

# Medical Priority Within the Housing Allocation Of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Factsheet

## 1- Introduction: What is Medical priority?

Medical Priority is when priority on the housing register is given to residents who have medical condition(s) which are worsened by their housing situation.

Each local authority have their own allocation policy and specific criteria to grant priority on their housing register.

The Housing register is the local authority waiting list for available social housing tenancies.

## 2- LBTH Criteria

The criteria for medical priority is twofold and applicants must meet **both** of these to be eligible for additional priority.

The applicant or a member of their household must have:

- A severe long-term limiting illness, or a permanent and substantial disability **AND**
- their health or quality of life is severely affected by the home they live in

## 3- How to make an application?

If someone has medical needs that are affected by their housing, then they can ask the council to assess their needs.

An application can be obtained from

- by contacting LBTH Lettings Department  
Lettings Team  
Housing Options Service  
Tower Hamlets Town Hall  
160 Whitechapel Road  
London  
E1 1BJ  
Tel: 020 7364 2826  
[lettings@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:lettings@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

- or if the current landlord is a partner landlord of tower hamlets council, by contacting the housing officer.

The List of partner landlords of London Borough of Tower Hamlets can be found [Partner landlords](#)

#### **4- The Application**

A form will then be provided asking for:

- Personal details of applicant and household member.
- A description of the problems - physical and mental - and/or disability of the people listed
- When did problem begin
- What is the health problem
- How this is affected by the housing condition

The applicant may want to provide supporting evidence along their application such as letters/ reports from GP, hospital consultant, specialist nurse, health prescribers, social services and so on.

Please note that any supporting evidence must be related to the health conditions or the effects of the property. Any letters just supporting a person in their move will not be helpful.

#### **5- The Assessment**

The Council will assess your application based on the application form and any additional information provided.

In some cases they may send an Occupational Therapist to do a home visit to Carry out an assessment.

#### **6- The Decision**

The council, after having assessed you, will decide whether any of the following applies to you:

- your case is an emergency (in which case you will be given the highest priority within Group A of Band 1)
- you need to move because of serious medical needs which are not an emergency (in which case you go into Group B of Band 1)
- you need to move because of serious medical needs and you need a ground floor or wheelchair accessible property (in which you go into Group A of Band 1)
- when you do move, you need to move to a ground floor property or a property which is serviced by a lift (this will be reflected in your property coding)
- when you do move, you need to move to a property with a garden (this will be reflected in your property coding)

#### **7- Bands**

- **Emergency Medical Award : Band 1 Group A**

This is the highest priority group on the housing register.

The criteria for being placed on Band 1 Group A for medical reasons are very limited. Someone will only be given this emergency priority if their medical

needs are urgent (e.g. there is a risk to life or the person can't leave hospital because there is nowhere suitable for them to live).

- **Priority Medical Award Band 1 Group B**

A household will normally only be placed in Band 1 Group B because of a medical need if it contains a person with a severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability whose health or quality of life is severely affected by the place they live in now.

### **Example**

The examples that the council gives of what sorts of situations might lead to a medical award are:

- The current home is too small for essential medical equipment, for example, a dialysis machine;
- The person with the medical needs is housebound or cannot access the essential facilities in their home;
- The person's ability to live in the community is at risk;
- There are critical concerns about the person's safety.

As you can see, the test is set very high and only those with the most serious medical needs for a move will be awarded health priority. It is not enough just that the person has serious health problems - **they also have to show that their health is seriously affected by their current home.**



You should be aware that if you are successful in an application for medical priority, your "preference date" (the date from which waiting time is calculated) will be the date you applied for medical priority, and not the date you first put your name on the register.]

## **8. Other recommendations that can be made on health grounds**

- **Priority for a Ground Floor Property**

The council can carry out an assessment to see if you need to live in a ground floor property or a property which is serviced by a lift. A ground floor coding will only normally be awarded if you have a permanent and substantial disability or severe limiting long term illness that means that your mobility or exercise tolerance is so severely restricted that you cannot safely manage any stairs.

Less serious mobility problems may lead to a coding specifying the highest floor level you can live on with or without a lift. However, there are no specific criteria for this in the policy.

- **Priority for a Garden**

The council will give priority to households with a disabled child for properties with gardens. This means a household containing a child who would benefit from an outdoor space to play in who has:

- A permanent and substantial disability;
- A severe long term limiting illness;
- The severest forms of learning difficulties; or
- The severest forms of behavioural problems

- **Discretionary Additional Priority**

The scheme recognises that there are some circumstances which are exceptional or which do not fit into the broad medical, overcrowding, homeless, decant etc. criteria. For example, some people may need to move because of violence or harassment or to prevent an elder or child going into institutional care. The council's scheme states that where an applicant has an exceptional need or where there is a combination of significant social/welfare/medical/safety or urgency factors that cannot be adequately dealt with in the lettings policy, discretionary priority will be considered.

This priority can only be awarded by the council's Housing Management Panel. You can ask your landlord (if your landlord is a member of the scheme) to investigate your case and then refer it to the panel. If you are not a current tenant of the council or a partner landlord, you can ask a lettings sustainability officer from the council to investigate and then refer the case.

It will be important to provide as much information and evidence to the housing officer investigating your case as possible.

If the Housing Management Panel agree that you need to move for exceptional reasons then you will be placed in either the emergency group in Band 1 Group A or Band 1 Group B.

## **9. Disagree with a decision?**

When the council makes a decision about any aspect of a transfer or a housing application they must notify the applicant in writing.

A review of the decision must be made **within 28 days** and there is no right for a late review. The request for a review does not have to be in writing it can be done by just **calling** the council and asking to seek a review.

The council should provide acknowledgment of the review request and invite applicant to provide further evidence to support their request through representation. All representations must be done **in writing**.

The council should normally ensure that a different officer to the one who made the disputed decision carries out the review and that the applicant is notified of the new decision within 56 days of the request for a review.

## **10. Obtaining Medical Priority**

Please note that even if medical priority is awarded there is still a considerable wait for rehousing

**Average waiting times in years (based on actual lets 2023/4)**

<b>Priority band</b>	<b>Studio</b>	<b>1 Bed</b>	<b>2 Bed</b>	<b>3 Bed</b>	<b>4 Bed</b>	<b>5+ Beds</b>
<b>Band 1</b>	2	3	5	7	7	11
<b>Band 2</b>	5	6	7	12	12	No lets
<b>Band 3</b>	10	6	No lets	No lets	No lets	No lets

Full details of Tower Hamlets lettings scheme can be found at

[Apply for social housing](#)

**For housing Advice please see**

[Housing Advice - THCAN](#)