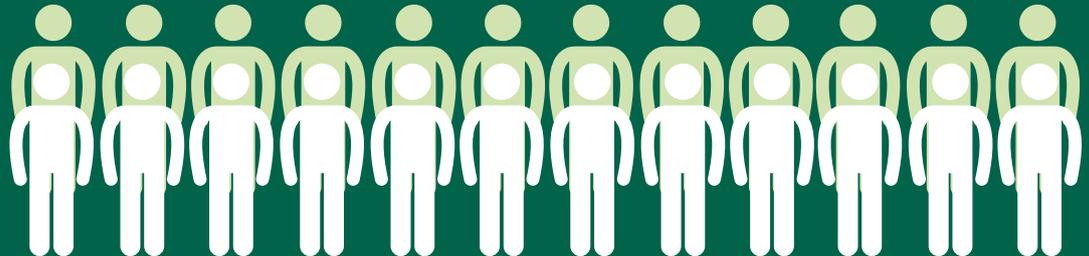
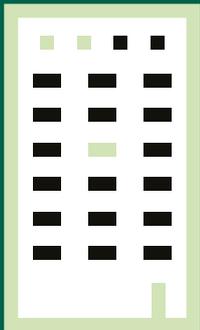


Social Housing in Hackney

What you need to know

- 12,100 households are on our housing waiting list
- Up to 500 new people are applying to be added to our waiting list every month
- Over 2,700 people on the waiting list are homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation, many of them outside the borough



Social housing in Hackney

Social housing, sometimes referred to as ‘council housing’, is housing managed by the Council, or a housing association, which is let at low rent for people who cannot afford to rent or buy in the private market.

Hackney Council is building more social housing than any other council in London. We get no money from the Government to pay for it, but we are always looking for creative ways to fund and build homes for people in need.

Despite building more homes than anyone else, there is a huge shortage of social housing in Hackney. Demand grows each year, with more people moving to live in the borough, increasingly expensive house prices and private rent, and Government benefit changes.

We currently have more than 12,100 households on our housing waiting list, with up to 500 new people every month asking to be added. About 2,700 of the people on our list are homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation, many of them outside the borough.

It’s a similar situation across London. All councils are facing an unprecedented demand for social housing and temporary accommodation, both of which are in very short supply.

- It would take 10 years to house everybody currently waiting for accommodation
- Most people who apply for social housing will wait for many months, several years or may never be offered a property, depending on need



Social housing in Hackney

Last year the Council was able to offer properties to 1,187 people on our waiting list. This means it would take more than 10 years to house everybody currently waiting, and Government reforms mean that the number of properties we'll be able to offer will probably decrease every year from now on, in spite of our efforts to build new houses and partnership work with Housing Associations.

We take everyone's request for a home seriously and try our best to help. However, the reality is that most people who apply for social housing will wait for many months, several years or may never be offered a property, depending on need.

The majority of social properties which become vacant are on the upper floors of blocks of flats and do not have a garden.

If we are not able to provide someone with social housing we will offer an interview with an officer who can give advice on the many alternatives available.

Social Housing – what you need to think about

Anyone over 16 years of age can apply to join the housing register. This is a waiting list for people applying for social housing.

However, the law sets out various reasons why a person may not be eligible.

These include:

- You owe the Council or another landlord rent arrears
- You have been evicted because of rent arrears
- Any other breach of your tenancy agreement
- Your landlord has applied to the court for possession of your home because of a serious breach of your tenancy agreement
- As a Council tenant you have behaved unacceptably
- You are subject to immigration control, eg an asylum seeker, over stayer or illegal immigrant

Everyone must complete the Housing Register Application form in full. The Council cannot register anyone without all the questions being answered.

These are used to decide:

- If you are eligible for an offer of housing
- What your priority for an offer of housing should be
- What kind of home you need

Alternatives to social housing

Everyone with a housing need can have an interview where advice and information about various options are discussed. You can also visit the Council's website to find out more www.hackney.gov.uk/housing

Alternatives include:

Finding your own home through the private-rented sector. If you are able to find accommodation closer to or in Hackney, the Council may be able to offer assistance with a deposit and rent in advance. If you are able to locate a landlord offering an affordable rent and willing to accept you as a tenant, contact the Council's Housing Advice Team on 020 8356 2929 or housingadvice@hackney.gov.uk

The Housing Moves Scheme offers people already living in social housing, but who want a different home, the chance to relocate within London. Councils and housing associations advertise homes available to social tenants on the Housing Moves website www.housingmoves.org.uk

The Fresh Start Scheme offers private-renting and social housing opportunities outside of London. To join you must be a Hackney resident and either on the Council's housing register or a Council or housing association tenant. Contact 020 8356 5751/7232.

Alternatives to social housing

The Seaside and Country Homes Scheme is open to Council or housing association tenants who live in London and want to relocate to the countryside or the coast. All applicants must be at least 60 years of age and capable of independent living. Contact: 020 8356 5751/7232.

Home Swapper helps social housing tenants move via mutual exchange with residents who wish to downsize, swapping with other residents who need a property with more space. For further information, visit www.housingpartners.co.uk

The Cash Incentive Scheme offers money to Council tenants who transfer to a social or housing association property that has fewer bedrooms than their current home. Once accepted under the scheme, tenants are then placed in the 'Urgent' priority band and can start bidding for properties. Contact: 020 8356 5769/5605.

Shared ownership is a possible option for people on lower incomes who are looking to buy a home. It is sometimes referred to as 'part rent/part buy'. People can buy a stake of between 25% and 75% of the property, using a deposit and a mortgage, and then pay rent on the rest. This means they need a smaller deposit and generally pay less per month. First Steps is currently the Council's agent for this scheme, visit www.shareto-buy.com/firststeps

Alternatives to social housing

Hackney Sales offers brand new homes for private sale and shared ownership, built directly by the Council in regeneration areas and sold to help fund new social housing across the borough. People who live and work locally get first choice on these homes before they are advertised elsewhere.

For More information

You can find out more about all the available housing options by going to the Housing Advice web pages on the Council's website www.hackney.gov.uk/housing

Hackney Council's Housing Policy <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/lettings-policy>

For more information on the bidding process www.hackney.gov.uk/hackneychoice

Contacts:

Hackney Council's Housing Advice Team 020 8356 2929 or housingadvice@hackney.gov.uk

If you think you are going to become homeless, or you already are, information is available at www.hackney.gov.uk/homelessness or call 020 8356 2929 or 020 8356 2300.

- People in temporary accommodation are expected to pay the full rent, minus any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- Weekly rent charges in temporary accommodation average £350 per week, including service charges before benefit is claimed
- Much of our temporary accommodation is outside of the borough



Temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation can be provided by the Council to people who genuinely have nowhere to live.

If you are homeless, or believe you are going to be made homeless, a Council officer will talk to you about your circumstances, advise on the options available and assess if there is a legal duty to provide emergency temporary accommodation.

This process includes an investigation into your past addresses and circumstances.

There are strict room size standards for temporary accommodation, and Hackney's temporary accommodation meets these legal minimum requirements.

To help ensure that temporary accommodation is safe and secure, there are often limitations on visitors. Residency checks are also in place.

People in temporary accommodation are expected to pay the full rent, minus any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Weekly rent charges in temporary accommodation average £350 per week, including service charges, before benefit is claimed.

- Temporary accommodation is very basic, often consisting of one bedroom and a bathroom or kitchen that is sometimes shared with other residents
- It is not permanent and you could be moved around and placed in alternative temporary accommodation at anytime
- You might be in temporary accommodation for many years



Temporary accommodation – things to think about

Temporary accommodation is in very short supply. It may be that the only suitable options - eg number of bedrooms, access to a school, a GP, good transport links - are outside Hackney or even London. It is often very basic, consisting of one bedroom and a bathroom or kitchen that is sometimes shared with other residents.

Temporary accommodation is not permanent. You could be moved around and placed in alternative temporary accommodation at any time with short notice, although the Council tries to prevent this from happening.

The Council cannot say how long you may have to stay in temporary accommodation and it doesn't mean you will definitely one day get placed in social housing. The lower your priority the longer the wait, and it could be many months or years.

If you do not pay your rent and build arrears in temporary accommodation you will be overlooked for any properties which you successfully bid for (see next section). You will need to clear any arrears and show that you are financially responsible before you will be offered social housing.

If you do not pay your rent the Council can evict you from temporary accommodation.

The waiting list for social housing

The Council has a set of rules which help ensure that those in greatest need get rehoused first.

Everyone accepted on the housing register will have their needs assessed with a system of three priority bands:

1. Urgent
2. Homeless / Priority
3. General

Needs are based on a person's circumstances, such as their vulnerability, the number of people they live with, income, number of children, health and homelessness. Once an application has been assessed, a person will be awarded points based on need and their housing application will be put in one of the bands, in date order.

Applications placed in the Urgent or Homeless / Priority bands have a better chance of being rehoused. People placed in the General band stand little, if any, chance of being offered housing.

Bidding

The process of applying for specific properties which become available is called 'bidding'. People must bid to be given a property.

People can start bidding once they have received a letter confirming their acceptance on the housing register. This will contain their band details, bidding number and instructions on how to bid.

Bidding takes place on the East London Lettings Company website, which each week lists properties which have become available.

People can place a bid on one property a week, and only for the number of bedrooms that the Council has assessed they need. The bidder with the most points, and who has been waiting the longest, will be invited to view the property.

People or households with disabilities and health needs are given preference for ground floor and first-floor properties. If you bid for these properties without a clear need, you will waste your bid and limit your chance of securing a property, thereby increasing your wait.

More information on bidding can be found on the Council website www.hackney.gov.uk/hackneychoice or www.ellcchoicehomes.org.uk

Contacts:

Hackney Council's Housing Advice Team: 020 8356 2929 or housingadvice@hackney.gov.uk

If you think you are going to become homeless, or you already are, information is available at www.hackney.gov.uk/homelessness or call 020 8356 2929 or 020 8356 2300