



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

To: All Council Leaders in England

Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Social Housing and Faith*

***Department for Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities***

2 Marsham Street
London
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Your reference:
Our reference:

1 February 2024

Consultation on Reforms to Social Housing Allocations

Dear Leader

I am writing to you to inform you that the government has launched a consultation seeking views on a series of reforms to how social housing is allocated in England.

Social housing is vital for families and communities, providing the long-term homes that help people put down roots to settle and thrive. I am grateful for the critical role that local authorities play in providing and allocating social housing.

This government is committed to increasing the supply of social housing. Under the Affordable Homes Programme, the government is investing over £11.5 billion to deliver more than 100,000 affordable homes, among them tens of thousands specifically for social rent. However, social housing will always be a finite resource. With over 1m households on waiting lists, we must interrogate how it is allocated and to whom.

Our proposals seek to provide greater clarity of a national minimum expectation for qualifications tests whilst still allowing for local flexibility. We want to make sure that all applicants and tenants benefit from a system that rewards responsible behaviour and prioritises local households.

The reforms which the government is seeking views on are:

- **UK connection test** – requiring people to be a British citizen, Irish citizen, Commonwealth citizen with a right of abode, or EEA or Swiss citizen with equal treatment rights in matters of housing under the Withdrawal Agreement, the EEA-EFTA Separation Agreement or the Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement, or otherwise to have been lawfully resident in the UK for ten years, in order to be eligible for social housing. We are consulting on an exemption for those arriving via safe and legal resettlement routes and the Ukrainian temporary visa schemes. This will allow for the allocation of more social homes to those with the strongest connection to the UK, while enabling the Government to continue to deliver its commitments to provide urgent humanitarian support.

- **Local connection test** – preventing individuals from being allocated social housing if they have not had links to the local authority area for two years e.g., through residence or work. This will ensure greater consistency across the country and ensure more local people can access social housing in the area they call home where they need it, supporting people to put down roots and maintain links to family and community.
- **Income test** – households earning above a maximum threshold (to be defined following responses to the consultation) would not qualify for social housing. It will not be applied to existing tenants and there will be no change to rights, tenures, the length of tenancies, or rents of existing tenants.
- **Anti-social behaviour test** – disqualifying people who have unspent convictions for certain criminal anti-social behaviour offences, as well as certain civil orders, from social housing for a defined period.
- **Terrorism test** – terrorist offenders with unspent convictions will not qualify for social housing unless excluding them would increase the risk to public safety.
- **False statement test** – mandating a period of disqualification for those who knowingly or recklessly make false statements when applying for social housing.

The government does not believe that those who repeatedly commit acts of anti-social behaviour or have unspent terrorism offences should continue to access social homes whilst law-abiding individuals remain on waiting lists. The government wants to explore using legislation to amend existing grounds for eviction, or, if necessary, add a new ground for eviction for those who are convicted for a terrorist offence, unless removing the accommodation would increase public safety risks.

We are also committed to a 'three strikes and you're out' expectation of social housing landlords, as set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan published last year. This means that they will be expected to evict tenants whose behaviour is disruptive to neighbours and jeopardises community cohesion.

As experts in the day-to-day operation of how social housing is allocated, I would greatly value the insight and feedback both you and your housing teams will have on the proposals set out in the consultation. Your feedback will help us develop these proposals further and help to ensure they can be implemented in a way which works for you and your teams.

The department plans to hold engagement sessions with local housing authorities during the consultation period and officials will be in touch with details of these as soon as possible.

The consultation will run for eight weeks, ending on 26 March, and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-reforms-to-social-housing-allocations>

For any enquiries about the consultation please contact socialhousingallocationsconsultation@levellingup.gov.uk.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Social Housing and Faith