

Housing Allocation Scheme

2018-2022

Effective 1 May 2018

How the scheme works

This booklet is a guide to making an application to join the housing register in Slough.

It explains what is needed to assess an application, who can and cannot apply and how offers of accommodation are made.

It is a summary of the Housing Allocation Scheme 2018-2022. The full version can be viewed on the website www.slough.gov.uk

Fraud prevention

The Housing Act 1996 Section 171 makes it an offence for anyone seeking assistance from a housing authority under Part 6 of the 1996 Act to:

- knowingly or recklessly give false information, or
- knowingly withhold information which the housing authority has reasonably required the applicant to give.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by section 146 of the 1996 Act) enables a housing authority to seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement by the tenants or a person acting as the tenant's instigation.

The council will not hesitate to prosecute any applicant(s) who have either been allocated a home or applied for a home by using false or fraudulent information.

At any point during this process applicants may be required to attend council offices to have photographs taken for identification purposes.

Making an application

The application is to join the housing register for an allocation of social housing. The application must be completed in full to be accepted.

An offer of accommodation may be anywhere in the borough, with any social landlord and for any property that meets housing need. Due to the high demand for social housing we cannot offer a choice of area unless there are exceptional circumstances that would make any offer unsuitable.

Being on the housing register does not always mean that you will get an offer of accommodation. The Homeseekers newsletter gives more information on the supply and demand for social housing in Slough.

The council aims to assess housing applications within eight weeks.

Applicants must be over 16 years of age and eligible within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

If you are a Slough Borough Council or housing association tenant you must contact your area housing officer for details of any other housing options that may be available.

Only main applicants and those persons that may reasonably be expected to reside with the applicant can be included on the application. Extended families and non-dependant family members are advised to make separate applications. An unborn child does not count as part of the household.

The following supporting (photocopied) documents must be submitted with the application. These documents will be verified if an offer of accommodation is made.

- For each person listed on the application a birth certificate or valid passport
- Proof of current and previous five years residence
- Proof of current income and employment details
- Proof of savings or equity
- Evidence of training or volunteering

- Proof of immigration status if subject to immigration control
- A tenancy agreement if in rented accommodation

The council will inform the applicant in writing if the application has been successful and what priority has been awarded. Applicants will be given a unique reference number. This number must be given when making any enquiry to the council concerning their application.

If the application has not been successful the applicant will be notified in writing as to the reasons why.

Who can join the housing register

The law sets out groups of people who are considered to have reasonable preference or a need for the allocation of social housing.

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Housing Act 1996)
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability)
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)
- Unsatisfactory/overcrowded or insanitary housing conditions

If an applicant or any member of the household ceases to be eligible then the application will be removed from the register.

If an applicant or any member of the household has a change in circumstance then any extra priority may be removed/added and/or the application removed from the register.

If a dependant child is no longer dependant then the application will be re assessed - this may result in the cancellation of the application. Non dependants are advised to make their own application.

Who cannot join the housing register

The council has decided that the following applicant(s) or any person included on the application do not qualify for an allocation of housing and cannot join the housing register:

- Applicants or members of their household who have not had a fixed address in the borough of Slough for a minimum of five consecutive years up to and including the date of the application or the date on which a decision is made on the application whichever is the later. Some exceptions to the five year qualification are detailed in the allocations policy
- Applicants or any member of their household who own property including those who have gifted property
- Those who have been found guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a council or housing association tenant at the time of the application
- Applicant(s) who have a joint gross household income exceeding £55,000
- Applicants or members of their household that have over £20,000 in savings, investments or equity
- Applicants who have refused one suitable offer of a secure (or introductory), assured or one of an assured short hold tenancy
- Applicants, or members of their household, that have any housing related debt, including rent arrears or mortgage arrears, in respect of their current property or previous accommodation
- Transfer tenants (from social housing) who have failed to maintain their homes, have caused damage to their home or have breached the terms of their tenancy
- Applicants, or members of their household who own any property or have exercised a council Right to Buy scheme within the past 10 years
- Applicants, or members of their household who have been placed into Slough by any other local authority

How priority is awarded

Applicants on the housing register will be placed into one of three bands.

Band A	Urgent or exceptional need to move
Band B	Need move due to reasonable preference and additional preference
Band C	Need to move due to reasonable preference

Band A	Urgent preference
Urgent medical	Where an applicant, or any member of his or her household, has a life threatening illness or disability and the accommodation occupied poses an immediate and exceptional risk of serious harm
Urgent welfare	Where an applicant or any member of his or her household requires urgent re-housing as a result of violence or threats, including intimidated witnesses and those escaping serious anti-social behaviour or domestic violence
Insanitary	Where the local authority has served a demolition or prohibition order under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System where category 1 hazards exist and cannot be rectified and continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a significant and immediate risk to health
Exceptional case	Special cases that cannot be covered in this scheme
Severe over crowding	Where an applicant is in severely overcrowded accommodation which poses a serious health hazard and that housing need cannot be met by other options, such as renting in the private sector. The property occupied must be insufficient by at least three bedrooms, as per the standard that the council uses to allocate property

Decants	Slough Borough Council tenants who are required to move due to the redevelopment of their homes or where major works are required
Succession	Slough Borough Council tenants who have succeeded to a tenancy and the property is too large for their needs
Homeless	Agreed statutory homeless cases in temporary accommodation where there is an urgent need to free up accommodation

Band B	Additional preference
Under occupation	Social housing tenants in Slough occupying a home in demand and willing to accept a smaller home
Foster/ adoption	Approved two year record of fostering/adoption by SBC
Armed forces	Armed forces applicants with housing need as set out in section 166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended
Family programme	Engagement with the council's troubled families programme
Leaving care	Leaving residential care
Care leavers	Relevant and eligible children leaving care
Reasonable preference: working	Community contribution: working households - work must be in the UK. Applicants must fulfil a minimum of 16 hours per week if a single applicant or 24 hours per week if a joint applicant. This must also be for a continuous period of six months up to the point of application and the same at the point of offer

Reasonable preference: work training	<p>Community contribution: Study or training - must be in the UK, be work related and lead to a recognised qualification</p> <p>Applicants must fulfil a minimum of 16 hours per week if a single applicant or 24 hours per week if a joint applicant. This must also be for a continuous period of six months up to the point of application and the same at the point of offer</p>
Reasonable preference: volunteering	<p>Community contribution: Volunteering - must be on a formal basis and for an organisation accredited by the Slough Council for Voluntary Services</p> <p>Applicants must fulfil a minimum of 16 hours per week if a single applicant or 24 hours per week if a joint applicant. This must also be for a continuous period of six months up to the point of application and the same at the point of offer</p>
Right to Move	Social housing tenants exercising the right to move and meeting the criteria set out in the allocations policy
Medical	Where a medical condition or disability is severe and remaining in the accommodation will contribute to a deterioration in health
Homeless	Qualifying households awarded a reasonable preference under the Housing Act Part V11 s.193(2)
Key worker	As per council key worker scheme

Band C	Reasonable preference
Homeless	Non-qualifying households awarded a reasonable preference under the Housing Act Part V11 s.193(2)
Locality	Some need to move for welfare reasons including the need to live in a locality to avoid hardship where no other solution is available
Over crowding	Overcrowding means the property is insufficient by one bedroom of the standard the council uses to allocate property
Sharing	Applicants sharing kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities with a separate household. Applicants who choose to sublet their home will not be considered
Hostel	Applicants living in supported hostel accommodation
Homeless: non statutory	Applicants assessed as non statutory homeless

The housing panel considers awarding an urgent preference to those in an urgent housing need where no other housing solution can be found.

Applications received through this route must demonstrate urgent need and will not be discussed

unless the clients GP, consultant or health professional can demonstrate, through evidence, that this client can benefit more than any other.

The panel may also take qualified medical opinion when required.

Making an offer of housing

Offers are made to those who have been waiting the longest in each band. Consideration will be given to applicants in higher priority bands.

When a property becomes available which is particularly suitable for an individual applicant who has specific needs or to effectively match available housing stock it may be allocated to them even if they are not at the top of the housing register.

New affordable social housing developments may require a policy to enable a balanced and sustainable community. This local lettings policy will be aimed at social households opting to downsize.

Applicants well positioned for an offer of housing may be visited at home to confirm that the information given to the council is correct.

Original documents will be verified and suitability to be a council or housing association tenant will be confirmed.

The council will also make enquiries with third party organisations to verify the information on applications. References and/or credit checks may be sought. Applicants who are unable to provide any information requested or whose circumstances have changed will be removed from the housing register and/or placed in the relevant band.

If the council is unable to contact an applicant, using contact details provided, within 24 hours (excluding weekends) the application will be cancelled. Any potential offer that may have been made will be counted as a refusal.

Applicants nearing the top of the housing register may be invited to multiple viewings on vacancies. If the offer is declined by the first applicant then it will be offered to the next person on the list until the property is accepted.

If an applicant is unable to respond to any deadline in accepting an offer then it will count as a refusal. Second viewings are not normally considered.

The property size that will be allocated for a particular household will be assessed according to the following guidelines and will be based only on the actual household composition. The council uses the Government's bedroom standard for housing benefit.

It is recommended that applicants confirm any housing benefit entitlement when accepting a property.

Applicants are entitled to a bedroom each for the following groups:

- Single or co-habiting couple
- Any child over the age of 16 years
- Any two children of the same sex under the age of 16 years
- Any two children any sex aged under 10
- A resident care worker
- A disabled child who cannot share a bedroom

Any applicant who rejects one suitable offer that would have reasonably met housing need will be removed from the housing register.

An applicant may re apply to join the register after a minimum period of 24 months. Any future application will be assessed according to the eligibility criteria.

Renewing applications

The council will periodically ask that an application is re assessed to ensure that the eligibility and qualification criteria are met and the correct priority band is awarded.

If a renewal request is not returned within one calendar month then the application will be cancelled. No reminder will be sent and any late responses will not be considered.

Changes in circumstance

The council must be notified if there are any household changes that may affect an application. A new application form must be completed.

The application will be re assessed and any extra priority may be removed and/or the application removed from the register.

Applicants who fail to notify the council of any changes may be prosecuted.

Cancelling an application

An application will be cancelled under the following circumstances

- If an applicant is re housed
- If an applicant fails to respond to review letters or to officer contact requests
- If an applicant is no longer eligible or qualifies
- At an applicant's request

Appeals and reviews

An applicant can request a review of the following

- The assessment of an application
- The priority awarded or decision to reduce priority
- The cancellation of an application
- The suitability of any offer made
- The housing panel decision

The senior reviewing officer will conduct all reviews in relation to eligibility to join the housing register, the assessment of applications, the suitability of any offer made and any other facts relating to the allocation of accommodation.

The request for a review must be made within 21 days of the original decision.

The service lead for strategic housing services will conduct any review relating to a decision made by the housing needs panel.

The council aims to respond to a review request within 56 days.

There is no further right to a review of a decision. If an applicant remains dissatisfied they may seek independent legal advice or they may then take their case to the Housing Ombudsman. The council's formal complaints process cannot be used to further challenge a decision already subject to an independent review.

Complaints

If an applicant is unhappy about the service they receive then the council has a three stage procedure for dealing with complaints. Details of the complaint procedure can be found on the council website or at the council offices.

Complaints that are not resolved using this procedure can be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

This document can be made available on audio tape, braille or in large print, and is also available on the website where it can easily be viewed in large print.

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If you would like assistance with the translation of the information in this document, please ask an English speaking person to request this by calling 01753 475111.

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज में दी गई जानकारी के अनुवाद किए जाने की सहायता चाहते हैं तो कृपया किसी अंग्रेजी भाषी व्यक्ति से यह अनुरोध करने के लिए 01753 475111 पर बात करके कहें.

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Aby uzyskać pomoc odnośnie tłumaczenia instrukcji zawartych w niniejszym dokumencie, należy zwrócić się do osoby mówiącej po angielsku, aby zadzwoniła w tej sprawie pod numer 01753 475111.

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