

Refusing an offer of accommodation from Southwark Council

As a customer of Southwark Council we want you to have a choice in applying for where you want to live and therefore we operate a “Choice-Based Lettings scheme”. The Council will support you in every way it can to secure a new home, through conducting the relevant assessment and awarding you with priority. We will also provide advice on the best housing option available to you, and present clear transparent information on the properties we have and their availability.

In return we expect you to place bids only on properties you are interested in, and to only attend the viewing of a new home if you realistically expect and hope to reside there. To ensure that you are re-housed as quickly as possible the Council has now adopted a “refusals policy” for all offers of accommodation and nominations to housing associations.

Making your bid count

- You don't need to bid every week
- Read the property advertisement carefully
- Ensure the property will meet your households needs
- Research the local area
- Make sure you can afford the rent and service charges
- Check if you are affected by any Housing Association policies if bidding on non council property.

1. Refusals

- 1.1 If you refuse three properties that meet your registered need within a 12 month period, your priority will be reduced and you will be placed in Band 4 on the date of the refusal.
- 1.2 Failure to attend a viewing without valid reason counts as a refusal against you. You may be asked to provide evidence to support any statements made regarding failure to attend
- 1.3 You can withdraw your bid any time before midnight on a Sunday, by logging into Homesearch at www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk. You can also contact our refusal hotline on 0207 525 2633 before midday on a Monday if you placed your bid by telephone. You also have an opportunity to refuse the property when we contact you to arrange viewing.
- 1.4 Homeless applicants owed a full homelessness duty under section 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996, will only receive one reasonable offer and refusal of that offer will result in the discharge of Southwark Council's homelessness duty.
- 1.5 Each time you refuse a property following viewing you will be asked to complete refusal paperwork that asks you why you refused an offer. If you do not complete the form your refusal will still be recorded and count as

unreasonable. The Council will contact you in writing so you will be aware of how many refusals you have recorded against your file.

1.6 Any applicant whose priority is reduced will be provided with written notification of the decision that will contain the following information:

- a) The reasons for the decision to reduce priority
- b) The band that their housing circumstances would have warranted and the band that they have been placed in as a result of the London Borough of Southwark's decision
- c) The applicant's right to request a review against the decision and what they have to do before they can be considered again for any higher band warranted by their housing needs.
- d) That any request for a review of the decision must be made in writing within 21 days of written notification of the decision.
- e) That any review will be dealt with by a Senior Officer not involved in the original decision.
- f) All appeals will be dealt with within 28 days from receipt of the appeal and the applicant advised of the outcome.

1.7 It is your responsibility to read property advertisements carefully, taking note of the information icons against each property.

1.8 If someone is bidding on your behalf it is your responsibility to ensure you are aware of what properties they are applying for and that they are instructed accordingly.

2.0 Nominations to Housing Association Partners

2.1 Bids for Housing Association properties are not exempt from this policy and in the event of a refusal, officers will ask you to fill out refusal paperwork.

2.2 Each property advertisement makes clear that specific Housing Association policies may apply. These conditions vary between each organisation and include, but are not limited to:

- No pets
- The age at which children get their own bedroom
- Fixed term tenancy
- Rent in advance

Please make relevant enquiries with our partner housing associations if you have any concerns or wish to find out more about their policies. Each Housing Association's policy is published on our website at www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk. Click on "Housing Association Policies".

3.0 Reasonable offers:

The Council will ensure that its properties meet the required standard at the time of letting. In some cases works may still be required to properties before a tenancy can commence. Your viewing officer will advise you of this together with

an indication of when the property will be ready for occupation. Copies of the Council's lettable standard are available from your viewing officer.