London Borough of Harrow

Social Housing Allocation Scheme

A summary

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

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1 What is the Social Housing Allocation Scheme?

A) What is social housing?.

Social housing is affordable rented accomodation provided by local authorities and housing associations for people whose housing needs cannot be adequately met through the private housing market.

B) What is the Housing Register?

A Housing Register is the waiting list of households who have applied and been assessed as eligible and qualifying for social housing.

C) Why the Council has an Allocation Scheme

London Borough of Harrow is required by law to have a Social Housing Allocation Scheme that sets out how the Council assesses applications and determines priority for social housing

The Scheme helps ensure that Harrow's limited supply of social housing is allocated fairly, transparently and according to housing need, while reflecting local housing pressures and priorities. There is not enough social housing available in Harrow to provide a home to everyone who applies. London Borough of Harrow has over 2,000 households on its Housing Register, but typically only around 150–300 social housing properties become available to let each year.

This means that demand is significantly higher than the number of homes available, and some households may face a long wait or may need to consider other suitable housing options

2 Who can join the Housing Register?

a) What are the age requirements?

The main applicant applying to join London Borough of Harrow's Housing Register must normally be 16 years of age or over.

However, applicants aged 16 or 17 are unlikely to be offered accommodation except in exceptional circumstances.

b) What is the residency/local connection requirements?

Applicants will generally need to demonstrate a local connection with Harrow, with continuous residence in the borough considered when determining housing priority. Those who do not meet the required residency period may still qualify if they have a reasonable preference housing need but may receive lower priority.

Exceptions may apply, including for certain Armed Forces members and veterans, survivors of domestic abuse, and care leavers.

c) What is the immigration and eligibility rules?

To join London Borough of Harrow's Housing Register, applicants must be eligible for social housing under immigration law. This includes British citizens and certain people with qualifying immigration status, such as refugee status, settled status or indefinite leave to remain.

People subject to immigration control will generally not qualify unless permitted by legislation. Eligibility may also depend on habitual residence and whether the applicant has a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition.

d) What is the income, savings or property ownership rules?

London Borough of Harrow will consider whether an applicant has sufficient financial resources to meet their own housing needs, including household income, savings, investments, property and other significant assets.

Applicants whose financial resources exceed the limits set out in Harrow's Social Housing Allocation Scheme may not qualify for social housing. Homeowners will generally not qualify where their housing needs can reasonably be met through their existing property or its available equity, although individual circumstances will be considered.

Households with a combined annual income of more than £90,000 will not qualify for the Housing Register.

3 How to apply?

a) How residents make an application

Residents can apply to join Harrow's Housing Register by completing an online housing application through the Locata system. The application asks about the household's circumstances and housing needs so London Borough of Harrow can assess eligibility and housing priority.

Applications can be made through the Locata Home website at http://www.locata.org.uk/harrow/

Applicants who are unable to complete an online application can contact the Council's Housing Needs service for advice and assistance.

b) What information and evidence they need

When applying to join the Housing Register, applicants must provide information and supporting evidence for themselves and everyone in their household. This enables London Borough of Harrow to check eligibility, assess housing need and determine the appropriate priority.

Evidence will normally include identity and immigration status, current and previous addresses (normally covering five years), household members, income and savings, employment and benefits, property ownership and current housing circumstances. Where relevant, evidence of medical or welfare needs, overcrowding, homelessness, domestic abuse or other housing needs may also be required.

c) What happens after an application is submitted

Once an application is submitted, the Housing Register Team will assess the information and supporting evidence to determine whether the household is eligible and qualifies to join Harrow's Housing Register. The assessment considers the household's circumstances and housing needs in accordance with the Council's Social Housing Allocation Scheme.

Once the assessment is completed (normally within 28 days), the applicant will be notified of the outcome and, if accepted, their priority for housing. Once their application is made live, eligible applicants can use Harrow Online Locata to view and bid for suitable advertised properties, subject to their assessed priority and eligibility to bid.

4 How priority works

Band 1 – Emergency and Urgent Housing Need:
For households with the most urgent housing needs, including life-threatening medical needs, severe welfare or social hardship, emergency management transfers, statutory or severe overcrowding, under-occupation, serious unsanitary housing conditions, and certain urgent move-on or care-related cases.

Band 2 – High Housing Need:
For households with a significant housing need, including households owed a duty to resolve homelessness with priority need, severe medical or disability needs, overcrowding, applicants lacking basic facilities, welfare or hardship needs relating to care and support, and certain management transfers.

Band 3 – Medium Housing Need:
For households with an identified housing need, including households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, households owed a homelessness duty and Right to Move applicants.

Band 4 – Lower Housing Priority:
For households who have a reasonable preference for social housing but have not lived in Harrow for more than five years. It also includes certain formerly homeless households who retain housing priority for a limited period after being rehoused in the private rented sector and the Council's homelessness duty has ended.

How the priority date works
The priority date determines an applicant's position compared with other households who are in the same priority band. When more than one household bids for a property, London Borough of Harrow considers the band first, and then applicants are normally ranked by their priority date within that band.

Where two applicants are in the same band, the applicant with the earlier priority date will generally have the higher priority.

The priority date will normally relate to the date the applicant became entitled to their particular level of housing priority, rather than simply the original date they first applied to the Housing Register. For example, where a person's circumstances change and they become entitled to a higher band because of a new medical or housing need, their priority date may change to the date that higher priority arose. Harrow's scheme also allows discretion to backdate a priority date where there was an unreasonable Council delay or a delay in obtaining evidence that was not the applicant's fault.

5 Homeless households

Being homeless does not automatically mean that someone will receive social housing. London Borough of Harrow will first assess the household under homelessness legislation and determine what homelessness duty, if any, is owed. The Council must also give reasonable preference to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness when allocating social housing.

Under the Social Housing Allocation Scheme, the homelessness categories work broadly as follows:

a. Band 2 – Homelessness duty with priority need:
Households owed a homelessness duty under section 189B (Relief Duty) where there is a priority need are placed in Band 2.

b. Band 3 – Main homelessness duty:
Households accepted as owed the section 193 main housing duty are placed in Band 3.

c. Band 3 – Other homelessness cases:
This also includes households owed duties under sections 195 or 189B (Relief and Prevention duty) without priority need, as well as households experiencing insecurity that puts them at risk of homelessness.

d. Band 4 – Previously homeless households rehoused privately:
Where the Council's section 193 duty has been discharged through suitable private rented accommodation, the household can retain priority for a specified period, depending on their bedroom need.

6 Medical and welfare needs

a) How medical priority is considered.
Medical priority is considered where an applicant, or a member of their household, has a medical condition or disability that is significantly affected by their current housing circumstances. The assessment focuses on how the current home affects the person and whether moving to alternative accommodation would substantially improve or prevent deterioration in their health or independence.

Under Harrow's new four-band scheme shown in your chart:

b) Band 1 – Emergency medical:

Where there is a life-threatening medical need to move or the current accommodation is having an exceptionally serious impact on the person's health or disability.

c) Band 2 – Severe medical or disability grounds:

Where there is a serious medical condition or disability and a significant housing-related need to move, but the circumstances do not meet the emergency threshold for Band 1.

d) No additional medical priority:

Having a medical condition or disability does not automatically result in a higher band. London Borough of Harrow considers the relationship between the person's health and their current accommodation and the severity of the housing-related impact. Harrow's published approach states that relatively mild, moderate, temporary or intermittent housing-related medical needs do not generally attract medical priority.

e) What evidence may be required

Applicants seeking medical priority should provide evidence showing not only their diagnosis, but how their current housing is adversely affecting their health or disability and why a move is necessary. Harrow's Social Housing Allocation Scheme states that medical evidence should contain a diagnosis and, where appropriate, information about the condition and prognosis.

Relevant evidence may include:

- **Consultant or specialist reports** explaining the condition, prognosis, treatment and housing-related difficulties.
- **GP or hospital information**, including diagnoses, medication and relevant treatment. However, Harrow's scheme makes clear that a GP letter on its own simply confirming a condition and a wish to move is not normally sufficient evidence of a medical need to move.
- **Occupational Therapist assessments**, particularly where mobility, accessibility, adaptations or difficulties using the current home are relevant.
- **Evidence from a Community Mental Health Nurse, health visitor or other healthcare professional**.
- **Social care assessments or support plans** where care and support needs are affected by the accommodation.
- **Where appropriate**, evidence showing why the existing property cannot reasonably be adapted to meet the person's needs.

f) Disability and accessible housing

If an applicant or a member of their household has a physical disability or significant mobility difficulties, London Borough of Harrow will consider whether they require a property with specific accessibility features. This is considered separately from their overall priority band so that any property offered is suitable for their assessed needs.

Applicants with significant mobility difficulties may be referred for an Occupational Therapy (OT) assessment. Harrow uses mobility categories to identify the type of accommodation required, including:

- **Mobility Group 1**: Wheelchair user indoors and outdoors.
- **Mobility Group 2**: Unable to manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the time and may require an accessible bathroom arrangement.
- **Mobility Group 3**: Generally, independent but can manage only one or two steps or requires ground-floor/lift-accessible accommodation.

g) Welfare and safeguarding considerations

Under Harrow's Social Housing Allocation Scheme, welfare priority can be awarded where a household needs to move because their current housing is causing serious social or welfare difficulties. The focus is on the impact of the current accommodation and why moving is necessary, rather than simply whether the applicant receives support from another service. Harrow recognises welfare and hardship needs as reasonable-preference considerations.

- **Band 1 – Severe social hardship:** This is for the most urgent welfare cases, where there are multiple or exceptionally serious welfare needs requiring an urgent move. This could include serious safeguarding concerns, significant risk to a vulnerable person's independence, or an urgent need to move to give or receive essential care and support.

- **Band 2 – Welfare** / **Hardship:** This includes households who need to move to a particular area to give or receive care or support or were remaining in their current accommodation would cause significant hardship. Harrow's published material describes Band 2 as including "hardship/welfare moves".

Evidence: London Borough of Harrow may consider information from Adult or Children's Social Care, the police, probation, support workers, health professionals or other recognised welfare agencies. The evidence should explain the applicant's circumstances, the impact of their current housing and why a move is required. Harrow's existing assessment framework specifically recognises referrals from social care, police/probation and other welfare agencies.

Multiple needs: Where someone has several needs—for example, homelessness combined with disability, welfare needs and unsuitable housing—the Council can consider the combined impact when determining the appropriate priority. However, having several lower-level needs does not automatically result in a higher band; each case is assessed on its individual circumstances.

7 Bedroom Assessment Rules

The number of bedrooms your household is entitled to depends on the size and make-up of your household. These rules are used to assess your housing needs, determine which properties you can bid for, and identify whether your home is overcrowded. Under Harrow's revised Social Housing Allocation Scheme, adults aged 18 and over are treated as non-dependants when assessing bedroom requirements.

a. Adults
One bedroom is allowed for each couple, including the applicant and their partner or spouse. Any additional adult couple in the household is also entitled to one bedroom. Adults aged 18 and over are assessed as non-dependants when calculating bedroom needs.

b. Children
Children are expected to share bedrooms in certain circumstances. Same-sex siblings share a bedroom regardless of age, while children of opposite sexes share a bedroom if both are under the age of 10. For bedroom assessment purposes, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

c. Additional bedroom needs
If you need an additional bedroom for medical or other exceptional reasons, this must be supported by appropriate evidence. Any request for an extra bedroom will be assessed in line with the Council's allocation policy.

8 How homes are offered

a) Choice-based lettings/bidding

Available council and housing association homes are advertised on Locata. You can bid for homes that are suitable for you and your household.

When bidding closes, we look at everyone who has bid. Your housing Band and priority date help decide your position on the list. If you are near the top, you may be invited to view the home.

Bidding first does not give you more priority – you just need to make your bid before the advert closes.

b) What are direct offers

Sometimes you will not need to bid for a home on Locata. London Borough of Harrow may choose a suitable home and offer it directly to you.

This may happen if you have an urgent housing need or there is another important reason why you need to move.

Please speak to us before refusing a Direct Offer. Refusing a suitable home may affect your Housing Register application or the housing duty the Council owes you

c) How properties are shortlisted

When bidding closes on a property advertised through Locata, London Borough of Harrow creates a shortlist of applicants who have bid and who meet the eligibility requirements for that particular property.

Applicants are generally prioritised according to their Housing Band and priority date. This means applicants with the greatest assessed housing need are considered first, and where applicants have the same level of priority, the priority date is used to determine their position.

The Council will also check that the property is suitable for the household, including the required number of bedrooms and any specific requirements attached to the property, such as age restrictions, mobility or disability adaptations. Applicants who do not meet the criteria for that particular property may be bypassed.

9 What happens when you receive a provisional offer

a) What an offer means

A provisional offer means that London Borough of Harrow or a housing association has identified a property that may be suitable for you and your household. You will normally be provided with information about the property and, where appropriate, given an opportunity to view it.

Any provisional offer will be subject to a verification check before it can be confirmed. As part of this process, you may be asked to provide additional information or supporting documentation to confirm your eligibility and circumstances.

b) How long does an applicant have to respond?

When you receive a provisional offer of accommodation, you should respond as quickly as possible and within the timeframe given in your offer letter. This is important because social housing is in very high demand and properties cannot normally be held for long periods.

If you need more information about the property or need help understanding the offer, you should contact the Housing Allocations Team immediately rather than allowing the deadline to pass.

10 Viewing the property

If you are shortlisted for a property, you may be invited to view the home before deciding whether to accept the offer. The viewing gives you an opportunity to see the property, ask questions and consider whether it is suitable for you and your household.

You should attend the viewing at the arranged time. If you are unable to attend, please contact London Borough of Harrow or housing provider as soon as possible.

Please note that an invitation to view a property does not constitute a formal offer of accommodation. In some circumstances, more than one applicant may be invited to view the same property, and not everyone who attends a viewing will subsequently be offered the property.

You should therefore not assume that the property will be offered to you simply because you are the first person to attend the viewing or because you indicate that you would accept it. Any offer will be subject to London Borough of Harrow's allocation and suitability procedures.

a) Accepting an offer

If you are happy with the property and decide to accept the offer, you should tell London Borough of Harrow or housing provider within the timeframe you have been given.

You will then be provided with information about the tenancy, rent, moving-in date and any other arrangements you need to know. Once the tenancy has been signed, the property becomes your new home.

b) Consequences of refusing suitable offers

If you refuse a suitable offer of social housing, you **could be disqualified from the Housing Register for up to 12 months**. This means you may not be able to bid for or be offered social housing during the disqualification period.

If you are being helped by London Borough of Harrow because you are homeless, refusing a suitable Direct Offer may also result in the Council ending the homelessness duty owed to you. This could mean that the Council no longer has a duty to provide you with accommodation.

Before refusing an offer, you should contact London Borough of Harrow and explain your concerns. Depending on the type of offer and decision made, you may also have a right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation or the Council's decision.

11 How long you might wait

As of October 2026, the approximate waiting times for social housing in Harrow are:

Bedroom Size	Estimated Waiting Time
1 Bedroom	4 years
2 Bedrooms	10 years
3 Bedrooms	16 years
4 Bedrooms	20 years
5 Bedrooms	No estimate available
6 Bedrooms	No estimate available

These are estimated waiting times only and are not guaranteed. Your actual waiting time will depend on your Housing Band, priority date, the type of home you need and how often suitable properties become available.

Being on the Housing Register does not mean you will receive a Council or Registered Social Landlord home. There are significantly more households needing social housing than properties available, so applicants should also consider other suitable housing options where possible.

12 Changes applicants must tell the council about

You must tell London Borough of Harrow as soon as possible if your circumstances change, as this could affect your Housing Register application, priority band or the type of property you are eligible for.

Changes you should tell us about include:

- A change of address or where you are currently living
- Someone joining or leaving your household
- The birth of a child
- A change in your relationship, such as marriage, separation or divorce
- Changes to your income, savings, employment or benefits
- Changes to your medical, disability or welfare needs
- Becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Purchasing, selling or gaining an interest in a property or other significant asset
- Any other significant change that could affect your housing circumstances

13 Keeping an application active

a) Annual reviews/re-registration

Applicants on the Housing Register are required to keep their application up to date. London Borough of Harrow may contact you periodically, including through an annual review or re-registration process, to check that you still wish to remain on the Housing Register and that your circumstances have not changed.

You must respond by the deadline provided and supply any information or evidence requested. If you do not complete the review or re-registration, London Borough of Harrow may assume that you no longer wish to remain on the Housing Register and your application may be closed or removed.

If your circumstances have changed, the Council may reassess your application, which could affect your Housing Band, priority date, bedroom entitlement or eligibility for social housing.

b) Responding to council correspondence

It is important that you read and respond to letters, emails, messages or requests for information from the Council by the deadline given. You should also make sure that your contact details are kept up to date so that we can contact you about your Housing Register application.

If you do not respond, London Borough of Harrow may be unable to complete or review your application. Depending on the circumstances, your application could be suspended, cancelled or removed from the Housing Register if you repeatedly fail to respond or do not provide information requested.

If you are having difficulty responding or providing the information requested, please contact London Borough of Harrow as soon as possible so that we can discuss what support you may need.

14 Reviews and Appeals

a) Which decisions applicants can ask the council to review

If you disagree with a decision about your Housing Register application, you can ask London Borough of Harrow to look at the decision again. Under Harrow's Social Housing Allocation Scheme, reviewable decisions include:

- A decision not to allow you to join the Housing Register
- A decision to remove you from the Housing Register/Locata membership
- The Housing Band you have been awarded
- Your priority date
- The number of bedrooms the Council has assessed you as needing
- Your mobility group or accessibility assessment
- Other decisions made about your application under the Social Housing Allocation Scheme

b) How to request a review

You should normally ask for a review within 21 days of being notified of the decision, explaining why you think the decision is incorrect and providing any supporting evidence. London Borough of Harrow has discretion to accept a late review where it considers this reasonable.

c) Where to send the request

The request for a review should be submitted to the officer who made the original decision. However, the review itself will be carried out by an officer who is senior to the original decision-maker and who was not involved in making the original decision, helping to ensure that the review is considered independently and fairly.

London Borough of Harrow will normally aim to complete the review and notify you of the outcome within eight weeks. In some circumstances, additional time may be required, and any extension can be agreed with you.

15 Where to get help

a) Housing Needs contact details

If you need housing advice, are at risk of becoming homeless, or are already homeless, you can contact Harrow's Housing Advice/Homelessness Prevention Team on 020 8424 1093. Housing Register/Locata enquiries can also use this number.

b) Council website

Information about the Housing Register and Harrow's Social Housing Allocation Scheme is available on the Council's website www.harrow.gov.uk

c) How to request reasonable adjustments

If you have a disability or another need that makes it difficult for you to access the Housing Register service in the usual way, you can ask the Council for a reasonable adjustment. This could include changing how the Council communicates with you or providing additional assistance to help you access the service.

d) Translation and interpreter assistance

If English is not your first language, we offer spoken interpreting and written translation, just ask an officer, or contact the Housing Register Team:

Telephone: 020 8424 1093 (Option 2)
www.locata.org.uk/harrow

e) How to request information in another format

We also offer information in another format so just ask an officer, or contact the Housing Register Team:

Telephone: 020 8424 1093 (Option 2)
www.locata.org.uk/harrow

Approved by Cabinet on 19 February 2026

Date of introduction November 2026

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