once the “Bidding Period” has ended, if the tenant has not moved one suitable direct offer will be made. A further suitable direct offer may be made in exceptional circumstances.

7.24 Households needing wheelchair accessible units and those needing four bedrooms or more will be made suitable direct offers rather than bidding for homes through choice based lettings. This is because the supply of these homes is limited.

7.25 *Changes in circumstances*

Tenants need to inform the Council as soon as possible if they have a change in their circumstances which may affect the size and type of new home they need. As stated in 6.7, there may be a point where a new home of the size and type needed cannot be guaranteed in the new development as the plans have been finalised. Where this is the case, a new home of the right size and type needed will be offered as close to the Housing Renewal Area as possible.

SECTION 3: OTHER TENANTS IN HOUSING RENEWAL AREAS

8. Homeless households in temporary accommodation

- 8.1 All homeless households that have been placed in temporary accommodation by the Council will be visited and advised of the relevant timescales, such as when they will need to move and the processes that will be followed. They will generally be offered alternative temporary accommodation (see 8.3 below for when this might not be the case). Households in temporary housing do not have a right to remain in or return to the Housing Renewal Area and the options in Section 2 do not apply to them.
- 8.2 Temporary accommodation can be in different locations and some is outside London. All households in temporary accommodation in housing renewal areas will be prioritised for alternative temporary accommodation in London. Households with the highest needs will always be prioritised for temporary accommodation in Westminster and adjoining boroughs and the Council's Accommodation Placement Policy for Homeless Households will be used to determine this. It is available at the link below:
- www.westminster.gov.uk/how-we-allocate-housing
- 8.3 Where a household in temporary accommodation is estimated to be within twelve months of being able to successfully bid or be made offers for social housing, they will be awarded additional priority to bring this forward. This is to try and avoid households having to move twice in a short period of time (firstly into alternative temporary accommodation and secondly into social housing). There is no guarantee that two moves won't be necessary however, as this will depend on the supply of social housing available at the time.

9. Private tenants

- 9.1 The Council will make every effort to communicate with private tenants as early as possible to explain what is happening and when. All private tenants will be visited at least once and informed where they can get further advice, particularly if they are at risk of being homeless as a result of housing renewal.
- 9.2 Those at risk of homelessness will be referred to the Council's Early Intervention Trailblazer Service (which offers support to those at risk of homelessness at an early stage) for as long as the service is running. Additional support will be offered to vulnerable households where it is needed.

9.3 Alongside this, the Council will also be communicating with their landlord (the non resident leaseholder) as set out in the Policy for Leaseholders in Housing Renewal Areas which can be found here:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

Glossary

Affordable housing

Homes for sale or for rent for people who cannot afford market housing. There are generally understood to be two forms:

- 1) **Social housing:** housing for rent for low income people on the Council's waiting list
- 2) **Intermediate housing:** housing for working people that aren't eligible for social housing but can't afford market housing. This is let through the Council's intermediate housing service called Homeownership Westminster.

Accommodation Placement Policy for Homeless Households

This Policy sets out how homeless households will be prioritised for properties, both for private rented sector and temporary accommodation offers, in different locations. Its key principle is to ensure that households are prioritised for accommodation in different areas, in ways that take account of their needs. Households are prioritised for accommodation in three bands. Band 1 is Westminster and adjoining boroughs, Band 2 is Greater London and Band 3 is anywhere else. The full Policy can be found at the link below:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

Bedroom Standard

This is part of the Housing Allocation Scheme (see below). It sets out the size of property an applicant for housing is eligible for, taking into account who is eligible to be rehoused

with them, their ages and any other special requirements.

Cash Incentive Payment

A payment offered to certain households that are under occupying their homes when they move to a smaller home. Details of when these payments are offered are in the Housing Allocation Scheme (see below).

Choice based lettings

A way of letting homes, which enables those eligible for them to bid for a property of their choice through an internet based system. Properties are advertised each week.

Housing Allocation Scheme

This sets out how the Council allocates social housing. It includes who is eligible for social housing, the size of property they need, how properties will be let and the priority they have for them, compared with other groups. The full scheme can be found at the link below:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

Housing Renewal Area

This is the area where housing renewal is taking place. It is generally defined in a master plan.

Intermediate housing

See the definition of affordable housing above.

Policy for Leaseholders in Housing Renewal Areas

This Policy sets out the financial compensation, rehousing options and general approach taken for leaseholders in housing renewal areas, where their properties are identified for acquisition by the Council in order to enable regeneration to go ahead. The Policy can be found at the link below:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

Specialist housing

This is housing for a particular group of people such as young people, those with learning difficulties or a mental health problem. It is accompanied by support, which may be provided on site. It can be short or longer term accommodation.

Tenancy Policy

This Policy sets out the types of social housing tenancies the Council offers i.e. when a secure tenancy or a fixed term flexible tenancy is offered. For flexible tenancies it sets out how long they are for and when they will be renewed. The Policy can be found at the link below:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

Under occupation

This is where someone has a bigger home than they need, using the Council's Bedroom Standard in the Housing Allocation Scheme to assess the size.

Vulnerable

There is no single definition of vulnerability and it is assessed on a case by case basis which involves a holistic view of a tenant's circumstances. However someone may be considered vulnerable where they are generally less able to cope compared with other people.