

# Frequently Asked Questions

Asked by Temporary Residents about the moving on process

## ▶ 1. Will I get secure housing on Grange Farm estate?

No, only current permanent secure tenants have the right to move into the new homes on the Grange Farm estate.

## ▶ 2. What type of status do we have? Temporary, Private rent or other.

As the Council is currently assisting you under the homelessness legislation, your current status is temporary. However, some temporary tenants have been successful in securing permanent council or Housing Association accommodation via Locata, the Council's choice based letting system. You are advised to continue to bid for any suitable available vacancies that are advertised on Locata.

## ▶ 3. What is the standard we can expect of the Private Rent property we move into?

The Council recognises the contribution the Private Rental Sector (PRS) makes in meeting housing need within the borough as there is limited supply of social housing. Therefore, The Council works closely with private landlords to ensure that the properties secured meets minimum standards.

Our contractors or staff inspect all properties that we secure in the private rented sector before it is let to a homeless household to ensure that the property is to a reasonable standard. This means that it is:

- **Safe** – There are no serious hazards in or around the property that have not been addressed before and at all times during occupation.
- **Secure** – The resident has full access and can enjoy their occupation unmolested by unwanted or unlawful intrusions.
- **Warm** – The property can be heated to a suitable degree of comfort without spending unreasonably on fuel costs.
- **Working** - The fabric and systems of the property are repaired and maintained as required in a timely fashion.

## ▶ 4. Does a council officer inspect these Private Rent properties before they are offered?

All private rent properties that are procured by the Council or through our partner agency 'Capital Letters' are inspected before they are offered to a resident. However, private properties that are secured directly by a resident are not inspected.

## ▶ 5. Can you explain the viewing arrangements?

This varies depending on the type of property and landlord.

- All Permanent social housing owned by the Council are currently viewed virtually in order to mitigate against the risk of infection from Covid-19. However, there are plans being worked through to return to physical attendance at the property as soon as this is practicably possible.
- Most Housing Association properties are viewed face to face.
- Where temporary accommodation is offered to a homeless household, the properties are not viewed as it's important to meet the emergency need of the household. However, during the sign up of the new property, the Housing Officer can provide photos of the accommodation if required.

▶ **6. Can you explain how long we will be given notice that we have to move to the new property? What is the minimum time?**

We have agreed to give up to 2 weeks for Grange Farm temporary accommodation residents to move. During this time, you will be expected to sign up for the new accommodation that has been offered and begin to pay rent for that property with no rent required from you at your current address (from the date of the new tenancy).

To help you prepare for your move, your Housing Needs Resettlement Officer Pauline Dawes will advise you of any potential offers that may be known to the Council in advance. However, sometimes properties available at very short notice may be suitable for a particular household and the offer will be made. Therefore, the extra time allowed should help residents during this process.

▶ **7. What translation facilities do you offer when you explain what is happening to us?**

The Housing Needs Service uses a translation service from 'Language line' which can be arranged when required.

▶ **8. Not clear how to update my information on Locata and bid. Can anyone help me?**

Information on Locata can be updated by logging onto the website using the link: Harrow Housing Options - Login ([locata.org.uk](http://locata.org.uk)). You will need to input your bidding number and your date of birth, then a pop-up box will appear requesting you to confirm if your information is correct. If it is not correct and you would like to update it, click 'No' and you will be taken to an application to fill out and update your circumstance.

If you are unable to do so and would like help doing so, please contact Pauline Dawes who will assist you.

▶ **9. If I bid on Locata, what are my realistic chances of getting secure, affordable social housing?**

Many people wish to move to council or housing association rented homes. However, the supply of this type of housing is very limited and half of the vacancies are studio and 1- bedroom flats, normally suitable only for single people and childless couples. Yet at any one time we have over 2,000 households who have registered their interest in taking such a tenancy, and over 850 new households applying to register each year. Therefore, there can be a long wait for such properties.

To give you an idea below is the average waiting time based on data from 1/4/2019 to 31/3/2021

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered accommodation	82	5 days	33 months	12 months
Studio	12	10 days	3 years	10 months
1-bed	166	0 days	19 years	14 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	79	8 weeks	13 years	3 years
2-bed house	17	5 months	12 years	3 years
3-bed flat or maisonette	8	14 months	18 years	4 years
3-bed house	47	9 weeks	18 years	3 years
4-bed	3	7 months	32 months	19 months
5-bed	0			

▶ **10. What rent will I likely have to pay in Private Rented accommodation in Harrow: 2 bed and 3 bed? And what is the London Housing Allowance?**

The rent in private rented accommodation based on the local housing allowance for properties in Harrow is set out below

Number of bedrooms	Weekly	Monthly
Number of bedrooms: 1 Bedroom Rate (self-contained)	£230.14	£1,001.01
Number of bedrooms: 2 Bedrooms	£287.67	£1,249.99
Number of bedrooms: 3 Bedrooms	£356.71	£1,549.99

▶ **11. If I am willing to move out of Harrow, what are my options? And will I get more security or a larger property?**

A number of residents have moved outside of Harrow to other parts of London or outside London into private accommodation. This can be for a number of reasons including to secure a larger property, cheaper rent levels, be near family and friends or live in a greener environment.

Most of the accommodation available will be private rented with an assured shorthold tenancy which can be either 1 or 2 years initially but can be renewed on an ongoing basis if you and the landlord are happy to continue with the tenancy.

If you would like to pursue this option, please speak to Pauline Dawes (Housing Needs Resettlement Officer) about it and the Council will make every effort to look for accommodation in your preferred area.

▶ **12. Is there a policy for council officers to respond to emails and calls?**

When you call us we will aim to:

- answer your telephone call within 24 hours (one dedicated officer)
- When you write to the Housing Needs team:
  - by email - we will aim to acknowledge your email or web form within 24 hours of receipt and aim to reply within 5 working days. If the matter is complex, and your email cannot be answered within 5 working days, we will inform you of how long it will take for us to answer.
  - by letter - we will aim to reply to your letter within 10 working days of receipt. If the matter is complex, and your letter cannot be answered within 10 working days, we will inform you of how long it will take for us to answer. We will avoid jargon and do our best to explain things clearly.

When you visit us: We will aim to see you on the published Officer Days at the Grange Farm Community Centre (usually fortnightly on a Wednesday). This is by appointment, by texting and calling Pauline Dawes: 07731 349006

▶ **13. I am a Temporary resident in Phase 3 on Grange Farm, can you explain what happens to me, next steps, and my options to help me prepare and plan?**

The Council will not need to start the process of emptying the Phase 3 properties until one year before the completion of the buildings in Phase 2. We do not yet have a timescale for the delivery of Phase 2, but residents will be given updates when this is clearer to help with planning the future.

## Questions around what support is available

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### ▶ 14. Can you help if I have to leave bulky furniture outside my flat in order to leave it empty?

As well as other practical assistance that can be offered, your Housing Needs Resettlement Officer, Pauline Dawes will work closely with Resident Services Team to arrange for clearance of unwanted items if you let her know in advance of leaving the accommodation.

### ▶ 15. Is there any support for cleaning materials and decorating materials to improve my next home?

Temporary Accommodation tenants will be supported through the decanting process by a dedicated Housing Needs Resettlement Officer, Pauline Dawes and the Council will ensure that every temporary accommodation that is leased from a private landlord is deep cleaned and post inspected before it is offered to you to ensure that it meets the minimum lettable standard. If you have any concerns about the quality of a property, please make Pauline Dawes aware and the issues will be addressed.

### ▶ 16. Can you help me move my belongings?

The Council can help with your removal costs either by arranging the removal with a company directly and will, where required, arrange for boxes to be provided to help with packing.

Where the tenant wishes to make these arrangements themselves and a request is made to reimburse costs, the Council will require two quotes to be obtained and will reimburse the lower of the costs obtained.

Other practical support that will be offered include the following:

- General advice regarding the Council's services, including housing allocations
- General advice and assistance on how to move home;
- Redirection of mail: If the tenant arranges re-direction of mail, we will reimburse the cost for all household members for up to 3 months.
- Disconnection and reconnection of washing machines and other plumbing: For some of the most vulnerable tenants we will arrange for the disconnection and reconnection of white goods and utility connections, e.g. a washing machine, dishwasher etc.