

Tenants: Your options

Summary of the Policy for Tenants
in Housing Renewal Areas 2019

Key information for all tenants

This leaflet provides a summary of **Westminster City Council's Policy for Tenants in Housing Renewal Areas**. As of October 2019 the housing renewal areas in Westminster are: the Church Street area, the Ebury Bridge Estate and the Tollgate Gardens Estate.

Housing renewal is where redevelopment is taking place and there will be new affordable homes, both social rented and intermediate. Intermediate housing can either be rented housing (with discounted rents which are lower than market ones) or low cost home ownership, such as shared ownership.

Housing renewal happens in different ways, an estate or area can be developed all at the same time or in phases. More information about housing renewal is available at:

westminster.gov.uk/housing-renewal

This new Policy updates the Policy published in 2015 and a summary of the changes is at the back of this booklet. The new Policy was consulted on between November 2018 and February 2019 and the comments made by those responding have been taken into account as far as possible.

Who does the Policy apply to?

The Policy applies to any tenant living in a housing renewal area and where they need to move to enable redevelopment to go ahead. There may be different types of tenants living in housing renewal areas. These include:

- **Council tenants:** These may be introductory, secure or flexible council tenants.
- **Registered provider (housing association) tenants:** These will be assured tenants and are likely to be, on Westminster renewal estates, tenants of Westminster Community Homes.
- **Private tenants:** These will be assured shorthold tenants of council leaseholders who are renting out their properties.
- **Temporary accommodation tenants:** These are homeless households that have been placed in temporary accommodation by the council.

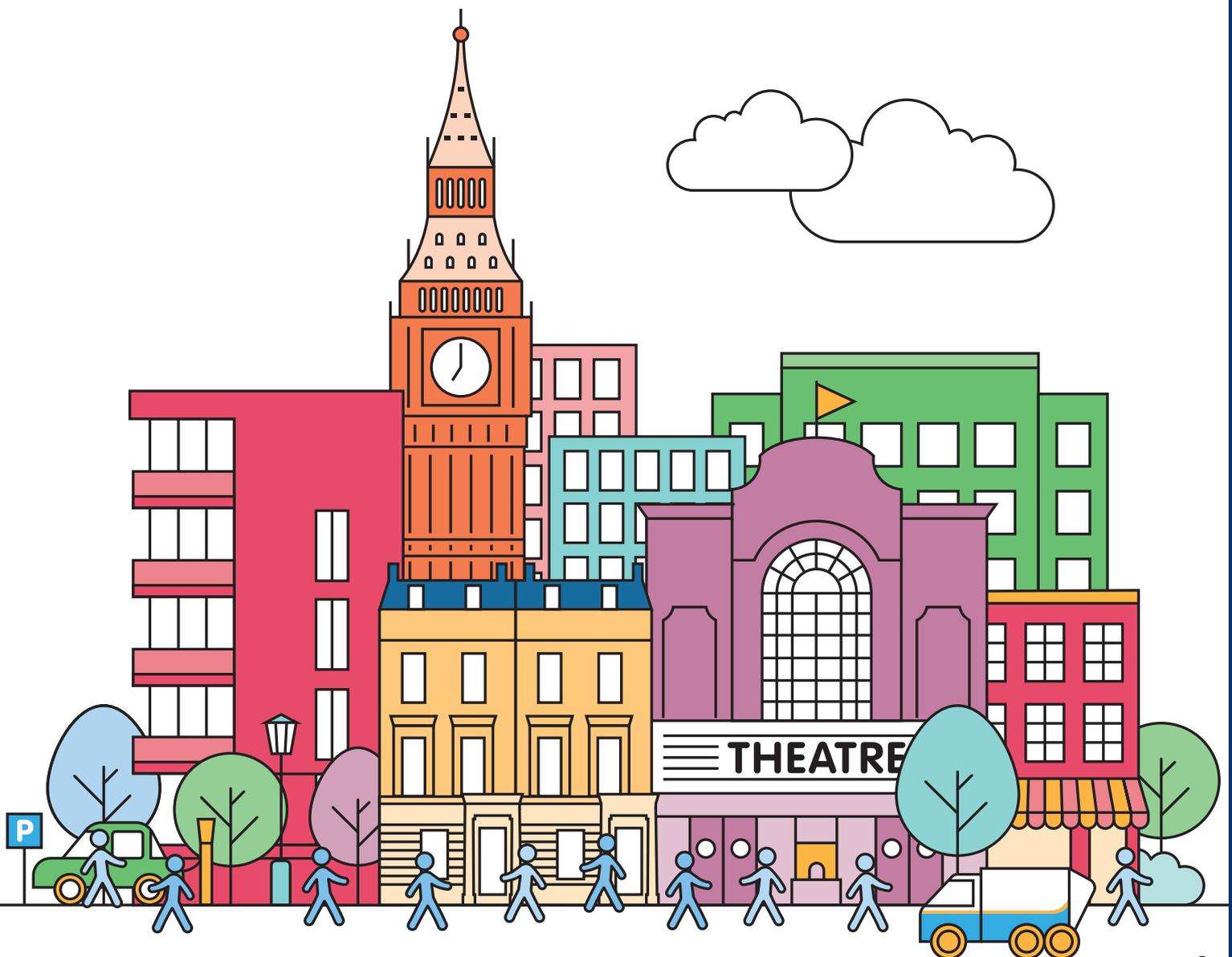
The Policy mainly applies to council tenants and information for other tenants is on page 5.

Can I appeal against the Policy?

Council and assured tenants of Westminster Community Homes can appeal about how the Policy has been applied to them by emailing or writing to the Director responsible for Housing or to a senior officer responsible for housing renewal. Appeals must be made within 21 days of any decision and the outcome of an appeal will be made within 21 days.

Where can I get more information?

See the end of this leaflet.



Options and entitlements for council tenants

including assured tenants of Westminster Community Homes

Financial compensation

Tenants are entitled to two types of payment:

- **A home loss payment** – to compensate tenants for having to move at a time which is not of their choosing. This amount is set by government and is reviewed each year, as of October 2019 it is £6,400.
- **A disturbance payment** – to cover the reasonable costs of moving. This includes removal costs, redirection of mail, disconnection and reconnection of appliances and the refitting of curtains and carpets. In many cases the council will organise these services for tenants, so they will not need to make payments up front themselves.

Rehousing options

All council tenants who need to move will have a right to one of the new social homes in the redevelopment. They can:

1. Move straight into one of the homes if this is possible.
2. Move into another social home in Westminster for a temporary period and then move into a new social home in the renewal area when they are ready.

Council tenants who do not want to move into one of the new homes can:

3. Move into another social home in Westminster.
4. Have high priority to buy any of the new intermediate homes that are for sale in the housing renewal area, such as homes sold on a shared ownership basis. More information about intermediate housing can be found at: homeownershipwestminster.co.uk

About the new social home

- **Size:** The new home will be of the size that is needed, which means it could be bigger or smaller than the current home (see page 5 for more information on how this is calculated).
- **Tenancy type:** This will be the same as tenants have now. For example secure tenants will be offered another secure tenancy and flexible tenants will be offered another flexible tenancy.
- **Rents:** These will be similar to current rents and set using the same national formula, but they could be slightly higher.

The rehousing process

Summary of the stages

- **Stage 1: The Housing Needs Survey** – at this stage tenants consider their options and they will be able to talk to an independent advisor. The council will also find out more about who is living in the household, the type of new home needed and any particular needs the tenant has.
- **Stage 2: The Assessment** – at this stage a detailed assessment is undertaken of the size and type of new home needed.
- **Stage 3: Rehousing begins** – at this stage the option chosen is confirmed in writing and generally cannot be changed. Rehousing will then start.

Stages 2 and 3 in more detail

Stage 2: The Assessment

In order to determine the size of the new home needed, the household members that can be included in this assessment are firstly worked out. Generally, with some limited exceptions, only original household members are included in this assessment. People that moved in with the tenant at a later date (with the exception of any children they, or the original household members, have had and that live with them) are not included. Friends, lodgers and sub tenants are not included in the assessment. For more detailed information about who is included in the assessment, see the full Policy at: westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

The size of the new home is also worked out at this stage. Single people may be offered a studio property. However single people already living in a one bedroom home will be offered another one bedroom home. The following table shows the size of new homes offered to larger households:

Each of the following will be offered ONE BEDROOM

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Adults | The tenant and any spouse or partner |
| | Adult household members (and any spouse or partner unless they are siblings – see below) Carers are included as household members if it has been agreed they need to be rehoused with the tenant |
| | Two siblings of the same sex where the age gap is ten years or less (where there is more than a ten year age gap two bedrooms will be offered) |
| | |
| Children | Two children of the opposite sex under 10 |
| | Two children of the same sex under 16 |
| | Two children of the same sex where one or both is over the age of 16 and where the age gap is 10 years or less |
| | One child (that is not included in the categories above) |

Stage 3: The rehousing begins

Tenants can bid for the new homes using choice based lettings for a period of time (called the 'bidding period') and will have the highest priority to move. There will be support for those who have not used choice based lettings before. Direct offers may also be made during this 'bidding period' to secure properties for those needing to move, but tenants do not have to accept them if they prefer to carry on bidding. At the end of the bidding period one final suitable direct offer will be made.

Tenants need to let the council know as soon as possible if they have had a change in their circumstances which may affect the size and type of new home needed.

Support for other tenants in housing renewal areas

Homeless households in temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation households will be visited and advised about when they will need to move and given information about the process. Households that are within twelve months of being offered social housing will be awarded extra priority to try and bring their move forward to help avoid them having to move twice in a short period of time. Where this doesn't apply, households will be prioritised for alternative temporary accommodation, which could be in Westminster if they meet the criteria or in London.

Private rented tenants

All private tenants will be visited at least once and advised about where they can get further advice, particularly if they are at risk of homelessness. Those at risk of homelessness will be referred to the council's homelessness services.

More information

This is only a summary and the full Policy for Tenants in Housing Renewal Areas 2019 can be found here: westminster.gov.uk/housing-strategies

More information about housing renewal areas in Westminster can be found here: westminster.gov.uk/housing-renewal

To speak to someone directly about the Policy or to receive a hard copy contact:

Hours: Mon–Fri: 10am–4pm
Evenings: Wed 5pm–7pm

If you live on the Ebury Bridge Estate:

📍 The Ebury Bridge Regeneration Base
15 – 19 Ebury Bridge Road,
London, SW1W 8QX

☎ 0800 011 3467

✉ eburybridge@westminster.gov.uk

🏠 eburybridge.org

Hours: Mon–Fri: 9am–5pm

If you live in the Church Street/Edgware Road area:

📍 The Church Street Regeneration Base
99 Church Street,
London, NW8 8EY

☎ 020 7641 2968

✉ churchstreet@westminster.gov.uk

🏠 churchstreet.org

If you live on the Tollgate Gardens Estate:

☎ 020 7641 1520

✉ tollgategardens@westminster.gov.uk

🏠 westminster.gov.uk/tollgate-gardens-estate-renewal-overview

The main changes to the Policy

Compared with the previous Policy published in 2015

For all tenants:

- The updated Policy is simpler to understand and there are less detailed processes which can go out of date quickly.

For council tenants:

Right of return

- There is now a right of return to the housing renewal area for tenants of Community Supportive (sheltered) Housing.

Priority to move

- Tenants needing to move will now have the highest priority in the Allocation Scheme so they will move ahead of all other groups.

Household members that can be included in the assessment to work out the size of the new home

- Older household members may now be included in some cases, even if they didn't form part of the original household, as long as overcrowding didn't result when they moved in.
- The Policy clarifies that eligible adult household members that moved away and returned need to have been living back with the tenant for 5 years in order to be included.

The size of the new home

- Single people already living in one bedroom homes will now not be offered studios.
- There is flexibility for under-occupiers to be offered homes for their permanent move, with one bedroom above their assessed needs as long as there is supply.

Tenancy type

- When 'family splits' are agreed (when separate tenancies are offered to grown up family members), these grown up family members will now be offered flexible or fixed term tenancies and they will be renewed in line with the council's Tenancy Policy.

Letting the homes

- Although choice based lettings will still be used, it will now be for a specific 'bidding period', after which a suitable direct offer will be made.

Appeals

- Tenants now have a longer period of time to make an appeal (21 days) and the appeal will be considered by the Director responsible for housing or a person nominated by them, rather than a panel of 3 people.

For other tenants:

Homeless households in temporary accommodation

- Homeless households in temporary accommodation will now be prioritised for alternative temporary accommodation in Westminster (depending on their circumstances) or in London.

Private tenants

- There is now more help and support for private tenants. For example, private tenants will be referred to a special service for people at risk of homelessness for as long as it is running.

