

MANCHESTER SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME REVIEW

The council is making changes to the way that social homes are allocated in Manchester.

The current Manchester Move system was introduced in 2011. Since then the demand for social homes has increased significantly while at the same time the number of social homes that have become available for new tenants has fallen considerably.

Alongside this, there has been a large rise in homelessness and it is very difficult for people in crisis to find homes.

Some key facts

- The number of Manchester Move applications has risen by more than 27% since March 2016.
- The number of applications in the top three bands is increasing and is now over 6,600.
- The number of homes that became available to advertise on Manchester Move fell by 32% between 2014 and 2019.
- Over 8,000 households became homeless in 2018/19, an increase of more than 3,000 since 2014/15.
- Manchester's rate of people sleeping rough has more than doubled since 2014.
- In February 2020 there were more than 1,500 homeless families and more than 640 homeless single people in temporary accommodation.
- The cost of providing temporary and supported accommodation for homeless households is rising and is unsustainable.
- Almost all homes go to households in bands 1 and 2, but most homeless households are in band 3.

In 2018/19 the council and its Manchester Move partners carried out a review of the allocations scheme to make sure that those in greatest need have the best chances of securing a social home.

There was a public consultation about the possible changes to the scheme and the majority of responses were in favour of the changes.

Timetable

Subject to slipping due to Covid-19, the new scheme will take effect on 3rd November 2020.

Moving to the new scheme

The new scheme rules will apply to all applicants.

Nobody will be asked to make a new application. All applications will be placed in the appropriate band on the new scheme.

Depending on circumstances applicants might be asked to provide some additional information in order to ensure their application is in the highest band that it can be. It is good practice to keep applications up to date, and applicants are advised to check that their information is accurate and up to date.

Some applicants will no longer qualify to join the housing register. Most of these applicants are in current bands 4, 5 and 6, and have little chance of being rehoused. After everyone's

information has been updated and checked, the Manchester Move organisations will know who no longer qualifies and will write to everyone affected. This will be at the beginning of October.

Some people will be in a different band on the new scheme. After everyone's information has been updated and checked, the Manchester Move organisations will know who is in which band and will write to everyone. This will be in the middle of October.

Nobody will have a shorter queue date and nobody will "start again". Most people will retain their current queue date on the new scheme. Some will have an earlier queue date.

The council and its partners are building new homes, but they take time to complete, so it's important that applicants are realistic in their housing choices.

Other housing options

As with the current scheme, applicants' chances of being rehoused depends entirely on their individual circumstances and how realistic they are when bidding for homes. There is very good advice on the Manchester Move website about bidding and about other housing options.

Changes to the rules

These are the main changes that have been agreed.

Residency

Currently the council does not require people to have lived in Manchester for longer than a single day in order to qualify to join the housing register. This is very unusual and the government recommends that people should have lived in an area continuously for two years before qualifying for rehousing. It has been agreed to introduce 2 years' continuous residency as a qualification to join the housing register, with certain exemptions.

Financial resources

Under the current scheme, if a household has savings of £75,000 or more then their application will be placed in band 6. This is unusually high. It was agreed to lower the savings threshold to £30,000 on the basis that this is sufficient for an applicant to pay a deposit for either a mortgage or a private sector rented home. Under the new scheme, any applicant with income or savings above the new thresholds will no longer qualify to join the housing register.

Homeowners

At the moment homeowners are allowed to join the register. This is unusual and the government recommends that people who own a home should not be able to get a social home. It was agreed that homeowners will not be able to join the housing register unless they are in an exempt category, for example people who are not able to cope in their current home due to disability.

Community contribution

The current scheme awards additional priority for applicants who are contributing to their community by working or volunteering. This has been a popular and successful priority award since the current scheme was introduced in 2011. But over time this priority award has become a barrier to rehousing for those in greatest need. It was agreed to remove additional priority for contributing, instead focusing just on housing need.

Overcrowding

The new scheme will continue to award band 1 for very severe overcrowding (3 bedrooms short). All applicants who are short by 2 bedrooms are in new band 2. Most applicants short by only 1 bedroom are in new band 3. The exceptions are applicants 1 bedroom short who either live with another household, or who live in 1 bedroom accommodation and have children. These exceptions are in new band 2.

Homeless applicants

Applicants who are homeless and are owed certain homelessness duties (the 'Relief Duty' or the 'Full Duty') are in new band 2. Applicants who have a home but are threatened with homelessness and are owed the homelessness prevention duty are in new band 3. Applicants who have been assessed as intentionally homeless but in priority need are in new band 3.

Moving group

The term "moving group" refers to the people that can be included in an application.

Moving groups now only include

- the applicant
- the applicant's spouse or partner
- children under 21 of either the applicant or partner so long as those children normally live with that parent
- grown up children over 21 so long as they remained living with that parent full time after they turned 21
- any close adult relative living with the applicant who is dependent on the applicant for care or who provides care to the applicant
- a carer who is not related to the applicant if they need to live with the applicant to provide overnight care
- any two people who wish to live together in non-family type accommodation