

Allocations Policy

Two Minute Guide

- **Background**

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council reviewed the Housing Allocations Policy in 2019 and consultation was carried out with residents, applicants on the register and elected members. The new revised policy came into effect in its final form in March 2021.

Purpose of the changes

The policy needed amending to help strengthen our approach to homelessness prevention and to ensure the most vulnerable receive the support they need. The key objectives were as follows:

1. Align policy with homelessness legislative requirements
2. Enhance the ability to prevent homelessness
3. Supporting vulnerable persons
4. Make the policy more efficient and fit for purpose
5. Continue to make the best use of existing stock

What makes me eligible to apply to the housing register?

To be eligible under the new policy you will need to meet the following criteria:

- Aged 18 years or over and meet the [qualification rules](#) or aged 16 or 17 years in specific circumstances

[Qualification rules:](#)

- Two-year local connection with Sandwell
- A social housing tenant living in Sandwell
- Serving in regular forces now or in last 2 years
- Armed forces and in urgent housing need
- Divorced/separated spouse/civil partner required to move out by MOD
- Care Leaver
- Persons moving-on from supported or refuge accommodation who meet various requirements

[Non- Qualification \(you will not qualify if any of these criteria apply\):](#)

- Person subject to immigration control
- Owner occupiers with no reasonable preference
- Owner occupiers with a reasonable preference but with equity to meet own housing needs
- Serious unacceptable behaviour
- Current/former rent arrears or housing related debt
- False information/withholding information
- Deliberately worsened housing circumstances

What are the key changes?

There are a number of key changes to banding based on circumstances and need. These are:

- Additional Preference categories have been added to Band 1
- Severely overcrowded households to be awarded band 2 priority from 1st July 2020
- Care leavers qualify for band 1

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What Band am I likely to be in?

The table below will help you understand what band you are likely to be placed in (subject to assessment and evidence):

BAND 1	BAND 2	BAND 3	BAND 4	BAND 5
<p>Additional preference groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibition Order • Category One Hazards in private sector housing • Property is a significant risk to health • Demolition/CPO where occupant is vulnerable • No access to essential facilities e.g. bathroom /kitchen • Medical priority-extremely urgent and immediate need to move (see D5.2 of full policy) • Domestic abuse/extreme violence/extreme harassment • Witness Protection (police recommendation) • Prevention of children taken or remaining in care/corporate parenting responsibilities. Includes where SGO in place and require appropriate housing • Potential foster carers who need more bedrooms or existing foster carers expanding number of children placed • Armed forces personnel in urgent housing need • Care Leavers ready to move out of care or ready for move-on • Under-occupying by 2 bedrooms • Under-occupying a house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless full duty • Homeless-Relief duty • CPO/Demolition • Overcrowded by 2 bedrooms • Medical Priority • Move-on from supported/refuge accommodation – applies to selected local providers • Households releasing a Sanctuary scheme property • Under-occupiers by one bedroom directly affected by spare room subsidy - only applies to lets prior to 17/04/2013 • Households releasing an adapted property • Non-successor left in occupation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent Homelessness (where likely full duty would be owed) • Overcrowded by one bedroom • Welfare/Hardship Priority people who need to move to a particular locality (see D6) • Under-occupying a flat/maisonette by one bedroom • Children in flats or maisonettes above first floor • Service Tenants due to terminate within 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentionally Homeless • Homeless unintentionally but where refused suitable offer (duty discharged) • Council or RSL tenants releasing a ground floor flat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other Households who do not fall within any of the priority need categories 1 to 4

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Additional clarifications:

Direct Offers

The council may make a direct offer of accommodation in exceptional circumstances. This has not changed from the previous policy and the council aims to keep these to a minimum. These can be used for but NOT limited to:

- Discharge a statutory duty owed
- Decants
- Vulnerability whereby unable to participate in Choice Based Letting
- Homeless and in Temporary Accommodation
- Prevent children going into care
- MAPPA
- Left in occupation
- Under-occupation
- Households who need to move rather than have their own house adapted

Houses

- Houses can only be allocated to households containing children (as defined by the policy)
- 30% of houses are allocated based on registration date only
- Of these, 70% will be allocated to households with children in Council flats. The remaining % will allocated to households purely on registration date only.

Adapted Properties

- Lettings are based on order of priority need for the adaptation required and for household who best matches the property household criteria
- Only when the above has been exhausted, lettings will be based on priority order to households who need adaptations but don't meet property household criteria