

You should always seek independent legal advice if you are unsure about any of the contents of this document. Free advice and guidance is usually available from your local citizens' advice bureau.



Housing Initiatives Team
020 8825 7686
housinginitiatives@ealing.gov.uk

Ealing Council's Overcrowded Tenants Scheme Options Leaflet

My family and I are overcrowded in our current home. I have been bidding on LOCATA for years and have had no viewings. What are my options?

There are a number of options available to you via Ealing Council's Housing Initiatives team.

- If you wish to remain in your current home, we can look to see if we can help you by installing space saving furniture in your home. This can include bunk beds, foldaway desks for study, sofa beds or storage solutions. We will visit you at your home to see if this is a suitable option.
- If you happen to live in a property which you feel may be able to be extended or have a loft room fitted in it please let us know. Again, we will visit you at home and see if this is really a viable alternative. Also, if the property next door to you is vacant please let us know. We may be able to see if there is any way of using it to help your overcrowding.
- If any of your children are aged over 18 years old and are unemployed and need help with training in order to gain a work based qualification, they may be eligible able to find them accommodation away from your overcrowded home and into a flat of their own.
Ask us about the InCome Project.
- If your children need access to homework clubs or somewhere quiet to study outside of the home we may be able to locate a suitable place for them to work without being distracted by other members of the household.
- If you are living with family members who are over 60 years old we can look to find them their own accommodation. This should help free us some space in you current home. They can look for properties in the borough or even move out to the Seaside or Countryside if they wish.
- If you want to move away from your current home, we can look to try and find you an alternative property to rent. This may be in the borough or we can assist you in looking outside the borough if you want to move away, or move to a seaside or country home if you wish.

How do I find out more about any of these schemes?

Contact the Housing Initiatives Team on 020 8825 7686 or on housinginitiatives@ealing.gov.uk

Further information is also available on our website www.ealing.gov.uk



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Ealing Council's Overcrowded Tenants Scheme Private Sector Rental

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I do not want to remain in my current home, as it is too small for my family needs. What can I do to move?

You will have registered for a transfer to another council home and be bidding for properties on LOCATA. You may have not placed bids for a long time as you feel that you have not got anywhere in the past.

This is because there are not enough larger council homes to go to everyone who would like one. You will probably find that it will be quicker for you to look for a property with a private landlord.

Why do I need to find a property to rent in the private sector and why can I not get a Council or Housing Association property?

There are not enough affordable or social homes in the borough to satisfy the growing demand for it. There are thousands of families waiting for a council home with very little chance of ever being offered one and the housing register is longer than it has ever been before. This means we have to find different ways to help families with their housing issues and we are looking more and more at the private sector to provide homes to rent.

You may have been bidding on LOCATA for years without ever having been offered a viewing. Unfortunately, unless you are in the highest priority for housing, you are unlikely to ever be offered a larger property.

What is the Council's Overcrowding Scheme?

The Council is now helping families find larger houses away from the LOCATA scheme. We are looking to secure you a larger family home in the private sector, which you otherwise would never be able to find on LOCATA.

These will be larger homes, some of which are in private roads, and some will have gardens or communal outside spaces. We will offer you viewings of these homes, which you can be offered subject to your priority on the Housing Register and you will be able

to decide if you wish to move into it. You will have a designated officer in the Council who will speak with you about your needs for a new home, and where appropriate, provide you with support after you have moved house. We will also arrange your removals for when you move into your new home.

There will also be support at the council to help you with any housing benefit queries.

Why would I want to move?

The biggest advantage of private sector properties is 'choice'. You are able to decide what type of property you want to live in, as well as choosing your preferred area and how close to certain schools, transport links and local amenities you are. If you do not like the council estate you currently live in then moving into a home in a road with privately owned houses in it may be more desirable to you.

People who have moved on this scheme already have done so because they were worried about the amount of space their children had in their current accommodation. They were also worried about anti-social behaviour on their estate, not having enough space for their children to play in or not having a garden. They were also worried about lifts in the blocks not working meaning they struggle with their buggies or heavy shopping, people hanging around in the communal areas causing trouble, or issues with their children and others on the estate.

Most families are currently living in one or two bedroom flats on council estates. Their children are sharing bedrooms even when they are teenagers, which is a time when they should have a bit more privacy. We hope that by finding you a large private sector house, your children will be able to have their own rooms and have more space for their studies, their computers or their toys away from the main front room.

How will I find a home to rent in the private sector?

We will contact private landlords and letting agents in the borough on your behalf and contact you as soon as a home that meets your requirements becomes available. You will then be offered a viewing of the property. We will offer two overcrowded households a viewing of the home, and you will be told **before** the viewing if you are the No.1 or No.2 choice. The No.1 and No.2 choices are determined firstly by your current LOCATA banding and secondly by how long you have been in that band.

Can I rent any size of property?

Not if you are going to claim Housing Benefit to help you with the rent.

Housing Benefit will only pay for the size of property you (and your family) need. If you rent a property that is bigger than you need your Housing Benefit will be restricted and you will have to pay the difference. If you are unsure what size property you (and your family) need, you should speak to the Housing Benefit office, as it will depend on how many people there are in your household, their relationship to you, their age and gender.

If you do not claim housing benefit then you can rent any property of any size as long as you can manage the rent. Remember that if you regularly miss your rent payments your landlord may ask you to leave the property.

How will I know if Housing Benefit will meet the rent for the property?

We will generally do this for you. Any property we refer to you will match your current entitlement to Housing Benefit.

IF YOUR INCOME CHANGES DURING YOUR TENANCY YOU WILL NEED TO INFORM HOUSING BENEFIT IMMEDIATELY AS IT MAY AFFECT HOW MUCH THEY WILL CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS YOUR RENT.

To find out what rent Housing Benefit would use to work out your claim, you should check the current LHA (Local Housing Allowance) rates, which are published every month. This will tell you before you commit yourself to a tenancy, if you can afford to take it on. Further information is available at www.lha-direct.voa.gov.uk

What sort of tenancy will I have?

You will usually have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) that lasts for 12 months. This is called the tenancy period and does not mean you will definitely have to move at the end of the tenancy period. We will always endeavor to secure tenancies for longer than 12 months on your behalf, but this is at the discretion of the landlord. Ideally we will look for a tenancy of up to 3 years for you.

Most landlords want tenants who will pay their rent on time and look after the property. If you do this you are likely to be able to remain in the property for longer than the original agreement period. You should maintain a good relationship with your landlord to ensure this happens. You may not be issued with a new tenancy agreement if this happens, but the terms of your original tenancy will continue and your tenancy then becomes a 'Periodic Tenancy'.

Your Landlord will no longer be Ealing Council. Instead it will be a private landlord.

How does an AST differ from a Secure Tenancy?

Your current council tenancy is a secure tenancy.

A secure tenancy means that your tenancy can only be ended by a court order. The Council can only get a court order if it can prove one of the reasons described as "grounds for possession", most commonly rent arrears.

You will remain a secure tenant as long as you live in your home as your only or principal home. It is a condition of your tenancy that you must live in the property so if you do not, you may lose your security of tenure, which would mean losing your rights as a secure tenant. You have signed a tenancy agreement, which is a legal contract. It makes clear the council's responsibilities to you and your obligations to the council and to your neighbours.

It does however mean that most families find themselves trapped in the same home for many years. You may have been living in the same property since before you had children and now found that you have completely outgrown the flat.

Can I remain on the Housing Register if I rent a property in the private sector?

Your current application for transfer on LOCATA will be cancelled once you move into another property. This is because you will not longer be an Ealing Council tenant. If you do wish to continue bidding for properties via LOCATA, you will need to make a new application as a Homeseeker. You will then be assessed again based on your need for housing.

What we hope is that once you have moved out of your council home, you will find it more desirable to stay in the private sector. We hope that you will be able to continue renting the home you move into, rent another home or eventually look to move into shared or complete ownership of your own home. We have specialist officers who can offer you the best advice about these options.

How much will I have to pay to move into a new home?

Unlike finding a privately rented home yourself, you will not be expected to pay a deposit to your landlord or pay any rent up front before moving in. You will never be asked to give the landlord any money aside from the agreed monthly rent. (If you are asked for money from your landlord, please inform the council immediately). The council will arrange and pay for all removals costs when you move you're your new home.

What you must remember is that the gas and electricity bills for a 3, 4 or 5 bedroom home will be greater than those in a 1 or 2 bedroom home. You will need to budget accordingly to make sure you keep up to date with all your bills.

Who will I report my repairs to?

It is the landlords responsibility to ensure you have a working boiler to provide you with hot water and central heating, to ensure the property remains secure (so fixing faulty windows, doors etc) and to ensure the outside of the building remains safe. If there are any issues such as this you will report them directly to the landlord who will be expected to repair them speedily.

Who are these landlords?

All of the properties we will send you to view are owned by Accredited Landlords. This means that they have attended a course to ensure they have the knowledge they require to maintain their properties to an acceptable and appropriate standard for you. We will not accept any properties from landlords who are not accredited via this scheme.

For further information about any of the above, please contact the Housing Initiatives Team on 0208 825 7686