

HOUSING PLACEMENT POLICY

**Allocation of Temporary Accommodation (Part VII
Housing Act 1996) and Private Sector Offers.**

Foreword

Hammersmith & Fulham Council is committed to securing suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households where this is required under section 188 or section 193 of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. Our aim is to provide accommodation within Hammersmith & Fulham wherever possible, but unfortunately this is not always achievable. The Council is dependent on the supply of accommodation that is available, and ongoing benefit changes mean that for some households, accommodation in Hammersmith & Fulham will not be affordable. As a result, there will be an increasing need to use accommodation that may be at a distance from Hammersmith & Fulham, and we need to have a process in place to ensure that we prioritise those who the greatest need to be in or close to a particular location. Where a household needs to be moved away from a particular location for safety reasons, this will always be taken into account when deciding on temporary accommodation allocation.

In assessing the allocation of accommodation the Council will comply with the relevant legislation, associated case law and give regard Homelessness Code of Guidance. Consideration will be given as to whether the applicant can afford the housing without being deprived of basic essentials such as food, clothing, heating, transport and other essentials; and in so doing will take account of costs resulting from the location of the accommodation.

It should be noted that these are guidelines only and the individual circumstances of each case including the time likely to be spent in the accommodation must always be taken into account when determining the suitability of an offer of temporary accommodation.

All placements are subject to a suitability assessment to determine the type and location of temporary accommodation that should be offered.

In an emergency situation a homeless household can be placed in TA in *any* location where there is availability *on that day*. If it is deemed unsuitable then they will be given priority to be transferred to alternative TA via the accelerated transfer route.

The criteria set out is not an exhaustive list; as this policy recognises that individual cases must be assessed on their own merit to establish whether they are sufficiently exceptional to depart from the policy. The Council will also take into account the affordability of accommodation in deciding where to provide accommodation.

This document is primarily for use to guide placements in temporary accommodation; the same principles will apply for the use of Private Sector Offers and Rent Deposits.

Group 1 - Temporary Accommodation in Hammersmith & Fulham.

Households in this group will be prioritised for Accommodation in the Hammersmith & Fulham area.

1. Applicants with a severe and enduring health condition requiring intensive and enduring specialist medical treatment only available in Hammersmith and Fulham.
2. Applicants who are in receipt of a significant care package and a range of healthcare options which cannot be transferred.
3. Applicants with a severe and enduring mental health problem who are receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare provided by local community mental health services and have an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact upon their ability to engage with treatment and care plans.

Group 2 – Temporary Accommodation in Hammersmith & Fulham and the general London area.

4. Households containing a child or children with special educational needs who are receiving education or educational support at a local school in Hammersmith and Fulham, or in a neighbouring borough and where a change to another school or learning establishment would be detrimental to their continuing development.
5. Households with one child (or more) who are attending a London school at “key stages” of education.
6. Households with a child(ren) registered on the Child Protection Register in Hammersmith and Fulham or families who have high social needs who are linked into local support services and where it is verified that a transfer to another area could be detrimental to their welfare.
7. Applicants who are currently in employment and who have been continuously employed for at least six months and where financial assessment confirms the cost of travel would render accommodation in another area unaffordable. Pregnant women who are on maternity leave but who intend to return to work at their place of employment will also be considered under these criteria.

Households will be required to provide documentary evidence that they fall within any of these groups. The Council's Medial Adviser will also need to assess the applicants' eligibility where appropriate.

Households in receipt of welfare benefits may be subject to restrictions on the amount of benefit they can receive, which may affect their ability to pay rent. Placement in Hammersmith & Fulham or the Local Area is subject to suitable accommodation being available and the applicant being able to afford accommodation in these areas. Placement in accommodation provided by the Council does not imply that the rent will be covered in full by welfare benefits, or that the Council will pay any shortfall.

A refusal of a suitable offer will usually mean discharging duty if a property has been unreasonably refused.

Group 2(a) - Criteria for allocating local temporary accommodation to low priority or non-priority applicants:-

7. Properties that do not meet the needs of any priority applicant will then be offered to non-priority applicants in temporary accommodation outside the borough on a date order basis. This means that properties should be offered to the applicant household who have been in temporary accommodation for the longest.

A refusal of a suitable offer will usually mean discharging duty if a property has been unreasonably refused.

Group 3

All other homeless households will be offered Accommodation wherever the borough is able to procure it including outside Hammersmith and Fulham and the London area.

1. Households who would otherwise be in Group 1 or 2 but who are unable to afford accommodation in Hammersmith & Fulham or the London area, for instance due to benefit restrictions.

A refusal of a suitable offer will usually mean discharging duty if a property has been unreasonably refused.

Households already placed by the Council in TA outside London but who wish to return to the London area will be assessed in accordance with this criteria but weight will be given to those who have been living outside London for the longest period.

For new applicants being placed in TA:-

All applicant households undergo a suitability assessment to determine the type and location of accommodation that is considered suitable.

In a situation where more than one household needs to be placed but only one property is available in the London area and neither household meets the above criteria, preference will be given to the applicant household who has lived in Hammersmith and Fulham for the longest time.

Applicants who are not considered a priority for temporary accommodation placement in the Hammersmith and Fulham area (as in Group 1) or who are not considered a to have priority for a temporary accommodation placement in the London area (as contained in Group 2) may be offered accommodation outside London.

Support and Resettlement:

Households being placed out of Hammersmith & Fulham and are deemed to require it, will be considered for floating support services. Support will be provided in relation to the household's needs, eg. accessing GPs, health visitors, education and Children's Centres. The Property & Procurement Team will provide details of incoming households to receiving boroughs if placed out of London. An information pack will be provided to households covering local services as appropriate.