

A summary of
Southwark Council's lettings policy

Letting Southwark homes



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This booklet is a summary of Southwark Council's lettings policy.

Its aim is to inform you how we assess and prioritise applicants for housing.



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Since 2005, most council and housing association properties are let through Southwark HomeSearch, a scheme to enable you to bid for the home of your choice from those that are available.

HomeSearch is Southwark's choice-based lettings scheme. It means you can decide where you want to live and to bid for the home of your choice.

To help find and bid for the right home for you, the HomeSearch service will

- Advertise vacant homes in our HomeSearch magazine and on our website every week
- Invite all those people whose names are on the housing list to bid (apply) for the property of their choice
- Offer the property to the highest priority applicant who has responded

Please be aware that although we would like to offer a home to everyone who wants one, there are simply not enough council or housing association homes available. The truth is that most people who want a new home will have to make their own housing arrangements.

To improve your chances of finding and keeping a home that's right for you, we recommend that you look at other housing options, and our booklet *Looking for a home* may help. You can also contact the HomeSearch centre on **020 7525 5950** for advice from our housing specialists, or to make an appointment for a housing options interview.

A fair system

We aim to make sure that people with the greatest housing need get a home first and we try to make the best use of the housing that is available.

Like most councils we do this by deciding

- Which reasons count as urgent reasons to move
- Which of these are most important

We keep a list of everyone who has applied to us for housing. You must be on the housing list before you can be re-housed. Your place or order of priority on this list will depend on your specific housing need.

How do I apply for a property?

The housing list stores the details of all the people applying for housing, and all our properties, on a computer. This makes the system fairer and easier to manage. All registered applicants receive a letter telling them which Homesearch band they have been given and their qualifying date in this band (see page 6).

When a property becomes empty it is advertised in the Southwark Homesearch magazine and on our website.

You can pick up a copy of Southwark Homesearch magazine at your area housing office, selected libraries, one stop shops or the HomeSearch centre. Please see the address list at the back of this booklet. Or check the website (free at public libraries): www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk.

If you see a property that you like, and that suits the size of your family (see page 8) you can bid for the property by phoning the Southwark Homesearch bidding hotline on **0845 270 0655**, or you can bid on the website. You will need to give your Homesearch registration number, your date of birth, and the reference number of the property, or type in the details if you are using the website. You can check to

see how many other applicants have placed bids for the property you are interested in.

You can make one bid every week.

The bidding hotline is in a range of community languages. The website also offers information in Bengali, Bosnian/Serbo-Croat, French, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, Turkish, Tamil, Urdu, Cantonese, Somali, and Vietnamese, as well as British Sign Language.

If you need help choosing a property and making a bid, contact **020 7525 4140**.

How will the successful applicant be selected?

Following the closing date for bids, our computer produces a list of everyone who has placed a bid for each advertised property. The applicant in the highest band and who has been in that band longest, will be offered the property.

Offers are not made on a first come, first served basis. The offer depends on your housing need. Read the section on Homesearch bands on page 6 to find out how we work out your housing need.



The Southwark housing list

Who can go on our housing list?

Only those people over age 16 are eligible to go on our housing list. You cannot be registered more than once (for example, on your application and on someone else's).

We cannot re-house asylum seekers and some other people with limits on their immigration status. Also you may not normally join our housing list if you

- **Have been evicted for owing rent, either by us or a housing association** (this also applies to money you owe for hostels, hotels and so on)
- **Have been found guilty of assaulting or threatening our staff or local councillors**

The application form

In applying, you will have to provide us with documents to prove your identity and your family's identity and to prove you live at the address you give us. We may visit you at home to check that the details on your form are accurate and that we have all the information we need.

Assessment

The aim of the council's lettings policy is to

- **Make the best use of the housing we have, and**
- **Make sure we give priority to the people who need it most**

Most people only have to fill in an application form. However, you may need to have more detailed assessment before we can decide how great your housing needs are.

This could apply if you are homeless or if you need a special type of housing, such as a sheltered scheme. Read the explanations below to find out more.

Medical assessment

If you live somewhere that is affecting your health or the health of someone in your family, you will need to fill in a medical assessment form. This may entitle you to higher priority on the housing list. It is possible however that following a medical assessment, some applicants may not be awarded any priority on medical grounds. You can get a form from your area housing office, one stop shop, the HomeSearch centre or telephone **020 7525 4140**.

Caring responsibilities

If you look after someone who is ill or disabled, and you need to live closer to that person, you will need to fill in a medical assessment form. You may be entitled to a higher priority for re-housing, or, if you need to live with the person you are looking after, you or they may be entitled to an extra bedroom.

Homeless

If you are homeless, we will assess your needs in line with the law.

Harassment or personal protection

Sometimes tenants who are at risk in their own home can be moved to a higher priority level. For example, if you are facing harassment, or if you need police protection this may apply to you.

You must give your area housing office detailed information before a panel can consider your case.

Sheltered housing

If you want to apply for sheltered housing, contact our sheltered services on **020 7525 4231** or **020 7525 4180**. They will send you a sheltered questionnaire. You should return the completed questionnaire, together with a completed housing list application form (if you are not already registered). Once you are assessed, you will be assigned a Band according to your needs and you will be offered support to bid for the property of your choice. Generally sheltered accommodation is for people aged 60 or over. However, we are able to consider some applicants over 55.

Adapted housing

If you or a member of your household uses a wheelchair within your home and needs accommodation that is adapted for this purpose, please contact our medical assessment service on **020 7525 4201**. They will determine whether you need an assessment by our occupational therapists. If so they will arrange for a referral.

What happens next?

We will process your application for the housing list and put all your details on our computer system. We will send you a letter confirming your details and explaining the level of priority you have for a council home or transfer.

If at any time after that you want to check your application, you can simply contact the HomeSearch centre on **020 7525 4140**.

Every year we will send you a letter asking if you still want to be on the housing list. We will ask you to confirm whether your details are still correct.

If you do not reply to this letter, we will take you off the housing list.

You must let us know if anything changes, particularly if you move, or you may lose out.

Being suspended from the list

You may be registered on the list but we may not be able to consider you for an offer of accommodation because your application is subject to a suspension. This will apply if

- **You owe rent to us or to a housing association.** You will be suspended until you pay the rent you owe. This also applies if you are a homeless person in temporary accommodation.
- **If you have made a homelessness application there will be a temporary suspension whilst we check your new circumstances**
- **You gave up a tenancy with us.** You will be suspended for one year from the date you left.
- **You are 16 or 17 years old.** We can help only a few 16 and 17 year olds and they are normally referred by the social services department or have been assessed as homeless by the homelessness service.
- **You are a council tenant using your right to buy**
- **We are waiting for more information to support your application** (for example, proof of identity)
- **You are a homeowner.** We do not offer homeowners housing except under exceptional circumstances. Contact the HomeSearch centre for advice on **020 7525 4140**.

Immigration status

You will not qualify to go on the housing list if you

- **Are restricted by certain immigration controls**
- **Do not regularly live in the United Kingdom or the European Union, or**
- **Are asked to leave the United Kingdom by the Government**

This is a complicated area and we are unable to provide all of the details here. These rules do not apply if you are already a council tenant.

Review

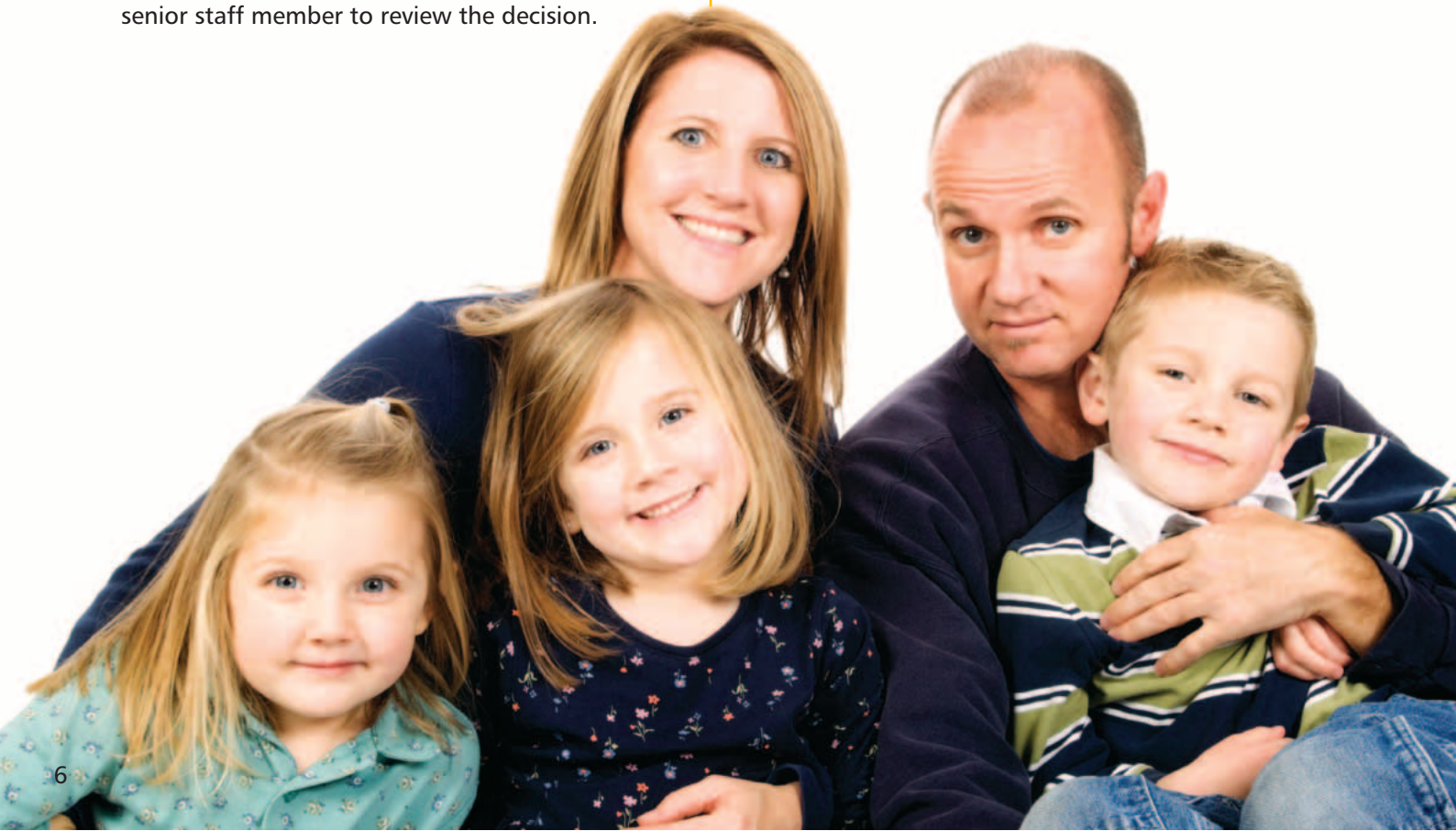
If you do not qualify to go on the housing list, or you are suspended from it, we will explain this to you in writing. You have the right to ask for a senior staff member to review the decision.

Homesearch bands

People who are on the housing list are placed in band one, two, three, or four, depending on how we assess your housing needs.

Band one is the highest priority and band four the lowest. Within each band you will be put in order of priority according to your qualifying date.

This means that those who have waited longest in each band will be considered first.



Band one

Who is in band one?

- **Underoccupiers – tenants of larger properties who want a smaller one** (who qualify through ‘Small is Beautiful’ our under-occupation initiative)
- **Families put forward by the social services department**
- **Council tenants who need to move so that new homes can be built or old ones can be improved or repaired**
- **Tenants affected by fire or flood**
- **Those to whom we have a legal duty, called a statutory obligation, because of overcrowding or a court order**

Band two

Who is in band two?

- **People whose serious illness or disability is made much worse by their current home and whose need to move is assessed as being vital.** This is known as urgent medical priority
- **People put forward by the single homeless nominations and allocations group (SHNAG)**
- **Young people leaving care put forward by the social services department**
- **People who need to be moved for their personal protection or to stop them from being harassed**
- **People who have more than one priority reason to move, such as being overcrowded and being a medical priority.** This is known as multiple need

Band three

Who is in band three?

- **Homeless people who have no home of their own, who have not made themselves homeless on purpose, and who are also vulnerable, such as the elderly, families with children or people with mental or physical health problems.** These people should also have a link with Southwark.
- **People who live in overcrowded housing, who are short of at least one bedroom**
- **People whose serious illness or disability is made worse by their current home and who need to move to improve their medical condition** (medical priority)
- **Council tenants whose relationship has broken down** (you will need to qualify under the terms of your tenancy agreement)
- **If you lack kitchen/bathroom facilities or an inside toilet**
- **If you lack permanent electricity or a hot water supply**

Band four

Who is in band four?

- **All those remaining who do not fall into one of the three bands above**

Usually your band will only change if you have a major change in your circumstances. For example, you may have a medical problem that has got much worse.

If you do have any major changes in your circumstances, contact the HomeSearch centre on **020 7525 4140**.

Suitable housing

We have rules about the size of property we are able to offer because there are so many people looking for a home.

Working out the size of home to suit you and/or your family

We look at the number of people in your family and how old they are

- **Couples are entitled to one bedroom**
- **Single adults are entitled to one bedroom** (for us an adult is someone who is 16 or over)
- **Two children of the same sex are usually expected to share a bedroom**
- **A boy and girl under 10 are expected to share a bedroom**
- **Children are only expected to share a double bedroom, one that is 10 square metres or larger**
- **One bedroom for any other child aged under 16**

Housing associations

The council owns and manages most of the properties it advertises and offers.

Some are owned by housing associations that provide homes for rent in a similar way to that of the council. Most of a housing association's new tenants are people who have applied to the council for housing. Not many housing associations have their own waiting lists.

Refusing an offer

If you make a successful bid for a property but decide to refuse the offer, then in most cases you will be free to bid again and no penalty will apply. However, if you refuse a total of 10 offers following successful bids, your application will be suspended from the bidding process for six months.

Direct offers

Sometimes we will make an offer of accommodation directly to someone who is on the housing list. The circumstances in which we will do this include:

- **Housing adapted for people with disabilities**
- **National Witness Protection Scheme moves**
- **Some tenants who are being rehoused as part of a regeneration scheme**
- **Tenants who are moving temporarily to allow extensive repair works to be carried out to their home**
- **Homeless applicants depending on the availability of temporary accommodation for homeless households**
- **Tenants who need to move urgently on grounds of personal protection/harassment and who have been provided with temporary accommodation by the council**
- **Exceptional circumstances which fall outside the normal provisions of our lettings policy**

Refusing a direct offer

In some circumstances, applicants who refuse a direct offer that we think is suitable, will not be offered housing again. This depends on the category of need of the applicant. It does not apply to people with disabilities.

A refusal is considered unreasonable if the property offered

- **Is the correct size for the household's needs as per council policy**
- **Takes into account any medical recommendations**

Appeals

In some cases, applicants who have been made a direct offer can appeal against a decision of unreasonable refusal.

Where there appears to be grounds for an appeal, the appeal will be heard by an appeals panel whose decision will be final.

There is more information about what happens if you refuse a direct offer and the appeals process in our leaflet *Offers and Refusals*, which we send out with every direct offer we make.

Consultation

This policy was developed in consultation with local people, tenants, residents, public and voluntary organisations, other landlords, and local community groups.



Equality and diversity in Southwark

The diversity of our community is one of our most valued assets.

Strong communities will thrive and prosper if individuals and groups are treated fairly, with respect, and given access to rights and services. Our aim is to create an environment where this is possible and to put equality and diversity at the heart of everything we do.

We will promote equality and diversity by

- **Building values of mutual respect where individuals have a sense of belonging and are encouraged to participate and gain full access to services to which they are entitled**
- **Recognising that some individuals and certain communities are particularly disadvantaged and will require extra recognition and support to deal with their disadvantages**

Our aims will be to

- **Improve the quality of life by improving access to services and by reducing gaps in health, employment, education attainment and community safety** – particularly with those most affected
- **Improve social cohesion by promoting positive relationships and a sense of community and belonging** – by reducing fear and tensions – particularly around race issues and by promoting a vision in which individuals, groups and communities are properly valued
- **Promote citizenship rights and responsibilities**
We will do this by ensuring that the council does all it should in providing real leadership and compliance with its duties and by encouraging its partners, particularly in the public sector to do likewise. We will also do this by acting to protect the rights of individuals and groups by ensuring that abuse, mistreatment or discrimination is recognised and properly dealt with.
- **Promote a workforce which understands and is committed to achieving these goals and retains the confidence of our local communities**

To deliver this vision we have created a single coherent framework to address all equality and diversity issues and have developed a corporate equalities action plan in order to communicate our intentions and to drive change.

Our policies and plans will be reviewed regularly in order to target effort and resources where it is most needed.





Useful addresses

Advice

If you need housing advice or are worried about becoming homeless, arrange a housing options interview by contacting:

HomeSearch Centre
25 Bournemouth Road
Peckham
SE15 4UJ

Tel: 020 7525 5950

Southwark Homesearch magazine pick-up points including housing offices:

Bermondsey One Stop Shop
17 Spa Road
London SE16 3QW

Peckham One Stop Shop
Ground Floor
Peckham Library
122 Peckham Hill Street
Peckham SE15 5JR

Walworth One Stop Shop
Wansey Street, off Walworth Road
SE17 1RY

Southwark Town Hall
Peckham Road SE5 8UB

Housing offices

Borough and Bankside area housing office
Library Street
Borough SE1 ORG

Part of Borough & Bankside area housing office
Tabard Gardens
169 Long Lane SE1 4PN

Camberwell area housing office
Harris Street
Camberwell SE5 7RX

Dulwich area housing office
41-43 East Dulwich Road
SE22 9BY

Kingswood sub-office
39-40 Kinsey House
Seeley Drive SE21 8QR

Nunhead and Peckham Rye area housing office
27 Bournemouth Road
Peckham SE15 4UJ

Rotherhithe area housing office
155-159 Abbeyfield Road
Rotherhithe SE16 2LS

Aylesbury sub-office
Taplow
Thurlow Street SE17 1NS

Leathermarket JMB
26 Leathermarket Street SE1 ORG

Libraries

Blue Anchor library
Market Place
Southwark Park Road SE16 3QW

Brandon library
Maddock Way
Cooks Road SE17 3NH

Camberwell library
17-21 Church Street SE5 8TR

Dulwich library
368 Lordship Lane SE22 8NB
East Street library
168-170 Old Kent Road SE1 5TY

Grove Vale library
25-27 Grove Vale SE22 8EQ

John Harvard library
211 Borough High Street
Borough SE1 1JA

Newington library
155-157 Walworth Road SE17 1RS

Nunhead library
Gordon Road SE15 3RW

Peckham library
122 Peckham Hill Street SE15 5JR

Rotherhithe library
Albion Street
Rotherhithe SE16 7HY

This booklet gives you information about how Southwark Council lets properties to tenants.

If you would like a copy of the booklet in large print, Braille or translated into another language, please contact us at the HomeSearch centre (address inside).

www.southwark.gov.uk

Bengali

সাধার্ক কাউন্সিল টেনাণ্টদের কিভাবে বাসা ভাড়া দেয় তার তথ্য আপনি এই বুকলেটটিতে পাবেন। আপনি যদি এই বুকলেটটি বড় অক্ষরে, ব্রেইলে বা অন্য ভাষায় অনুবাদ চান তাহলে হোম সার্চ সেন্টারে (ঠিকানা ভিতরে দেওয়া আছে) আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

French

Ce livret vous informe sur la manière dont le Conseil de Southwark propose des biens destinés à des locataires. Si vous souhaitez obtenir une copie de ce livret imprimée en gros caractères, en Braille ou traduite dans une autre langue, veuillez nous contacter au HomeSearch Centre (adresse à l'intérieur).

Somali

Buug-yarahan wuxu macluumaad kaa siinayaa siday Guddiga Southwark Council guryaha u siiyaan dadka. Haddii aad jeceshahay inaad bug-yarahan ka hesho nuqul ku qoran far waaweyn, farta indhoolaha ee "Braille" ama mid luqad kale loo tarjumay, fadlan nagala soo xidhiidh HomeSearch Centre (cinwaanka gudaha).

Spanish

Este folleto le informará cómo alquila el Municipio de Southwark propiedades a inquilinos. Si usted deseara una copia del folleto en letras grandes, Braille o traducida a otro idioma, por favor contáctenos en el Centro de Búsqueda de Vivienda (dirección adentro).

Chinese

這份小冊子是解釋南華克地方議會出租房屋政策。如果你想索取大字體，盲文，或翻譯成其他語文的版本，請聯絡找屋中心（HomeSearch centre）（地址附內）

Turkish

Bu broşür Soutwark Belediyesi'nin kiracılarına konutları ne şekilde kiraladığına ilişkin bilgi vermektedir. Bu broşürün büyük puntolarl veya Bray Alfabetiyle yazılmış bir kopyasını veya başka bir dile çevrilmesini isterseniz, lütfen HomeSearch Centre'da (Ev Arama Merkezi-Adresi Broşürün İçerisinde Belirtilmiştir) bizimle kontak kurunuz.

Vietnamese

Cuốn sách nhỏ này cho bạn biết Hội đồng Quận Southwark tiến hành cho thuê nhà tới những người đi thuê như thế nào. Nếu bạn muốn có một bản copy của cuốn sách này với cỡ chữ to hơn, in chữ nổi hoặc được dịch sang ngôn ngữ bạn muốn, xin hãy liên lạc với chúng tôi tại Trung tâm tìm kiếm nhà ở (địa chỉ ở bên trong).