



# Moving with Dacorum - Changes from 4 July 2022

We have recently reviewed our Housing Allocations Policy.

Following consultations with residents, staff and Councillors, we have made some changes, which will take effect from 4 July 2022. We will apply these changes to existing applications by the end of July.

This information sheet aims to give you information about these changes and answer most of the questions that housing applicants may have about the review.

## **Section 1: How does the review affect me?**

### **Section 2: Policy Changes**

### **Section 3: Points Changes**

### **Section 4: Your Questions Answered**

If you are an existing housing applicant affected by these changes, we will contact you over the next few weeks. You can view the new [Housing Allocations Policy](#) on our website.

If you would like more information on the Housing Register please view our general information on our [Dacorum website](#) or on [Moving With Dacorum](#).

## **Section 1: How does the review affect me?**

- The changes to our policy will apply to all active applications.
- We expect to finish making all the changes by the end of July 2022.
- You will not need to make a new application.
- We will make any changes to your application and your number of points may change.
- You may need to give us more information to make sure that your application is up-to-date, but we will tell you if this affects you.
- Your registration date will remain the same.
- Your log in details will remain the same.

## **What do I need to do?**

- We are advising all applicants to check that all information on their housing application is accurate and up-to-date.
- It's easier to manage your application online – this helps avoid unnecessary delays and keeps your information up-to-date.
- Please make sure that you tell us about any change in your circumstances.
- It's easy to upload your documents straight on to your application and this helps us to deal with you promptly.

- If you no longer need your housing register application, please contact the Housing Needs team so that we can help other people sooner.

### How will the changes affect me?

- Your points may increase or decrease.
- Some applicants will no longer qualify to join the housing register.
- We are updating our medical assessment form and process:
  - If you have a long-term medical condition that affects the type of home you need, you must complete our online form.
  - It's easy to upload your supporting evidence.
  - If you are unable to complete our online form, please consider asking friends and family to help you.
  - If you still need help to complete the online form, please contact the housing needs team.
- We have removed any applicants who:
  - Have been on our active register for two years or more but have not bid on any homes during that time.
  - Have been suspended from the active register and:
    - are not on the direct offer list.
    - have not actively engaged with the service for two years or more.

## Section 2: Policy Changes

We have reviewed our [Housing Allocations Policy](#) to make sure that we are making best use of the Council's housing stock. There are some key changes that applicants need to know about. We have put together some information to answer the questions we are often asked when we make changes to this policy. If you would like to find out more, please visit our [Housing Register information page](#).

### Financial Means

Applicants will not now qualify to apply for social housing if they have the financial means to meet their own housing need. We define this as the applicant and/or their partner having a greater annual income than the limits set out below, or £16,000 or more in savings.

(The only exception to this is for current or former members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces who have received a lump sum as compensation.) Annual earnings limits:

- One-bedroom/studio property £40,000
- Two-bedroom property £50,000
- Three-bedroom property £60,000
- Four-bedroom property £60,000

These limits do not apply to applicants who have a need for supported housing. Supported housing applicants who have a capital of £400,000 will not be eligible to apply.

### Unacceptable Behaviour

Applicants subject to certain legal orders will not be considered to qualify, and will not be accepted on the housing register for a period of one, three or five years.

The serious action or legal proceedings and the timescales when applications will not be accepted include but are not limited to:

- Current Non-molestation order/ Occupation order (one year)
- Current Restraining order (five years)

### Village Connection

When shortlisting for village properties, we have amended the length of time that the applicant must have lived in the village. The requirements for local connection to Dacorum remain the same, but the residency requirement for village connection has reduced from ten years to a five-year residency within the village at some point in their lifetime.

### Supported Housing Moves

- An existing tenant aged 60 or over in General Needs bedsit or one-bedroom accommodation in Dacorum may apply to move into Supported Housing.

## Section 3: Points Changes

### Homeless Applicants

- If you are placed into temporary accommodation, you will be awarded 'temporary accommodation points' - **10 points**. (However, applicants will not receive any points for sharing, overcrowding or flats without a lift whilst living in temporary accommodation.)
- Applicants living at The Elms Hostel who have effectively engaged with support workers, have no licence breaches and no rent arrears at The Elms will be awarded **5 points**.
- Applicants who have moved into 'Move on' accommodation through The Elms, following a satisfactory move on assessment will receive **10 points**.

### Sharing kitchen and/or bathroom facilities

A household living in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) will be awarded **15 points**.

### Overcrowding

- We have reviewed and updated the [Dacorum Bedroom Standard](#) to reflect the changes to the Housing Allocations Policy. Some applicants with children may now receive fewer points, but this remains in line with the government's bedroom standards.
- At Dacorum Borough Council, we consider overcrowding to occur when an additional person does not have a bed-space, if one bedroom is allocated to each:
  - Married or co-habiting couple;
  - Adult aged 18 years or more;
  - Pair of children aged 0 - 16 years of the same sex;
  - and
  - Pair of children aged 10 years regardless of sex.

**20 Points** per lacking bed space. Any applicants living in a bedsit and who are overcrowded will receive **5 points** in addition to those listed above.

### **Under-occupation**

- **30 points** per bedroom if applicant wants to downsize to a General Needs property
- **50 points** per bedroom if applicant wants to downsize to a Supported Housing property

### **Medical Grounds**

- The policy now includes an additional **75 points** for 'very high medical needs'.

### **Welfare Grounds**

- The policy now includes an additional **75 points** for 'very high welfare needs'.

### **Children in Flats**

- We have lowered the age at which we will take into consideration children in flats (first floor and above) where no lift is available from 9 years to 5 years. However, we will only award these points when another housing needs exists.

### **Pre-Tenancy Training**

- We have removed these points from applications. All pre-tenancy training is now compulsory for applicants aged under 60 years.

### **Length of time on the Housing Register**

- We no longer award points for length of time on the housing register and have removed these from existing applications.

### **Management Reasons**

- At the Council's discretion, housing management can award points as an additional priority. In the rare circumstances that these points will be used, the number of extra points must be agreed by two housing managers.

## **Section 4: Allocations Policy Review – Your questions answered**

### **Why has Dacorum Borough Council reviewed its Housing Allocations Policy?**

- It is a legal requirement that this policy should be reviewed at least every four years.
- We always make sure that we follow good practice and make best use of our housing stock in relation to the current housing climate, affordability and applicants' access to housing.
- We need to change our Housing Allocations Policy from time to time to make sure that people in need of housing are able to access our available stock in a fair and proportionate way.

### **When will the reviewed policy be in place?**

- We aim to implement the changes on the 4 July 2022.

### **Will you notify me of changes to my application?**

- We always encourage all applicants to log into their application regularly. This will allow you to review any changes that the team makes to your points.

- Once your application has been reassessed we will write to you to confirm your points and any changes made.

### **Will my points change?**

- All applications will be reviewed and it is likely that your current number of points will change in line with the new policy.
- You can find all the changes to the way we award points on our [Housing Allocations Policy Review web page](#)

### **Why have my pre-tenancy training points been removed?**

- We have removed these points from applications because our pre-tenancy training course is now a compulsory part of the application process for everyone aged under 60.
- We no longer award any points for completing the training because everyone under 60 has to do it.
- If you have been shortlisted for a property that you have bid on, we will send you a link to our online pre-tenancy training course, which you must complete as part of the shortlisting process.

### **Why do I no longer have 'length of time' on the Housing Register Points?**

- We have removed these points from all applications because the Housing Register is not a waiting list to be housed, so we will not award additional points for the length of time an applicant has been active on the housing register.
- If two applicants with the same amount of points bid on a property, the applicant who has been registered the longest will be given priority.

### **How many points will I get if I am under-occupying my property?**

- **30 points per bedroom** if you wish to downsize to a General Needs property
- **50 points per bedroom** if you wish to downsize to a Supported Housing property

### **My bedroom entitlement has changed, why is this?**

- We have changed the Dacorum Bedroom Standard to reflect changes in demand for different sizes of property. Previously, a pair of children regardless of sex would be entitled to a room each from 5 years old, but this has now changed to age 10 years.
  - For example: A household living in a two bedroomed property consisting of a mother, and two children, one boy aged 5 and one girl aged 7, could previously have applied either for a three bedroom property under the Dacorum Bedroom Standard.
  - They have a two-bedroom need according to the government's bedroom standards.
- All changes have been made to align with the Housing Benefit Regulations and Government Bedroom Standards
- We always aim to make best use of our housing stock considering the demand in the local area.

### **I no longer have any points for Children in Flats without a lift, why is this?**

- If your application included 10 points for Children aged nine years or younger in flats where no lift was available, and you have no other identifiable housing need, we have removed these points. You now must have an additional identifiable housing need for these points to be awarded.

### **I am in temporary accommodation, in a property first floor and above without a lift with children aged five. Why do I not receive the children in flats points?**

- Placements into temporary accommodation are not through choice, and rely on what stock is available at the time for use as temporary accommodation.
- To make it fair for all of those in temporary accommodation, you will now receive temporary accommodation points, but no Children in Flats points.

### **I am living in a room in a shared house - House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). What points am I entitled to?**

- A household that is residing in a House in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) will be awarded **15 points**

### **I am aged 60 (or older), living in a one-bedroom General Needs flat and want to move to Supported Housing. What points will I receive?**

- An existing Council tenant aged 60 or over living in a General Needs bedsit or one-bedroom accommodation in Dacorum who wishes to move into Supported Housing will receive **25 Points**

### **What local connection is required to be able to bid on village properties?**

- You must meet the standard local connection to Dacorum criteria as set out in the Allocations Policy, plus at least one of the following:
  - A five-year residency within the village at some point in your lifetime;
  - Family connection where an immediate family member (parents, children, siblings) who are over the age of 18 and has continuously been a resident within the village for ten years immediately preceding the date of application;
  - Currently in permanent employment within the village boundary, consisting of 16 hours a week or more, and which has been continuous for at least the last 24 months.

### **How many households are bidding on housing?**

- Approximately **2520** households are active to bid on the Housing Register.
- On average, we let around 400 - 600 empty homes each year through our choice-based lettings scheme.

### **How many households are registered for a Direct Offer of accommodation for an Adapted Property?**

- Approximately **95** households are registered for a Direct Offer of accommodation that is an Adapted Property.
- On average, we make around 5 Direct Offers each year.

**How many households are registered for a Direct Offer of accommodation following a Homeless Application and receiving the Main Housing duty?**

- Approximately **36** households are registered for a Direct Offer of accommodation after receiving a Main Housing Duty.
- On average, we make around 78 Direct Offers as a Homeless Duty.

**I have bid on a property with the right number of bedrooms to meet my housing need, but the Housing Needs team reviewed my bid and advised that this would not be suitable for me, why is this?**

- The Housing Allocations Policy states that in sensitive cases, whilst an applicant is able to bid, the Council has the right to review and approve the bid. If you are unsure why this is, please contact the team or check any correspondence sent to you.

**What if I am not happy with the Council's decision?**

- Please visit our [Housing Reviews & Appeals](#) page for further information