



TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENTS POLICY

Effective Date	May, 2019	Version	1.0
Date of Next Review	June, 2021	Review Frequency	2 years
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Policy:	<i>Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy</i>
Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to provide detailed guidance for the fair allocation of suitable temporary accommodation within and outside of the London Borough of Barnet. The temporary accommodation procurement policy is attached at Appendix 1 for ease of reference.
Legislation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 • Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (MHCLG, 2018) • Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) England Order 2012 • Equality Act 2010 • Section 11 of the Children Act 2004
Scope:	<p>This procedure impacts the following teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation Solutions Team • Housing Needs Teams • Temporary Accommodation Reduction Team
Responsibilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation Solutions Manager – approving manager for accommodation placements and transfer requests • Housing Needs Managers – approving managers for accommodation placements and transfer requests • Housing Needs Officers – officers making accommodation placement and transfer requests • TA Reduction Officers – officers making transfer requests • Accommodation Solutions Officers - officers making accommodation placements

1. Overview

- 1.1 This Policy will provide a framework for the fair allocation of suitable temporary accommodation within and outside of the London Borough of Barnet. This policy applies to the allocation of temporary accommodation secured under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and meets the standards set out in the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (MHCLG, 2018), the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) England Order 2012, the Equality Act 2010 and section 11 of the Children Act 2004.
- 1.2 Whilst most accommodation we provide is self-contained, there is an insufficient supply of affordable, local, temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation may be;
- In borough, out-of-borough or out-of-of London
 - Short term or long term
- 1.3 The London Borough of Barnet will only place a household in accommodation that it considers is suitable for the household. However, what is suitable will depend on a number of factors including the period for which the household is likely to occupy that accommodation.
- 1.4 The London Borough of Barnet is close to other boroughs in terms of travelling time and distances will be assessed in terms of travel by way of public or private transport rather than measured distances. It may be more suitable for an applicant to be accommodated out of borough if that means travelling times are reduced.
- 1.5 There are circumstances in which it is not in an applicant's interests to be accommodated in or close to the Borough. These include:
- Cases where the applicant is fleeing domestic violence or other violence;
 - To enable rehabilitation away from previous contacts;
 - To maximise employment opportunities;
 - Personal choice.

Households who fall within these categories will not have priority for in or close to borough placements.

- 1.6 This policy does not prevent a household from considering other housing options, including asking the Council for advice, support and assistance in relocating to more settled accommodation or making their own accommodation arrangements.
- 1.7 Short term temporary accommodation is accommodation managed by a private company and paid for on a nightly basis. This type of accommodation will normally be given to households who have been accepted as requiring assistance in accordance with s.188 of the Housing Act 1996, because the local authority has reason to believe that they are homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need. This type of accommodation should only be occupied for a short period of time whilst the local authority is making inquiries and so may not achieve as high a degree of suitability for the household.
- 1.8 Long term temporary accommodation is accommodation provided or managed by the Council, a Registered Provider or private company on behalf of the Council. This kind of

accommodation will be provided to households who

- Have been accepted as requiring assistance in accordance with s.193 of the Housing Act 1996 (the “main housing duty”).
- Have other exceptional circumstances that the Council considers appropriate to be offered long term temporary accommodation.

1.9 Where reasonably practicable, officers will try to place all households within or as close as possible to the London Borough of Barnet. However, as it is not possible to accommodate all applicants in the London Borough of Barnet, officers will prioritise those in most need of accommodation in the London Borough of Barnet, taking into account all known relevant facts relating to the household.

1.10 Priority will depend on the nature of the unit of accommodation available at any time, including its size and suitability for the make-up of the household. A household will be offered accommodation which is suitable in terms of size for its make-up.

1.11 When making an offer of accommodation, the council will consider what accommodation is available at the time and prioritise use of the nearest accommodation to those applicants with the highest need for the type of accommodation available. Where two households have the same priority, the time they have been waiting will be considered. A household in need of long-term temporary accommodation will not normally be offered short-term accommodation and vice versa.

2. Prioritisation

2.1 If the local authority has a duty to secure accommodation, an assessment will be carried out to determine the requirements of the household including any children. The assessment will determine whether the household has:

- Priority to be located in the London Borough of Barnet
- Priority to be located close to the London Borough of Barnet
- No priority to be located either within or close to the London Borough of Barnet

2.2 The award of an 'In-borough' or 'Close to Borough' location priority does not guarantee the provision of temporary accommodation within those areas, rather priority for such accommodation should it be available and suitable for the needs of the household.

2.3 Where the household is in receipt of welfare benefits, this may place additional constraints on the availability of affordable accommodation, including constraints on its type and location. It is more likely that out of borough accommodation will be affordable for households on benefits. Discretionary Housing Payments will not normally be made available to enable a household to remain in the London Borough of Barnet.

2.4 In accordance with its obligations pursuant to section 11 of the Children Act 2004, the Council will have due regard to the principal needs of any children in the household, and the need to safeguard and promote the children's welfare. In particular, regard will be had to any disruption to schools and education, medical care, social work, other key services and other support.

2.5 The Council will have due regard to matters concerning public safeguarding and protection and will work with all relevant organisations to ensure the suitability of accommodation.

2.6 The Council will have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 in ensuring that the needs of households with disabilities are met in determining the location of the temporary accommodation. In particular, regard will be had to the need of any disabled person to remain close to medical facilities, support networks and other key services.

3. Priority for accommodation within the borough

3.1 Priority for available in-borough accommodation will be given to certain households who the Council has assessed as having a particular need to be housed within the London Borough of Barnet. Households who satisfy one or more of the following criteria will be considered as having a priority for accommodation within the London Borough of Barnet:

- Those who are receiving treatment for a physical or mental health condition from a specialist hospital unit which cannot be transferred to another NHS service or where they are at a critical point in their treatment.
- Those with disabilities, the effect of which is that they have a compelling need to be accommodated in the London Borough of Barnet
- Children subject to a Child Protection Plan in the London Borough of Barnet which cannot be transferred to another local authority without causing serious detriment to a child's welfare.
- Children subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs in the London Borough of Barnet which cannot be transferred to another local authority without causing serious detriment to the child's welfare.
- In accordance with the criteria set out within the Housing Allocations Scheme, those who have a longstanding arrangement to provide essential care to another resident of the London Borough of Barnet who is not part of the household.
- Other circumstances which demonstrate an exceptional need which cannot be met outside of the London Borough of Barnet.

3.2 An 'In-borough' priority award does not guarantee an in-borough placement, but should suitable and affordable accommodation be available within that area, it does give that household priority over others without this assessed priority. If no in-borough accommodation is available an offer of accommodation as close to the Borough as possible will be made.

4. Priority for accommodation close to the borough

4.1 'Close to Borough' priority is defined as priority for accommodation located within a specific travelling distance of the London Borough of Barnet by public transport.

4.2 Applicants or their household members to be housed with them who satisfy one or more of the following criteria will qualify for 'Close to Borough' priority:

- Those who are being offered long-term temporary accommodation and who are continuously employed within the London Borough of Barnet for 16 hours or more per week in a role which cannot be transferred to another area. Wherever

practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance by public transport from their place of employment which is in accordance with the DWP guidelines on reasonable travelling times for employment.

- Women who are on maternity leave from employment and meet the above criteria will also be prioritised for long-term placements close to the London Borough of Barnet. Wherever practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance by public transport from their place of employment.
- Children who are enrolled in GCSE, AS, or A level courses in the London Borough of Barnet, with public exams to be taken within the current or next academic year. Wherever practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 75 minutes journey time to and from school using public transport. This is in accordance with timescales recommended by the Department for Education for children of secondary school age.
- Those with disabilities the effect of which is that they have a compelling need to be accommodated close to the London Borough of Barnet.
- Other exceptional circumstances, where applicants demonstrate an exceptional need to be housed close to the London Borough of Barnet.

4.3 Such priority does not guarantee a placement within the suggested travelling distance of the London Borough of Barnet by public transport, but should suitable and affordable accommodation be available within that area, it does give the household priority over others without that assessed priority. If no in-borough accommodation is available, an offer of accommodation as close to the Borough as possible will be made.

5. No priority for accommodation within or close to the borough

5.1 Applicants who meet none of the 'In-borough' or 'Close to Borough' criteria may be offered properties further afield than 90 minutes travelling distance of the London Borough of Barnet by public transport, when no suitable property is reasonably practicably available within these areas.

6. Multiple priorities

6.1 Where there are multiple priorities identified i.e. where there are conflicting schooling, medical and employment needs, it will be for the Council to determine which priority it chooses to give weight to in the event that not all needs can be met.

7. Move-on from temporary accommodation

7.1 Where the Council determines that a placement does not meet the legally defined standards of suitability as a result of incorrect information from the temporary accommodation provider at the time of placement, through a change of circumstances or through the production of new information, it will seek to make an urgent offer of alternative accommodation as soon as one that is suitable and affordable becomes available.

7.2 Where the Council determines that a placement does meet the legally defined standards of suitability but considers that an alternative offer of accommodation would better meet the needs of the applicant and their household, it will seek to make an offer of alternative

accommodation. Such an offer will only be made in the event that a property which is suitable and affordable becomes available and which is not required for a household who have been assessed to have a more urgent need for the placement.

7.3 Applicants placed in temporary accommodation under section 193, Housing Act 1996 have the right to seek a review of the suitability of their accommodation under section 202 of the Act if they consider that it is not suitable to their needs. Those applicants who are placed under section 188, Housing Act 1996 do not have the same rights of review and should in the first instance speak to their Housing Needs Officer to try and resolve any concerns informally. If the applicant is not satisfied with the informal response they are able to pursue a formal complaint through Barnet Homes complaints procedure.

8. Notification of placements outside Barnet

8.1 Where a placement is made outside Barnet, notification will be made in accordance with s.208 of the Housing Act 1996 to the host borough.

9. Monitoring

9.1 The Council continuously monitors the numbers in temporary accommodation to help ensure that budgetary pressures can be monitored and reported upon, and that data regarding housing needs can be used to procure appropriate temporary accommodation. Monitoring will include data regarding the protected characteristics of households and where they are placed.

9.2 The Council will keep daily records of all available properties and will keep details of what properties are available on each day, and what offers are made, and file these for three months.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Type of Change	Date	Revisions from Previous Issues
1.0	Creation	May 2019	Creation of formal policy to reflect current practice.

APPENDIX 1



TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PROCUREMENT POLICY

Version Control

Item	Reason for Change	Version	Author	Date
1.	Previous version: January 2016	v.1		January 2016
2.	Annual Change	v.2	Bo Wen Wang	June 2019
3.				
4.				
5.				
Last Review Date:		June 2019	Next Review Date: May 2021	

Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the Council's policy for the acquisition of suitable privately owned properties for use as temporary accommodation for households towards whom a duty to secure accommodation has been accepted or have been accepted as requiring assistance under the Housing Act 1996.

1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the London Borough of Barnet's Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy.

1.3 The Council does not have sufficient units of temporary accommodation (TA) within its own owned and managed stock, and as a result we depend on the supply of privately owned properties to meet our obligations to provide TA to homeless households. Changes to the local housing market and other factors largely outside the Council's control have made it increasingly difficult to obtain properties for use as TA in the borough and in surrounding areas that meet the standards that are required. This policy is intended to ensure that sufficient numbers of suitable properties are obtained for the anticipated demand for TA in the ensuing twelve months. The policy, and associated demand projections, will be reviewed every year.

Key principles

2.1 The approach of Barnet Homes to the acquisition of suitable properties is informed by the following key principles:

- The objective of Barnet Homes is to procure sufficient units of TA to meet the anticipated demand for properties in each financial year.
- Where possible these units will be in the borough of Barnet, however Barnet Homes may acquire properties in a range of other locations where it appears the supply of units in the borough will not be sufficient for the anticipated demand. Where there is a shortfall in the number of 'in-borough' units, the TA Placements policy will be applied to determine which households are offered those units, and which households will be offered properties in other locations
- In addressing the shortfall, Barnet Homes will endeavour to acquire units in boroughs and which are close to the borough in order to minimise as far as possible the distance between the borough itself and the location of TA being offered to households who cannot be accommodated within the borough. These 'nearby boroughs' are; Brent, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow and Hertsmere.
- Where the demand for accommodation is such that it is unlikely to be possible to acquire sufficient properties for all homeless households in Barnet and in nearby boroughs, Barnet Homes may acquire properties in other locations, which can be offered to homeless households applying the approach set out in the TA Placements Policy.
- In making decisions on the acquisition of properties for TA, Barnet Homes may consider the resources available for the provision of TA, the difficulties of procuring sufficient units of TA at affordable

prices in the borough, and the practicalities of acquiring accommodation in nearby areas.

Temporary accommodation provision

3.1 Barnet Homes currently provides as much TA as possible using properties which are already owned by the Council. These include a number of self-contained hostels and vacant general needs units on regeneration estates. There are currently approximately 850 of both of these types of properties available. This number is likely to reduce gradually as the regeneration scheme progresses and properties are required to be decanted for demolition.

3.2 In May 2019 the number of households in TA stood at over 2,550. It is therefore essential that privately owned properties are used as part of the TA 'portfolio' in order to fulfil the Council's duties.

3.3 Barnet Homes currently acquires privately owned properties in the context of a Framework Agreement which appoints 'preferred suppliers' to negotiate with property owners and make properties available to Barnet Homes under the Framework.

3.4 Barnet Homes also sources from private landlords and secured under lease for use as long-term TA.

Anticipated demand for temporary accommodation

4.1 Efforts are being made to reduce the number of households needing placement in TA, through a focus on early intervention and prevention activities, and increased moves into the private rented sector rather than TA. However, the number of households requiring TA is unlikely to reduce significantly in the coming year for a range of reasons, including the limited supply of secure accommodation and the continuing high level of homeless presentations by households with a local connection to the borough. Between 2,400 and 2,600 properties are likely to be required at any given point, with some seasonal variations. Some properties currently in use are also likely to be handed back to their owners during the year, creating an additional requirement of as many as 150 properties in addition to the numbers needed for newly homeless households.

4.2 Barnet, being the most populous London Borough, is expecting to see a population increase of 83,000 over the next 30 years, adding further inflationary pressures to the PRS housing market in Barnet. Further, the availability of affordable supply in Barnet is restricted, partially owing to the borough being situated in a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) that includes a number of more affordable places to live, including Enfield and Haringey. This has led to increasing numbers of households approaching Barnet Homes for assistance due to their inability to access the private sector market.

4.2 Given this level of demand it is certain that Barnet Homes will not be able to meet the need for TA using only properties within the borough. There are also 3 very severe challenges in acquiring properties in nearby boroughs, most of which are experiencing steeply rising property prices, increasing private sector rents, fierce competition for supply and other trends, the effect

of which is to reduce the number of properties in the borough or in nearby boroughs which may become available for use as TA.

4.3 The TA procurement policy for 2019 [this document] assumes that it will be necessary to procure properties in a range of locations beyond the borough itself and the surrounding area. All properties procured under the policy will be as close to the borough as is reasonably practicable, given the financial constraints within Barnet Homes operates and the practical difficulties which can prevent units being procured in Barnet or nearby boroughs.

Instructions to suppliers

5.1 Much of the procurement of individual properties is vested in the managing agents working on Barnet Homes behalf. Barnet Homes must ensure that the suppliers meet the quality of TA required as well as the regulatory standards. Barnet Homes must ensure that suppliers are compliant with the Temporary Accommodation Procurement policy and Barnet Homes Managing Agents Guidelines.

5.2 The decision whether to use a particular property which is being offered by a supplier is made by Barnet Homes, and must be informed by applying the key principles of the Temporary Accommodation Procurement policy.

5.3 The managing agents who procure TA on Barnet Homes' behalf are aware of the standard of accommodation required by the Council and of the Temporary Accommodation Procurement policy.

5.4 All managing agents are under a standing instruction to procure as many properties as possible in the borough; to procure properties in nearby boroughs wherever possible; and to procure properties as close to the borough as possible when considering other areas.

5.5 Where it may be possible for suppliers to deliver cost-effective arrangements for TA in other areas, managers in Barnet Homes are authorised to approve these arrangements where it appears clear that

- On the basis of trends in supply and demand Barnet Homes cannot be confident of comprehensively meeting its obligations to homeless households using only the properties likely to be acquired in the borough and in nearby areas, and
- It is likely there will also be a shortfall in the number of available units located in areas between the borough and nearby areas and the location of the potential acquisition and
- The properties in question meet the physical standards set out in Barnet Homes Managing Agents Guidelines, and
- The properties being offered represent good value for money when considered in the context of the Council's overall expenditure on TA.

5.6 Where units are acquired in other areas by applying the above criteria, the Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy will be applied in the process of matching each individual property to a homeless household. Each property will only be offered to an applicant when Barnet Homes has satisfied

itself that it is suitable for the homeless household, taking into account the household's individual circumstances and the characteristics of the property.

Process for acquisitions

- 6.1 The process by which individual properties are offered to Barnet Homes by suppliers, and the property standards required, are set out in Barnet Homes Managing Agents Guidelines for TA procured under the Framework Agreement.
- 6.2 Before agreeing to the use of a specific unit, officers in Barnet Homes are responsible for ensuring that the acquisitions process in Barnet Homes Managing Agents Guidelines has been followed, and that the acquisition of the unit is consistent with the principles of the Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy as set out above.
- 6.3 Where there are not likely to be sufficient units in the borough and nearby boroughs to meet demand, officers in Barnet Homes can authorise the acquisition of properties elsewhere in order that it will be possible to meet the Council's obligations.
- 6.4 When properties have been acquired Barnet Homes will go on to consider which households should be offered them, applying the Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy.

Financial considerations

- 7.1 The difficulties experienced by Barnet Homes in procuring TA in the borough and in nearby boroughs are largely related to the wider housing market and the availability to owners and landlords of other options which are more financially attractive (including letting properties to households not dependent on Housing Benefit). In light of this Barnet Homes keeps under review the rates paid and other financial incentives it offers to managing agents and property owners, and will implement increases in these incentives where there is a business case for doing so.
- 7.2 Barnet Homes is obliged to provide services within the budgetary limits set by the Council, and to seek value for money in all its dealings with third parties. For these reasons it is not possible for the Council to pay 'market rents' for properties in the borough, or in any area, where to do so would create a severe financial imbalance between the maximum obtainable rent (based on the Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements for TA) and the amount payable to the agent or owner. In seeking to provide suitable accommodation in the borough or as close to it as possible, Barnet Homes cannot set aside its obligations to the Council Tax payer and other sources of funding. These considerations represent a significant impediment to obtaining as many units of TA in the borough or nearby as would be desirable to fulfil the principles of the Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy and the Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy.
- 7.3 Barnet Homes and the suppliers with whom it works in partnership are committed to maximising the supply of properties in or near the borough for use as TA. The Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy reflects this

objective while taking account of the difficulties in procuring sufficient units of TA in the borough, and the practical and financial constraints in obtaining properties of a sufficiently high standard in nearby areas.

7.4 Barnet Homes also has regard to the right of homeless applicants to request a review of the suitability of any temporary accommodation provided to them under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, and of the requirements of the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.

Standards in temporary accommodation

8.1 Barnet Homes is committed to ensuring that all properties acquired for use as TA, meet the Temporary Accommodation Management Guidelines and the Private Sector Leasing Property Standards.