

# Manchester's Social Housing Allocations Scheme

## Summary

Some landlords have their own rules for deciding who gets priority for available homes, but most homes are allocated to people using our rehousing rules - our 'allocations scheme'.

The allocations scheme helps us rehouse people in a clear, orderly and fair way, so that homes go to those who most need them. The rules reflect the demand for housing in Manchester, and the law on who should get priority for homes.

### How we decide priority

When you register for rehousing, you are asked about your housing history and legal status. The law says the council cannot offer a home to certain people from abroad. You would also not qualify for rehousing if your housing history includes behaviour that we class as unacceptable. If you are not eligible or you do not qualify you are not allowed to join the housing register.

We put all eligible and qualifying applicants into rehousing bands. Which band depends on how urgently someone needs to move and other circumstances. The higher your band, the more chance you have of getting a home.

We record the date that each applicant went into that band. This is your 'award date'. We compare award dates when people from the same band want the same home.

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Band 1 | This is the highest band. It is for people who need to move urgently for reasons that the law or the council describes as highest priority.  |
| Band 2 | This band is for people who need to move for urgent reasons.   |
| Band 3 | This band is for people who need to move.  |
| Band 4 | This band is for people who want to move, but don't have a level of need that would get them into Bands 1, 2 or 3.   |
| Band 5 | This is a 'reduced priority' band. People go into this band if they have rent arrears, have broken a tenancy agreement or if they or the people they are moving with have acted antisocially in the past. People also go into this band if they don't keep to the rehousing rules. |

There are more people who want social homes than there are homes available. Therefore, for most homes, only people in bands 1-3 are allowed to bid for them.

This is how the rules work. It is only a summary and anyone wanting to understand the rules in detail is advised to refer to the full allocations scheme.

## Award dates

Your award date is the date you first got the level of priority that put you into your current rehousing band.

This might be the same as the 'registration date' when you first registered for rehousing - but not always. Your award date can be different to your registration date if you go into a different priority band because your circumstances change, or because the housing rules change.

If two people from the same priority band want the same home, it goes to the one with the earlier award date. If they have the same award date, it goes to the one with the earliest registration date. So the earlier your award date and registration date, the better your chance of getting a home.

## The priority rehousing bands: Bands 1-3

The three highest priority bands are for people who have a need to move as described by the law. Being in one of the top three bands gives you a better chance of getting a home. If you have one of the reasons for needing to move, you go into either Band 1 or Band 2 or Band 3, depending on the severity of your circumstances. Here's how we decide what is Band 1, what is Band 2 and what is Band 3.

| <b>Band 1</b>   |
|---|
| <p>You are coming out of hospital and have nowhere suitable to live</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You have nowhere to live at all, and you have explored all other reasonable housing options; or</li><li>• You have somewhere to live - but it is unsuitable for someone with your medical condition, and it cannot be made suitable because it would be too expensive, would take too long, or it's not structurally possible.</li></ul>  |
| <p>You need to move because of a medical condition or disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The condition of your home is affecting your health so seriously that it is, or could become, life-threatening; or</li><li>• You have a disability that is long-term and your accommodation restricts your mobility so much that you can't carry out most normal day-to-day tasks, and you need to move to suitably adapted accommodation for the long-term; or</li><li>• You have a condition that means you are at risk of admission to hospital or residential care because there are critical safety concerns in your current accommodation.</li></ul> |
| <p>You are acutely overcrowded because your home is too small for your household<br/>We use the 'national bedroom standard' rules to work out if you are overcrowded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You need at least three bedrooms more than you have in your current home.</li></ul>   |

You are suffering abuse, violence, harassment, victimisation, or threats

- You are suffering from very serious domestic abuse, extreme violence or harassment that means it is genuinely dangerous to stay living in your home and rehousing is part of a multi-agency plan to protect and safeguard you.

You want to move to a smaller home (note that you must rent your home from one of the Manchester Move landlords, and must leave that home empty if you moved)

- You live in a home suitable for families, with three or more bedrooms; and you would move to a property with fewer bedrooms that is not for families (a multi-storey flat, retirement housing, or bungalow for example).

You are, or were, in the armed forces

- You are a former member of the armed forces and you have an urgent need to move that would otherwise put you in band 2 or band 3; or
- You are a serving member of the armed forces and you need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained while you were serving; or
- You are the bereaved spouse or civil partner of a member of the armed forces, and you are leaving services accommodation; or
- You are a serving or former member of the reserve forces and you need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained while you were serving; or
- You are the divorced or separated partner of a serving member of the regular forces and your divorce or separation means you have to leave accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence, or you have left such accommodation in the last year.

You rent your home from a private landlord; and it is in poor condition or lacks basic facilities

- Your home is in an extremely poor state of repair so that it is an immediate danger or is life-threatening, with one or more Category 1 Hazards under the Health and Safety rating System and the council has served a Prohibition Order.

You need to move to protect a child or young person

- Your accommodation contributes to a serious threat to the wellbeing of a child, and the risk is so critical that a move is the only reasonable option to safeguard the child.

You are a young person ready to leave care

- You are a young person assessed as ready to leave care.

## **Band 2**

You are homeless

- You are a homeless person and the council owes you a duty under section 189B(2) or section 193(2) of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. For more advice about this, contact your homelessness adviser.

You are overcrowded because your home is too small for your household  
We use the 'national bedroom standard' rules to work out if you are overcrowded.

- You need two bedrooms more than you have in your current home; or
- Your household includes one or more children and you live in one bedroom accommodation; or
- You live with another household and in your current accommodation is one bedroom short.

You rent your home from a private landlord; and it is in poor condition or lacks basic facilities

- Your home is in such a poor state of repair that there is one or more Category 1 Hazards under the Health and Safety rating System and the council has served a Suspended Prohibition Order.

You want to move to a smaller home (note that you must rent your home from one of the Manchester Move landlords, and must leave that home empty if you moved)

- You have more bedrooms than the bedroom standard says you need in your current home and you want to move to a new home where you will not have spare bedrooms according to the bedroom standard.

You need to move for medical, disability or welfare reasons

- You have assessed medical or welfare grounds for needing to be rehoused but these are not severe enough to award band 1; or
- Your accommodation is inadequate because it is affecting the wellbeing of an older person who is disabled or in ill-health.

You need to move because of significant hardship

- You are a tenant of a social landlord outside Manchester and need to move to the city in order to take up a paid permanent job offer in Manchester and you can't reasonably travel to work from your current home; or
- You need to give or receive substantial and continuing care and cannot rely on your own or public transport; or
- You need to commute to work, education or training that is not available nearer to your home and the commuting distance is unreasonable.

You need to move because your household includes a child living at height

- A child under 10 lives above the ground floor in a flat or maisonette, and there is no access to a garden.

You need to move to protect a child or young person

- Your accommodation contributes to the risk to a child or children subject to a Child Protection Plan and rehousing is an essential contribution to safeguarding the welfare of the child/ren.

You are ready to leave supported housing or residential care

- You are ready to move from supported housing or residential care to settled, independent housing.

You are suffering abuse, violence, harassment, victimisation, or threats

- You are suffering from domestic abuse, threats, or harassment - but you are not in immediate danger.

### **Band 3**

You are homeless

- You are homeless or are threatened with homelessness and the council owes you a duty under section 195(2) or section 190(2) of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. For more advice about this, contact your homeless adviser or support worker.

You are overcrowded because your home is too small for your household

We use the 'national bedroom standard' rules to work out if you are overcrowded.

- You need one bedroom more than you have in your current home.

All other qualifying applications are placed in band 4 unless they are reduced priority.

Because of the levels of demand for all social homes and the numbers of applicants in bands 1-3, applicants in bands 4 and 5 will not be allowed to bid on homes unless the individual advertisement for a property specifies that bids are invited from applicants in bands 4 and 5.

## **Reduced priority**

In certain circumstances we reduce someone's rehousing priority to Band 5. This could be because:

- You, or someone in your household, has behaved inappropriately. For example, you may have rent arrears, have broken a tenancy agreement, or acted antisocially in the past; or
- You have not provided a satisfactory reference; or
- You have refused suitable housing without good reason; or
- You have deliberately worsened your housing circumstances

## **Manchester Move**

We give rehousing applicants as much choice as possible by using a 'choice based lettings system' called Manchester Move. The vast majority of homes that are available through our allocations scheme are advertised on the Manchester Move website.

The only way to get a home on Manchester Move is to bid for it. There's no money involved; a 'bid' is simply the way you express an interest in that particular property. You can have up to three 'live' bids at any one time. Only bid for homes you really want. If you bid for homes and then turn them down, you may end up with a reduced rehousing priority in future.

By far the best way to see homes and bid for them is on the Manchester Move website.

Check all the homes you're eligible for, see photos, detailed descriptions and maps, and bid for a home with just one click. You can also bid when it suits you - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## How Manchester Move works

Most homes are advertised on Manchester Move for 6-7 days. They can be put on the system on any day, but the system is set up so that all homes are open for bids on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. You can bid for a home at any time during the period it is advertised. At the end of each bidding period for each property, the landlord that has advertised the property gets a list of all the people who have bid for it. The bidder with the highest priority is offered the home first.

If the property has been advertised using Manchester City Council rules, the home is offered to any bidders from Band 1 first; starting with the one who has been in this band the longest - that's the person with the earliest award date.

If there's no-one in Band 1, it's offered to anyone in Band 2 who has bid for it (starting with the bidder with the earliest award date) and so on down the bands until it's offered to a bidder who accepts it.

Occasionally a home is advertised as a 'first come first served' property. Instead of looking at the priority of the bidders (as described above), a home like this goes to the first bidder who is eligible for it.

## Your chance of a home

Your chance of a home depends on seven main things:

- how often you look for homes and bid for homes on Manchester Move.
- the rehousing band you're in - the higher the band, the better your chances.
- how long you've been in that band - called your 'award date'. The earlier this date, the better your chances.
- the type and size of home you're eligible for. Some properties are more readily-available than others.
- in flats, the age of the youngest person who is moving - some homes are reserved for people over a certain age.
- the area you want. In some areas, homes come up very often - but in others there's nothing available for a long time.
- how many other people bid for a home when it's advertised.

## Who can apply to be rehoused?

Anybody over 16 can apply for a home that's allocated using the Council's rehousing rules. Everyone who registers is asked about their housing history and legal status.

The law says we are not allowed to offer a home to certain people from abroad. This includes some people who are British citizens but are subject to immigration control.

We don't offer homes to people who don't need them because they own their own home or because they can afford to rent privately. We don't offer homes to people who haven't lived in Manchester for the last two years. We also don't offer homes to people who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour. This can include:

- owing more than £1000 rent
- breaking a tenancy agreement with a not-for-profit landlord, or causing serious damage to a property
- being guilty of serious antisocial behaviour or domestic abuse
- getting a tenancy illegally - by giving false information or paying money for example
- having to leave a home that came with a job that has been lost because of inappropriate behaviour
- having an unspent criminal conviction that would make the person a significant risk to local people

## Overcrowding: bedroom standard rules

You may qualify for one of the three higher rehousing bands if you are overcrowded because there are not enough bedrooms where you live now.

We use rules called the 'national bedroom standard' to work out how many bedrooms you need.

First we look at couples and single adults in your household:

- a couple (aged 16 or over) who live together as partners should have their own bedroom
- a single adult age 21 and over, should have their own bedroom

Then we check if there is a woman in the household who is pregnant (28 weeks or more):

- if there are no other children in the family, the expected baby should have its own bedroom.
- if there are other children in the family, the baby will be part of the rules for children and young people (below).

Then we look at children and young people (under 21) from the same family in the household:

- two children under 10 of either sex can share a bedroom
- two boys under 21 can share a bedroom
- two girls under 21 can share a bedroom
- any remaining children should have their own bedroom
- young single people who are under 21, and not in the same family, need their own bedrooms

When we have worked out how many bedrooms you need, we compare that number to the number of bedrooms you actually have. If you need more bedrooms than you have, you are classed as overcrowded.