

A photograph of Hackney Town Hall, a large, classical-style building with a clock tower and arched windows. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter. The text 'HACKNEY TOWN HALL' is visible on the building's facade.

Hackney Council

Members briefing
Lettings Policy -
Housing Register Transition

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A new housing register solution that aligns to Hackney's new allocations scheme is now live

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Background

We have created a simpler, more transparent housing register, better suited to the situation in Hackney today. At a time of increasing demand and reduced supply, the Council must ensure that the limited stock of social housing that becomes available goes to those in greatest need while also investing in advice and support for all those unlikely to access a home through the housing register.

Vision

People wanting to join the housing register can understand the full range of options available to them and their likelihood of securing social housing. It is simple to join for people who qualify, minimises failure demand, is easy to administer, sufficiently open and gives all stakeholders confidence in the fairness of the process. The underlying applications are secure, reliable and adaptable to the changing needs of users.

Outcomes we're driving through the new system:

- Empathic – prioritising people with the greatest need
- Simple – easier to apply and guides people to the right outcome
- Robust – generates less confusion and misunderstanding
- Fairer – provides predictable outcomes
- Clearer – changing the conversation about what's possible

Some of the main challenges we were facing

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There is a severe shortage of social housing in Hackney, meaning we can not provide a social housing property to the vast majority of people who would like one

In early 2021 there were 13,000 people on the housing register in Hackney. **During 2019/20 only 409 properties became available for allocation** and most people without special circumstances would be waiting **for over 20 years** for social housing.

Homeless households were facing estimated waiting times **four or more times longer** than households with similar circumstances in the urgent band.

Of households in the register in 2020 **over one third had significant housing needs**, double the proportion in 2015. More and more of these households are presenting with multiple and complex needs.

Unable to focus on the most complex and vulnerable cases

Due to the quantities of people on the housing register and because of the large amount of administrative work, our staff were unable to focus on **the most complex and vulnerable cases which often need more support to secure a stable housing option.**

Compromised systems

In October 2020, the council endured the cyber-attack which resulted in many of our internally hosted systems being unavailable **including the old housing register (Universal Housing).**

The opportunity

The Council recognised the need to update the Social Housing Lettings Policy, moving from 5 bands to 3 bands **to provide a clearer system for eligible residents** and support those most vulnerable residents to find settled accommodation.

We are developing a tool that will;

- allow residents **to self-serve where possible**
- incorporate logic and automation where we could **in order to gain efficiencies and minimise the administrative workload**

In next weeks briefing we will give you a run down of the new software

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Transition Process

- Those residents previously in the urgent, priority and homeless bands will retain eligibility under the new scheme as will households previously in the General Band where there is an assessed medical need or overcrowding in a one bedroom property.
- Over 55s will remain eligible to bid for older persons accommodation, and households with children approaching a relevant age will remain on the register in a transitional band.

New Band	Description	Number of households (approx) *	
Band B	Applicants with a significant housing need - accepted homeless, overcrowded by 2 rooms or more, significant medical need/condition, significant social priority	5176 (includes 501 accepted homeless cases pending issue of bidding number)	Applicants eligible under urgent, priority or homeless band in previous scheme.
Band C	Medical need, condition not exacerbated by housing, one room overcrowded. social need	2337	
Transition	Applicants with children approaching significant birthday which brings about overcrowding by 2 or more rooms		Refers only to existing applicants on the register at 30/09/21
Over 55s - Band C	Applicant eligible for older persons accommodation		Applicants only eligible to bid for age related properties.

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The transition process - Reserve and General Band Households

- Letters have been dispatched to all residents in the **reserve band** who no longer qualify under the new scheme. A copy of the letter can be found [here](#). 2901 households fall into this category and have now had their bidding account suspended.
- Letters have been dispatched to 2313 **general band** households who no longer qualify under the new scheme and a copy of the letter is [here](#). Those households who still qualify because of their medical condition (392) or overcrowding in small properties (1341) have been identified separately.
- The letters included a link to an [online form](#) for residents to report a change in circumstance if they believed they are eligible and qualify under the new scheme and offered the opportunity to provide details of relevant changes and to seek individual advice about securing appropriate settled accommodation.
- The service is working on all forms received and applicants who qualify through this route will be awarded an appropriate band and effective date based on the change in circumstance, they will not have been disadvantaged by the cyber attack or policy change.
- The service has been scheduling appointments and conducting interviews with those residents who have asked for further support and advice.
- 620 households have been identified as moved away and not notified the Council of their change ie 5% to date and increasing as the transition process continues

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The transition process - Phase 1 New applications

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- Applications to join the housing register = 442
- Reported changes in circumstances = 306
- Households requested to complete a health form = 75
- Homeless accepted cases to be allocated a bidding number = 602
- Homeless residents reporting a change in circumstances = 110
- Reviews = 5

The transition process - Phase 2 Band B Re - registering process

Phase 2 will address the need to check the circumstances of those households that transfer to the new register and will focus on:

- Review and registering of under occupiers = 260
- Review and registering of households with significant medical needs = 120
- Review and registering of overcrowded households = 399
- Review and registering of households with a significant social need (e.g Domestic Abuse, Gang Related) = 67
- Review and registering of Lease Expiry/Council Interest (Quota)/Decants (Temporary or Permanent) = 199

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The Transition Process - Phase 3 Band C Re - registering process

Phase Three will review the cases in Band C of the new scheme:

- Households with residents over 55 eligible for older persons housing/dwellings - Housing Register (859)
- Review as reassessment of households with a lower level medical need (e.g. extra bedroom) - Medical Team (750)

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Tailored Housing Advice

- Medical Team & Housing Register Team
- Specific advice based on Tenure type and individual circumstances
- 12 ways into housing for Council Tenants
- Registered Providers giving advice direct to affected residents and promoting mutual exchange
- Housing Advice appointments booked for private tenants
- Early advice for new applicants to explore quicker solutions for housing needs
- Promotion of alternate schemes Homeswapper, Homefinders, Seaside and Country Homes. 10 moves via SSCH
- Mutual Exchange event for Council and Housing Association tenants
- Mutual Exchange is a way for social housing tenants to swap tenancies so that they can move, normally into the right sized house. 172 MEX swaps completed during 2019/20 & 2020/21
- **4 way** swap completed by Housing and three other Landlords. Hackney to Birmingham to Pontypridd to Great Yarmouth to Hackney.....588 miles.

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Would you like to swap homes with another social housing tenant?



Don't miss our Home Swap virtual event on **Saturday 5 March from 10.30am-12.00pm**

Swapping homes is known as 'Mutual Exchange'. Hundreds of Hackney residents have already done this. It's a nationwide scheme; you can apply to exchange properties with other council tenants in Hackney or another council, housing association or other provider.

It's suitable for those living in social housing and who either wish to:

- Move to a bigger property
- Downsize
- Move to another area outside or inside Hackney.

To take part, you will need to be a social housing tenant with a secure or assured tenancy. You must also have no rent arrears or live notices of seeking possession relating to your tenancy. The Mutual Exchange process will also require you to have access to the internet.



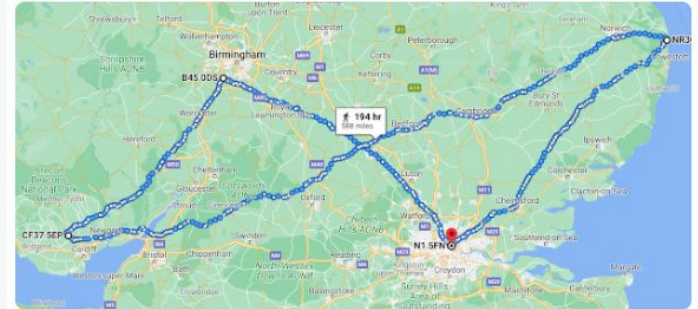
Mutual Exchange but turned up to 11

Mutual Exchange is a way for social housing Residents to swap tenancies so that they can move, normally into the right sized house.

Well, with new technology and the pressure on social housing these swaps can become very complicated! Check out the **4 way** swap completed by Damian Donnelly and three other Landlords below. Hackney to Birmingham to Pontypridd to Great Yarmouth to Hackney.....588 miles.

Well done to **+Damian Donnelly** and the landlords but most importantly to the Residents for making it happen!

#residents #MutualExchange #iwouldwalk500miles



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- September 2022 - Report to members:
 - Evaluation of policy intent
 - EQIA - outcomes of Lettings Policy change
 - Update on detailed reporting from Housing Register
 - Progress of case reviews