



Housing Decisions Panel Procedure

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Housing Decisions Panel Procedure			
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1. Purpose

The Housing Decisions Panel has been set up (with discretionary powers granted to it by the Allocations Policy) to award additional priority and approve offers of housing in exceptional circumstances.

This procedure describes:

- the process for referring cases to the Housing Decisions Panel; and
- the decision making process

2. Linked policies and procedures

- The Allocations Policy 2015
- Decants Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding (Adults) Policy

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all officers authorised to refer cases to the Housing Decisions Panel (known in this document as the submitting or referring officer).

4. Housing Decisions Panel

The Housing Decisions Panel consists of senior managers from both Housing Demand and Housing Operations.

The meeting are generally scheduled for every two weeks.

5. Referrals to the panel

The following officers (and their managers) are authorised to refer (submit) cases to the Housing Decisions Panel:

Management transfers	Tenancy management case workers Domestic violence officers ASBAT officers Move on Officer or manager
Grants of tenancy	Tenancy management case workers
Decants	Tenancy management case workers
Welfare need	Tenancy management case workers Social Services case workers



Safeguarding referrals	Social services case workers Head of Adult social services Head of children's services
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6. Submitting officer responsibilities

The submitting officer will complete a Housing Decisions Panel referral form explaining why a referral is being made to the Panel, and highlighting the exceptional nature of the case. This should be supported with evidence.

Referrals with supporting documentation must be sent to the Chair at least **48 hours** before the Housing Decisions Panel is due to meet so that the Panel Members have time to familiarise themselves with cases prior to the meeting.

The submitting officer will present their case (with the exception of decants) to the panel so that they can answer any questions the panel may have.

For further details see appendices.

7. Panel decision making process

The panel will take into account the allocations policy in place at the relevant date (for example the date of tenant's death).

The panel will try to achieve consensus however if it comes to a vote and in the case of a tied vote the Chair will have the casting vote.

Where disputes cannot be resolved the decision will be escalated to a more senior manager (head of service, director, assistant director) for final decision.

8. Alternative accommodation

If an alternative property is being considered, input should be sought on availability from the Lettings Manager.

If a move is urgent and there is no available permanent accommodation other options should be considered.

9. Assessment of application and outcome



The applicant will be sent a letter setting out the outcome within 10 working days (two weeks of the panel date).

This letter will be signed by the Chair of the Housing Decisions Panel.

If the application is approved the letter will confirm:

- The Banding (if applicable); or
- If the applicant will receive a direct offer of accommodation
- The size, and, if applicable, the type of property
- The effective date

10. Application declined

Wherever possible an unsuccessful applicant will be advised of the outcome in person.

Where the applicant has a representative, including a support worker or advocate, they will also be contacted and advised of the outcome.

Unsuccessful applicants will be:

- Advised as to what they need to do next
- Advised as to what Homes for Haringey will do following the decision (the legal process)
- Given basic advice on the applicant's housing options
- Signposted or referred (where applicable) to appropriate services that may be able to assist the applicant further including with finding alternative accommodation in the private rental market
- Advised that they will be allowed a minimum of three month's grace period so that we can help them find alternative accommodation.
- Advised of the formal review procedure
- In cases of vulnerability, given a leaflet explaining the process in writing

Consideration should be held as to who should be present at the meeting. While in most cases it will be the tenancy management case worker there may be cases where an officer from Housing Demand (eg Housing Solutions) should be in attendance.

11. Minutes

The Chair will record the outcome of the Housing Decisions Panel discussions and the panel decision. All minutes will be kept centrally in SharePoint.



12. Applications and supporting documentation



For audit and review purposes a copy of all applications and supporting documentation should be kept centrally in SharePoint with a clear link to the applicable minutes. (I.e. by use of reference numbers and/or date)

13. Formal reviews and/or court orders

For audit and review purposes a copy of all decisions and orders should be kept centrally in SharePoint.

14. Monitoring and reporting

The monitoring reporting spreadsheet will be updated after each meeting.

Homes for Haringey will report annually on:

- The number of cases taken to the Housing Decisions Panel by category and the outcome.
- Number of cases referred for formal review (including court) and outcome
- Panel attendance
- Length of time between relevant date and resolution (i.e. death of tenant and termination of tenancy)

15. Version control

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Consultation? Who	Reviewed by
1.0	10/6/16	Initial release	various	ELT
2.0	08/03/17	amended	various	S Morgan
3.0	18/4/17	Additional amendments	Internal/external	A Kjellberg-Obst

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Appendix - Management Transfers

The submitting officer should submit:

- A completed decisions panel report outlining:
 - the history of incidents in date order; and
 - Any result of investigation into any of these incidents
- All information necessary to support the recommendation made to the panel to enable the panel to make a reasonable decision on whether the tenant should be relocated or if it is reasonable for the tenant to occupy the property, possibly with further support or actions by Homes for Haringey, Haringey Council, Heathstone, the Metropolitan Police etc.
- Whether in the submitting officer's opinion the tenant should be moved immediately or as soon as reasonably practicable.

The report must include:

1. All relevant information on the alleged perpetrator
2. All relevant information on the tenant and household members particularly on any factors which may indicate that they could be vulnerable. If they are considered to be vulnerable the submitting officer should consider and include in the report any support available to them.
3. Any threats and/or factors indicating an ongoing risk to the safety of the tenant or members of the household
4. Any confirmation of incidents
5. Outcomes of any court hearings
6. Location requirements
 - a. All information available on the areas it is not safe for the tenant to remain in.
 - b. Should the tenant request a particular area because of links or support available this should be reporting to the panel as a request with an assessment of the risk to the perpetrator being aware of these contacts and following the tenant to the new area.
 - c. Where the tenant is resident in TA and the application is considered 'post localism' the referring officer should first consider an AST placement as discharge of duty. If appropriate the applicant can either be assisted through *HomeFinder* or *Find Your Own*.



Medical assessments

Medical assessments – where a tenant or member of the household has a medical need that would support the application the officer submitting the case should obtain up to date medical information (no longer than 6 months) and where applicable contact the Assessment Team for a Now Medical Assessment.

Authorisation

The Housing Decisions Panel is authorised to make the following decisions:

- To approve, defer or decline an application
- To request additional information
- To approve a 'direct offer' of alternative accommodation
- If the applicant should be moved immediately or as soon as is practicable
- Approve location



Appendix - Grant of Tenancy (exceptional circumstances)

See section 15.25.9 of the Allocations Policy.

Homes for Haringey has the freedom to grant new tenancies in **exceptional** circumstances to those unable to succeed to a tenancy having considered the merits of the case in line with the landlord's duty to address housing needs.

The report should include the following:

- The name of the applicant
- Other household members
- Relationship to the tenant (must be a qualifying member)
- ID for each member of the household
- Evidence that they were living at the address as their principal home (for the period claimed or up to 10 years whichever is the shorter)
- Evidence that they are still living at the address
- Income details
- Medical details (if applicable)
- Support services (if applicable)
- Fraud report

The Housing Decisions Panel may consider any or all of the following when assessing the exceptional nature of the case:

- If the applicant can demonstrate that:
 - They are an immediate household member; and
 - They have lived at the property for 10 or more years ; and
 - They are on a low income; and
 - Have limited financial resources.
- If the applicant would be someone the council would otherwise have a statutory duty to assist under homelessness legislation
- If the applicant can demonstrate that they gave up a social housing tenancy voluntarily prior to moving in with the tenant
- Organisational error including wrong advice that has resulted in a detrimental effect on the applicant's housing situation
- If the tenant or a member of the household has a serious medical issues, disability or mental health issues that would have a severe detrimental effect on the applicant's health or wellbeing



- If the applicant could have been part of a joint tenancy before the death of a partner/spouse/cohabitee
- If the tenancy could have been assigned prior to the tenant moving
- The age of the applicant (under 25 or 65 and over)
- If it is in the council's interest to make a grant of tenancy (potential considerations could include financial cost, reputational risk or compassionate grounds.)

An application will be declined:

- Where there is a history of domestic or family violence by the applicant
- Where there are, or have been, safeguarding concerns relating to the applicant
- If the applicant or any member of the applicant's household is subject to an anti social behaviour order or similar
- Where there are any current or outstanding legal actions which could prevent the applicant or any member of the applicant's household being considered a suitable tenant.
- Where the balance of the 'use and occupancy' account prevents the applicant from being considered a suitable tenant

Applications will not be considered in cases of misrepresentation or fraud.

Authorisation

The Housing Decisions Panel is authorised to make the following decisions:

- To approve, defer or decline an application
- To request additional information
- To approve a grant of tenancy to the same property or to a different property
- To approve size and location of property

Where the application is to be declined

The panel may also consider other housing options that may be suitable for the applicant if the application is to be declined. This may include:

- Supported housing
- Housing related support pathway
- Housing solutions assessment for assistance with securing private rented accommodation depending on the applicant's circumstances



In these instances the panel should refer the case to the relevant team manager who should consider the referral and give *in principle* approval prior to the applicant being notified of the outcome.

Advising the applicant

Wherever possible an unsuccessful applicant will be advised of the outcome in person.

In most cases this will be by the submitting officer. However in some cases the panel may recommend that a member of Housing Demand attends the meeting.

Where the applicant has a support worker or advocate they will also be contacted and advised of the outcome (where appropriate, in advance of the meeting)

Unsuccessful applicants will be:

- Advised as to what they need to do next
- Advised as to what Homes for Haringey will do following the decision (the legal process)
- Given basic advice on the applicant's housing options
- Signposted or referred (where applicable) to appropriate services that may be able to assist the applicant further including with finding alternative accommodation in the private rental market
- Advised of the formal review procedure
- Given a leaflet explaining the process in writing

Time Periods

The grace period for the person to be able to stay in the property to allow time to find alternative accommodation with our advice and help is at least 3 months.

It is the panel's discretion to allow for a longer period and the bereavement training for panel members is intended to help make such judgements.

Where an applicant has been given a grace period to find alternative accommodation and they have not moved out by the end of the period



the applicant will, wherever possible, be advised in person that a Notice to Quit is about to be issued. At that time they will also be given or sent another copy of the explanatory leaflet explaining the process and timelines.



Appendix - Decants

A temporary or permanent move to alternative accommodation so that repairs or improvements can be carried out to the property.

See Decants Policy for further information

The submitting officer will provide:

- Evidence from the surveyor explaining why the move is necessary; and why the repairs cannot be undertaken with the tenant living in the property
- A completed tenant declaration form signed by the tenant/s
- Any supporting documentation if applicable (ie medical evidence)

Note: The Housing Decisions Panel will not consider:

- Immediate/emergency decants which are considered by the Lettings Manager
- Decants from redevelopment / regeneration schemes

Authorisation

The Housing Decisions Panel is authorised to:

- Approve, defer or decline an application
- Request additional information
- Approve size and location of property
- Approve a temporary or permanent move



Appendix - Welfare Need

See 15.22 of the Allocations Policy

This applies if at least one person in the household is vulnerable and less able to find settled or suitable accommodation.

These applicants will have a need to move but may not get medical priority because their current housing may be suitable for their needs.

Note: Applicants accepted for rehousing under the homelessness legislation will not normally be eligible for welfare priority because, if their temporary accommodation is unsuitable on welfare grounds, or a move to more suitable accommodation would have a positive effect on their welfare, the Council will first look to provide alternative temporary accommodation.

If a homeless applicant or household is especially vulnerable and they may be at significant risk in temporary accommodation, the Council can consider the Housing Needs Band A category of 'applicants who are in severe need and have been accepted for rehousing, by Haringey Council, under the homelessness legislation' (see section 15.8).

The submitting officer should submit:

- A completed decisions panel report
- Evidence that a client's current accommodation is having a detrimental effect on their welfare or wellbeing.

For example evidence from:

- Medical professionals
- Mental health services?
- Disability services?
- Social services
- Schools
- Other support services

The Housing Decisions Panel will consider:

- The extent that the applicant's welfare is being affected by their current housing situation; and
- The benefits, if any of providing alternative accommodation



Authorisation

The Housing Decisions Panel is authorised to:

- Approve, defer or decline an application
- Award priority banding (or agree a direct offer)
- Request additional information
- Approve size and location of property



Appendix - Safeguarding

Applications can be referred to the Housing Decisions Panel by Children's or Adult Services.

The Housing Decisions Panel will consider:

- The extent that the applicant's welfare and safety is being affected by their current housing situation; and
- The benefits if any, of providing alternative accommodation

Authorisation

The Housing Decisions Panel is authorised to:

- Award Band A or B; or
- If the tenant should be made a direct offer
- Approve the size and location of property