

APPENDIX 2 TO PAPER NO. 12-66

Initial Equality Impact Assessment – Policy Change.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Department | Housing |
| Policy | Housing Allocation Scheme |
| People involved | Dave Worth (Head of Housing Services) Ghazell Nasir (Rehousing Manager) Anna Williams (Policy and Performance Officer) Clare O'Connor (Policy Analyst) |

1. What are the aims of the policy and what changes are being proposed?

The proposal is that the Council should agree in principle to participate in *housingmoves* and amend the Housing Allocation Scheme to enable participation.

***Housingmoves* is the new pan-London mobility scheme that has been developed by the GLA (Greater London Authority) to facilitate cross-borough housing mobility for tenants of social housing who wish to move around the capital.**

Participating in the pan-London mobility arrangements would require the Council to make up to five per cent of the properties that become available to the Council for re-letting or nomination each year available to transferring tenants under the arrangements. There are very few rules governing which properties participating boroughs should contribute to the scheme other than the need for contributions to be proportionate by bedsize.

The Housing Allocation Scheme sets out how the Council determines priorities when allocating properties. Therefore, the Council's participation in *housingmoves* is dependent on amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme being approved.

Wandsworth Council is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and aims to ensure that homes are let fairly to all sections of the community and in accordance with the Housing Allocation Scheme.

If the Council decides to participate in *housingmoves*, the number of properties that can be allocated to Wandsworth Council tenants who apply for a transfer will be reduced (This is explained further later in this document).

However, as a result of participating in the scheme, Wandsworth Council tenants and housing association tenants living in Wandsworth will, provided that they are eligible (see below) be able to make transfer applications through the scheme to be considered for vacancies in other London local authority areas.

Under the Housing Allocation Scheme, housing applications are assessed and, providing the applicant is eligible, registered on one of eight housing queues:

- General Needs Queue – most applicants who are not Wandsworth Council tenants applying for a transfer are registered on this queue;
- Homeless Queue – Applicants whom the Council has a duty to house under homelessness legislation are registered on this queue;
- Council Tenant Transfer Queue – Most Wandsworth Council tenants who apply for a transfer are registered on this queue;
- Council’s Interest Queue – Some Wandsworth Council tenants who apply for a transfer are registered on this queue:
 - Tenants required to leave their homes at the request of the council because of the need to carry out major works or essential repairs;
 - Tenants needing to move from a situation of immediate risk (management transfers); and
 - Tenants who are underoccupying their home and are willing to move to a smaller home under the Room to Move scheme;
- Supported Queue – This queue is for applicants (including council tenants) with support needs who have been nominated to the Housing Department by either Adult Social Services or other approved organisations such as the Mental Health Trust, in line with inter-agency arrangements;
- Social Care Queue – This queue is for families with children or other persons (including council tenants) nominated by children’s services to the Housing Department;
- Physical Disability Queue – This queue is for people (including council tenants) seeking a specially designed or adapted property suitable for those who are physically disabled, including wheelchair users. Applicants (including council tenants) requiring specially designed or adapted sheltered housing or extra care housing will, if eligible, be registered on the Older Persons’ Housing Queue;
- Older Persons Housing Queue – This queue is for older people (including council tenants) who want to apply for sheltered housing and / or extra care housing.

Each year, the council estimates how many properties are likely to become available for letting during the year and decides how many properties should be allocated to applicants on each queue. This is known as the ‘allocation plan’ and can be revised during the year if the number of properties that become available for letting during the year is significantly more or less than the number predicted. Importantly, the allocation plan must ensure that a reasonable proportion of the properties that become available are allocated to applicants on each queue and, in particular, that a reasonable proportion of properties are allocated to each of the following broad categories of applicants:

- Applicants whom the Council has a duty to house under homelessness legislation;
- Wandsworth Council tenants who apply for a transfer; and
- Other applicants.

Therefore, if the Council decides to participate in *housingmoves*, the number of properties that can be allocated to Wandsworth Council tenants who apply for a transfer will be reduced.

However, as a result of participating in the scheme, Wandsworth Council tenants and housing association tenants living in Wandsworth will, provided that they are eligible (see below) be able to make transfer applications through the scheme to be considered for vacancies in other London local authority areas.

Therefore, participating in the scheme will benefit the following provided they are eligible for acceptance onto the scheme (see below) and have sufficient priority under the scheme to be offered a property (see below):

- Wandsworth Council tenants who want to move to another London local authority area;
- Housing association tenants in Wandsworth who want to move to another London local authority area; and
- Social housing tenants (council tenants and housing association tenants) living in other London boroughs who want to move to Wandsworth.

And participating in the scheme will disadvantage:

- Wandsworth Council tenants who want to transfer to another property in Wandsworth and whose priority means that they would have been offered a property had the Council not participated in the scheme and therefore been able to allocate more properties to Wandsworth Council tenants who applied for a transfer.

Housingmoves: Eligibility

Under the *housingmoves* policy framework as currently drafted, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria for acceptance onto the scheme:

- Be current social rented tenant(s) with an assured or a secure tenancy (i.e. not be on an introductory or starter tenancy);
- Be resident (irrespective of landlord) in a borough that is contributing properties to the scheme, or a tenant of a housing association that is contributing a proportion of its true voids to the scheme, whether in a participating borough or not;
- Not be the subject of a Notice of Seeking Possession or Notice to Quit;
- Not have, or be part of a household containing individuals who have, an ongoing record of anti-social behaviour;
- Have had a clear rent account for the last 12 months, both at the point of application and at the point of letting, although the policy framework clarifies that 'There may be exceptional circumstances where the referring landlord takes the decision to permit the registration of an applicant with some history of rent arrears. In these cases the referring landlord should note their decision on the system and, in all cases, the decision to let the property to that applicant is at the receiving landlord's discretion).

In relation to the last point above, Wandsworth Council Officers have notified the GLA of their concerns that this is too specific and too time consuming to assess and, if strictly applied, would probably exclude a great number of tenants (effectively anyone who does not pay their rent in full in advance) including underoccupiers who may be struggling to pay their rent due to benefit reductions where a move to smaller (cheaper) property would benefit both them and the landlord. Officers have suggested that the criteria should, to make it easier to assess, be changed to either:

- 'Not have an ongoing history of failure to pay rent' (similar to the requirement in the framework that the applicant must 'not have, or be part of a household containing individuals who have, an ongoing record of anti-social behaviour' about which the framework states 'The wording of this criterion is deliberately loose since it is ultimately down to the contributing and receiving landlords to verify, with discretion, an applicant's details and tenancy history'); or
- 'Have a clear rent account, both at the point of application and at the point of letting (There may be exceptional circumstances where the referring landlord takes the decision to permit the registration of an applicant with some rent arrears. In these cases the referring landlord should note their decision on the system and, in all cases, the decision to let the property to that applicant is at the receiving landlord's

discretion’).

Housingmoves: Allocations policy (Prioritising applicants)

As illustrated by the table below, each eligible applicant who applies to the *housingmoves* scheme will be placed in the band that meets their circumstances. The highest band (band 1) will afford applicants the highest priority and, within each band, applicants will be prioritised using up to three priority filters.

| | Band 1 | Band 2 | Band 3 | Band 4 |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| | Willing to downsize | Member of household in employment or in training / education linked to employment | Member of household providing care or support to family member / friend | All other eligible bids |
| Priority filter 1 | Number of bedrooms freed up | Member of household providing care or support to family member / friend | N/A | N/A |
| Priority filter 2 | Member of household in employment or in training / education linked to employment | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Priority filter 3 | Member of household providing care or support to family member / friend | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Priority filter 4 | Date of allocation to band | Date of allocation to band | Date of allocation to band | Date of application to scheme |

2. What is the rationale behind these changes?

Housingmoves is the new pan-London mobility scheme that has been developed by the GLA (Greater London Authority) to facilitate cross-borough housing mobility for tenants of social housing who wish to move around the capital.

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing maintains a specific requirement for all social landlords to participate in mobility schemes where they are available and, although this requirement is not included in the draft revised Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012 it is possible that this requirement has been inadvertently excluded and may re-appear in the final version.

Under the Localism Act, boroughs in London will be required to have regard to the London Housing Strategy (which contains a policy in respect of sub-regional mobility) when preparing or modifying their allocation schemes.

The scheme will prioritise:

- Tenants who are willing to downsize into smaller homes thereby freeing up the larger homes for those who need them;
- Working households, thus providing:
 - an incentive to workless households to find work (or education or training linked to a job offer e.g. an apprenticeship) even if the job is located a long way from their current home;
 - a solution for households who need to move to sustain existing employment, e.g. to reduce travel time and costs, or because of work relocation.
- Tenants who wish to move to enable themselves or a member of their households to provide care or support to a family member / friend.

3. What information do you have on the policy and the potential impact of your policy change in relation to the following?

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| | <p>List information you have. Do not put what the information shows you</p> <p>Information includes number of people supported by the policy, customer satisfaction, feedback on service, results of consultation</p> |
| Race | <p><u>In relation to the <i>housingmoves</i> scheme as a whole:</u></p> <p>The GLA (Greater London Authority) have carried out an initial equalities impact assessment (EIA) on the scheme as a whole and a further EIA will be carried out as part of the six month review of the scheme. The initial EIA has been published as an appendix to the <i>housingmoves</i> policy framework document which has been published on the GLA’s website: http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing/housing-need/mobility/pan-london-mobility</p> <p>The scheme will prioritise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants who are underoccupying their properties and are willing to downsize into smaller homes (who, in Wandsworth, tend to be older White tenants – <i>Of the 153 underoccupiers on the Council’s Interest Queue as at 31st March 2011, 73 per cent were White (with ethnic origin unknown for five per cent)</i>) thereby freeing up the larger homes for those who need them (who, in Wandsworth, tend to be younger tenants with children who are often from a minority ethnic community – <i>As at 31st March 2011, non-White applicants accounted for 60 per cent of applicants on the housing queues seeking non-sheltered accommodation with two or less bedrooms (with ethnic origin unknown for three per cent), 69 per cent of applicants seeing three bedroom accommodation (with ethnic origin unknown for three per cent) and 79 per cent of applicants seeking accommodation with four or more bedrooms (with ethnic origin unknown for two per cent)</i>); and • Tenants who wish to move to enable themselves or a member of their households to provide care or support to family member / friend – which will benefit the primarily older / disabled people who need care or support. <p>Also, the scheme will link with the London Accessible Housing Register (LAHR) which aims to promote a better use of accessible housing for those who need it. Disabled tenants who require accessible housing will be able to refine their searches for accommodation that may not be in abundance in their own borough.</p> |
| Gender | |
| Disability | |
| Age | |
| Faith | |
| Sexual Orientation | |

As stated in the GLA's EIA: 'The scheme needs to be as accessible as possible in order that all tenants can benefit from the opportunities that it provides. This is particularly important in social housing, which is home to higher proportions of tenants who may face barriers accessing mainstream services. The scheme will be web-based and there will be little contact with GLA or borough officers on a day-to-day basis. This means that measures need to be put in place to ensure that the service is accessible to those tenants who are not capable of using, or do not have access to, the web, or who require face to face contact (e.g. because English is not a first or strong language).'

The *housingmoves* policy framework states that:

'In general, it is incumbent on boroughs and housing associations to put in place mechanisms to enable applicants to access the PLM scheme who do not have the means to do so independently. ... In addition, the CBL system and the GLA will provide the following:

- Detailed and bespoke user guides for the PLM scheme. These will be available on the web, and for the GLA, boroughs, landlords and applicants to print off;
- Facilitation of participation using texting, touch tone telephone and potentially interactive television (currently being rolled out for some adult social care clients);
- At least two days upon which all properties are advertised on the CBL system. This will give some certainty to applicants who do not have regular access to the internet;
- The facility for boroughs and landlords to submit fully verified application forms and to undertake bidding on behalf of tenants / residents.'

It further states that 'The website itself will adhere to all the GLA's strict accessibility guidelines. It will also provide downloadable guides in easy read format, and summaries in key languages'.

In relation to Wandsworth’s participation in the *housingmoves* scheme:

As stated above, participating in the scheme will benefit the following provided they are eligible for acceptance onto the scheme (see above) and have sufficient priority under the scheme to be offered a property (see above):

- Wandsworth Council tenants who want to move to another London local authority area;
- Housing association tenants in Wandsworth who want to move to another London local authority area; and
- Social housing tenants (council tenants and housing association tenants) living in other London boroughs who want to move to Wandsworth.

And participating in the scheme will disadvantage:

- Wandsworth Council tenants who want to transfer to another property in Wandsworth and whose priority means that they would have been offered a property had the Council not participated in the scheme and therefore been able to allocate more properties to Wandsworth Council tenants who applied for a transfer.

We do not know what race, gender, disability, age, faith or sexual orientation these applicants will be.

However, please note the comments on page 7.

4. Thinking about each group below please list the impact that the policy change will have.

| | <u>Positive</u> impacts of policy change | Possible <u>negative</u> impacts of policy change |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Race | Please see comments in section 3 above. | |
| Gender | <p>As stated above, participating in the scheme will benefit the following provided they are eligible for acceptance onto the scheme (see above) and have sufficient priority under the scheme to be offered a property (see above):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wandsworth Council tenants who want to move to another London local authority area; • Housing association tenants in Wandsworth who want to move to another London local authority area; and • Social housing tenants (council tenants and housing association tenants) living in other London boroughs who want to move to Wandsworth. <p>And participating in the scheme will disadvantage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wandsworth Council tenants who want to transfer to another property in Wandsworth and whose priority means that they would have been offered a property had the Council not participated in the scheme and therefore been able to allocate more properties to Wandsworth Council tenants who applied for a transfer. <p>We do not know what race, gender, disability, age, faith or sexual orientation these applicants will be.</p> <p>Annual monitoring systems are already in place to monitor, by race and gender, the applicants on the council’s housing queues and those housed.</p> <p>On average, we are able to offer approximately 1,000 council homes and 350 housing association homes for rent each year.</p> <p>Less than five per cent of these flats / houses will be contributed to the <i>housingmoves</i> scheme so it is unlikely that the policy change will have any statistically significant impact on any particular group.</p> <p>As stated in the GLA’s EIA: ‘A key part of the monitoring, reporting and reviewing of the scheme will be the equalities impact aspect. At application stage, applicants will be asked for their details including the seven protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. This data will remain anonymous, and will be used to ensure that the measures put in place to promote accessibility are effective’. (Wandsworth Officers have asked GLA Officers to clarify exactly what details applicants will be asked for as there are nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010).</p> | |
| Disability | | |
| Age | | |
| Faith | | |
| Sexual orientation | | |

5. Is a full EIA required? No.

- **Does the policy support a frontline service? Yes**
- **Is it clear what impact the policy change will have on all the equality groups? Yes** – It is unlikely that there will be any statistically significant impact on any particular group.
- **Overall will the change have a negative impact on any of the equality groups? No.**

Comments - Please give the rationale here for not undertaking a full EIA:

The rationale is set out in the table above.

6. Through the initial EIA have you identified any actions that needed to be implemented to improve access or monitoring of the policy? (please list): Yes.

The Council will need to put in place mechanisms to enable applicants who do not have the means to access the scheme independently to do so.

This may include making use of the facility for boroughs and landlords to submit fully verified application forms and to undertake bidding on behalf of tenants.

The PLM scheme will include an interactive reporting tool that can be used by any borough or landlord. Council officers will need to make use of these tools to, where possible, assess the impact of the Council's participation in the scheme.

Signed

Date

Approved by:

(all initial EIAs to be approved by Clare O'Connor)

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