

Social Housing & the Housing Needs Register

There is no 'Council housing' in Epsom & Ewell. Social rented housing is instead provided by a number of different housing associations, the largest being Rosebery Housing Association.

The Council has 'nomination rights' to a percentage of the housing association's vacancies and in order to decide who will be put forward to each property the Council operates a Housing Needs Register. The Housing Needs Register is a waiting list for people in the borough who are in need of social rented accommodation. Applicants are awarded priority based on an assessment of their circumstances and housing needs, as outlined in the Council's Allocation Policy.

When a property becomes available it will be advertised through the Council's choice based letting scheme, Epsom and Ewell Home Choice.

The vast majority of social housing properties available in the borough will now be let on Affordable Rents and fixed term tenancies. Affordable Rent properties have their rents set at a level of up to 80% of the market rent. These will be at similar level to most private sector housing rents or the LHA rate.

Please note that there is a severe shortage of social housing in the borough and it is likely to be some considerable time, if at all, before you would be considered for rehousing. Therefore you should not rely on the Council's Housing Needs Register to accommodate you within a given time period as the register is not able to assist with rehousing quickly or in emergencies. As a result, if you have a more urgent housing problem you may wish to seek advice on your alternative housing options from the Housing Options Team. Please see the recent lettings information below for an indication of how many properties become available each year.

Who can apply to join the Housing Needs Register?

To join the Council's Housing Needs Register you must be over the age of 16 and meet the eligibility and qualifying criteria relating to local connection, financial resources and behaviour as outlined in the Housing Allocation policy. If you do not meet this criteria you will not be entitled to join the Housing Needs Register.

A summary of this criteria and the allocation policy is available www.eebc-homechoice.org.uk or from Housing Services.

How to apply?

To apply to join the Housing Needs Register you need to complete an on-line application form on the Home Choice website – www.eebc-homechoice.org.uk . If you need help completing the on-line form please contact Housing Services on 01372 732000.

To enable us to accurately assess your application you must provide Housing Services with the supporting documents and ID within 14 days of submitting your on-line application. If you do not provide this information your application will be cancelled.

Once you have submitted the on-line application and provided the required documents we will process your application to consider whether you are eligible and qualify and if so, assess your housing needs.

How needs are assessed and applicants prioritised?

The housing allocation scheme is a Banding Scheme and has been designed to be more straightforward to administer, be fairer to all categories of applicants on the Housing Needs Register and reduce homelessness, whilst making the best use of the borough's very limited social housing.

A system of re-housing quota targets will operate to ensure that different categories of applicants for housing have a chance of being offered accommodation. This will balance the needs of homeless households, waiting list applicants and existing local transfer tenants.

To assess and prioritise housing need the Council operates a banding scheme that ranks together applicants with different but equal housing need. Applicants will first be placed into an application category as either homeless, waiting list or transfer applicants. Applicants in each category will only be able to bid on properties advertised in that category.

Applicants in each application category will then be placed in one of five bands ranging from A (highest need) to E (lowest), which reflects their housing need as set out in the Council's Housing Allocation Policy.

The position in that band is organised first by the band date and then the registration date. Waiting time in each band ensures that once assessed applicants will gradually move up towards the top of the band.

If you have medical or welfare needs please ensure these are mentioned on the application. You will need to provide supporting information.

Some applicants may have their priority reduced and be placed in a lower band. This applies to applicants who have housing related debt and have not made or are not keeping to a repayment plan and those who are considered to have unacceptable behaviour.

One of the main aims of the new policy is to prevent homelessness by placing certain high need waiting list applicants in the same priority band as homeless applicants who are living in temporary accommodation. By doing this we hope to give these applicants an opportunity of being housed before a point of crisis is reached.

Homeless households where the Council has accepted a full statutory duty will have much more limited choice and will only be made one direct offer of a suitable property anywhere in the borough. If you are threatened with homelessness, if you can resolve your current housing problem or find alternative accommodation you will then have more choice over the properties you can bid on.

Size accommodation

The number of bedrooms applicants will be considered for will depend upon the size and composition of their household and are aligned to the DWP social sector size criteria.

How properties are allocated - Epsom and Ewell Home Choice

When a property becomes available it will be advertised through the Council's choice based letting scheme, Epsom and Ewell Home Choice. Applicants will be able to see what properties are available and bid for those that they are matched. Please let Housing Services know if you will need assistance with bidding.

Properties will be advertised from midnight Thursday to midnight the following Wednesday. They are advertised in the following ways:

- Via www.eebc-homechoice.org.uk
- On display in the Reception area at the Town Hall

The successful applicant will be the person with the highest priority for the property they have bid for and who meets the property or letting plan criteria.

Recent Lettings information

Please find below information regarding the number and types of all social housing vacancies that have been allocated over the last 7 years.

Property Size	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom	Sheltered	Total
2015/16	16	34	10	1	18	79
2016/17	30	31	25	5	23	114
2017/18	18	21	11	1	27	78
2018/19	35	39	21	8	24	127
2019/20	34	22	14	1	10	81
2020/21	29	23	10	1	26	89
2021/22	32	29	13	4	12	89
2022/23	47	61	18	0	15	141

Most of these vacancies are for 1 bedroom and sheltered flats and we would generally only expect one 4-bedroom vacancy to arise every 1-2 years, less than ten 3-bedroom vacancies a year and most 2-bedroom properties will be flats not houses.

The average waiting times for a social housing property for applicants in Band B:-

- 1 bedroom property is 2-3 years
- 2-bedroom property is 5-8 years
- 3-bedroom property is over 10 years
- 4-bed property. This is very difficult to predict as we will only get one 4-bedroom property every 1 to 2 years.

These waiting times are subject to change and are dependent on the number of applicants on the register and the number of properties that become available each year.