

Council house allocation system set to be reviewed

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Council chiefs in Edinburgh are set to overhaul the system used to allocate social housing in a bid to make it 'fairer.' A major review of the local authority's points-based model which determines who gets prioritised for council and housing association properties is among a range of new actions aimed at addressing the housing crisis.

This would take around a year to complete and includes looking at the 'fairness' of the existing allocations policy, how assessments are undertaken and how easy the process is for people whose first language is not English.

The council said work alongside partner landlords to increase the rate of allocations to homeless households had "proven successful" but a stronger effort was required on preventing homelessness.

There are currently around 24,000 people waiting for council housing in the capital – however only 2,079 homes were advertised by social landlords between April 1 last year and January 1 2024, new figures revealed.

An average of 243 bids are received for each property. Average waiting times vary across the city depending on location and the circumstances of applicants, ranging from 27 weeks for those assigned 'gold priority' to up to more than 10 years for bidders with 'no priority'.

EdIndex – the housing register used by the council and 17

partner housing associations and cooperatives – awards more priority points to people registered as homeless or threatened with homelessness, and fewer to those making an application because they live with family and not in their own home, have come out of a relationship or are having problems with their existing property such as dampness or issues heating.

In response to the housing shortage, increasing demand, spiralling rents in the private sector – and a record 5,000 homeless households currently in temporary accommodation – councillors unanimously declared a ‘housing emergency’ in the capital last November.

A plan drawn up in response, set to be agreed by councillors [next week](#), proposes reviewing ‘all current housing policies and strategies to maximise the availability of housing’ and ‘mapping the homeless support available across Edinburgh to remove duplication’.

Developed through a series of workshops with stakeholders, other actions include:

- Reassess what criteria is used to define vulnerability when assessing housing needs
- Utilising modern technology to reduce the time taken to bring properties to lettable standard
- Investigating how many households are currently living in under-occupied tenancies to explore potential for freeing up larger homes
- Investigating system wide adoption of a default consent model for data sharing
- Developing a plan to reduce the number of families with children living in temporary accommodation, including targeted approach to prioritise permanent housing for those in unsuitable accommodation
- Increasing accessibility of money, benefit and debt advice services to support households across the city
- Investigating models of housing co-operatives, including for different characteristics; the funding models and

advantages available and the possibility of introducing these in Edinburgh

Of a total 11,000 new affordable homes the council wants to see built by 2029 there is currently only capacity for around 6,200 to be constructed or approved by 2029, with less than half of those council or housing association-owned.

And to meet its target, the city needs a cash injection of around £665 million.

Jane Meagher, housing, homelessness and fair work convener, said: "What we're trying to do in the council is as much as we possibly can within the constraints of the financial limitations we have to resolve the housing crisis – housing emergency – however it has to be said we are limited by the funding."

Follow the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work committee meeting [here](#).

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



Cllr Jane Meagher, housing, homelessness and fair work convener. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com