

Frequently Asked Questions

Housing Register and Asylum Seekers

Changes to the Stevenage Borough Council Allocations Policy

Demand for social housing far outweighs supply within Stevenage, a trend that is seen across most local authority areas. Local authorities have a duty to regularly review their Allocations Policies and are required by law to give Reasonable Preference to those assessed as having a high level of housing need, which includes those who are:

- Owed certain homeless duties
- Occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing
- Needing to move on medical or welfare grounds
- Needing to move to avoid hardship to themselves or others

Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) reviewed the Allocations Policy in 2023 and adopted a new Policy in December 2024. The new Allocations Policy ensures that the council meets legal requirements by applying Reasonable Preference in line with homelessness duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The changes made to the Allocations Policy are focussed on ensuring that social housing is allocated to those who need it most and not giving false hope to applicants who have no realistic prospect of ever successfully securing social housing.

We understand that social and affordable housing is very important to Stevenage residents and would prefer to be in a position where social rent homes could be available to everyone, but nationally, as well as in Stevenage, the demand significantly outweighs supply.

The Government is trying to address this with new house building targets and significant grant funding available to support the building of additional homes for social and affordable rent.

You can find more details on the changes on the [Housing Allocations scheme page](#).

Why have applicants been removed from the Housing Register?

Following changes to the Allocations Policy, only applicants who are assessed as already adequately housed and not in housing need, including those who are housed in the Private Rented Sector or single people and couples who share a home with another household, have been removed from the Housing Register.

Of the 2,500 households that were removed, over 1,400 applicants had not bid on properties via the choice based letting system in over two years (so could already be automatically removed from the housing register under the old policy).

All applicants that were removed were contacted before the new policy was adopted and were encouraged to update their circumstances to help confirm whether they had a housing need and were in the Reasonable Preference groups.

All applicants removed from the register were offered a review of the decision to remove them from the waiting list. 62 applicants requested a review since the new Allocations Policy was introduced, mainly because they had been removed from the housing register. 20% of

those reviewed were reinstated due to new information being submitted in relation to their application.

The council currently receives approximately 600 new applications to join the housing register every three months, with approximately 200 (one third) being accepted. If circumstances have changed, applicants who have previously been removed can reapply to the Housing Register.

It is also important to note that the Policy changes were widely consulted on with Stevenage residents prior to the policy being adopted and the Policy will be kept under review on a regular basis.

If you are concerned that you may become homeless, it is important that you seek advice from our Housing Options Team, who can assist you. It is important that you seek advice early and not at the point of homelessness, unless this is beyond your reasonable control.

Key Facts

The council let 494 council owned properties during 2024/25 and 74 housing association properties, so 568 in total. 99.6% of the 568 properties allocated, were let to Stevenage residents.

Asylum Seekers are housed by the Home Office in contingency accommodation or dispersed accommodation units and are not allocated social housing by the local authority.

Refugees are not given preferential treatment for social housing and must meet the criteria of the local Allocations Policy and legislation, like any other applicant registering for social housing.

For more information, please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions concerning Asylum Seeker Accommodation in Stevenage.

What is Stevenage Borough Council doing to provide more social housing?

The provision of new homes for local people forms a key part of the council's Corporate Objectives, with an ambitious Housing Development Programme already well established in Stevenage. To date, over 620 new homes have been delivered by the council's Housing Development Programme, with 85% of these let as social and affordable rented council homes. The remaining 15% are private sale homes, the proceeds of which are used to reinvest in further development and acquisition of council homes.

A new 88 bed Independent Living Scheme at Brodie Court is now complete and has been let to Stevenage residents, many of whom downsized to free up family size accommodation for those on the Housing Register. The council offers downsizing initiatives to those who no longer need larger properties, to manage stock more effectively.

The council also is on site at an additional 264 homes at a variety of sites across the town, including new schemes at The Oval, Burwell Road and Ellis Avenue continuing the vital work of delivering affordable homes for local people.

The council also supports the development of social housing schemes of other registered providers building homes for social and affordable rent (let via the council's Housing Register) and private sale housing schemes. We have recently allocated 200 properties on behalf of Clarion Housing and Guinness Homes, all let to Stevenage residents.