

Amendments to public sector general needs housing income thresholds

Overview

The Public Sector Housing (General Needs) (Allocation) Policy 2019 is currently undergoing a full review. Because this review is extensive, the Housing Agency (on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure) is proposing to introduce several essential changes ahead of the full update.

These early amendments focus on improving fairness, clarity, and consistency in how public sector housing is allocated. We are seeking your views on three key proposed changes:

1. **Updating income eligibility thresholds and introducing automatic annual uplifts**
2. **Removing certain 'priority' points that do not reflect housing need**
3. **Introducing discretion for local housing authorities on residential requirements**

Why your views matter

Your feedback plays a vital role in shaping how public sector housing is allocated. The proposed changes aim to make the system fairer, clearer, and more responsive—but it is essential that the people who use, rely on, or are affected by the policy have the opportunity to influence it.

By sharing your views, you help us to:

- **Understand real-life experiences** of those navigating the housing system
- **Identify unintended impacts** that may not be visible from data alone
- **Test whether the proposed changes feel fair and workable** for households and communities
- **Ensure the policy reflects local needs and values**, not just administrative requirements
- **Strengthen transparency and accountability** in how decisions are made

Public sector housing policy affects thousands of people. Your insight helps ensure that the system is not only technically sound but also grounded in the lived realities of the community it serves.

Your views will assist the Department in finalising the draft amendments to the existing Allocations Policy ahead of being taken to Tynwald for formal approval.

Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats

The Department is committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our documents easy to use and accessible to all.

The Department will take steps to accommodate any reasonable adjustments and provide such assistance as may reasonably be required to enable access or reply to this consultation.

If this document is required in another format or assistance is required with accessing or replying to this consultation, please email Lisa.philliskirk@gov.im

Responding to this consultation and questions

This consultation can be responded to by clicking on the 'Online survey' link below.

Alternatively you can download a paper version of this consultation from the 'Related' section below and email it to Lisa.philliskirk@gov.im or post it to:

Lisa Philliskirk
Head of Housing
2nd Floor Markwell House,
Market St,
Douglas,
IM1 2RJ

What happens next

The feedback from this consultation will be reviewed by the Housing Agency Board and will give direction to any final changes to be made to the general needs public sector housing allocation policy. It is anticipated that the amendments will be brought to Tynwald for approval in July 2026.

About you

1 What is your name?

Name

2 What is your email address?

Email

3 The Department will share the consultation response report. May we publish your response?

More information

- Publish in full – your name along with full answers **may** be published on the hub or on the report (your email will **not** be published)
- Publish anonymously – only your responses **may** be published on the hub or on the report (your name and email will **not** be published)
- Do not publish – **nothing will** be published publicly on the hub or on the report (your response will only be part of a larger summary response document)

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes, you can publish my response in full
- Yes, you may publish my response anonymously
- No, please do not publish my response

Proposed change 1: Updating income eligibility thresholds and introducing automatic annual uplifts

Increase income thresholds

Income thresholds determine whether a household can join the general needs public sector housing waiting list. These thresholds have not been updated since 2023 and no longer reflect current economic pressures or the rising cost of living.

The Housing Agency has reviewed existing data and proposes to **increase income thresholds to reflect today's economic conditions**.

Current income thresholds (maximum gross annual income)

- **Single applicants with:**
 - no dependent children: **£34,500**
 - 1 child: **£40,000**
 - 2 children: **£43,500**
 - 3 children or more: **£47,000**
- **Joint applicants with:**
 - no dependent children: **£38,000**
 - 1 child: **£43,500**
 - 2 children: **£47,000**
 - 3 children or more: **£50,500**

Proposed income thresholds (maximum gross annual income)

- **Single applicants with:**
 - no dependent children: **£35,800**
 - 1 child: **£43,000**
 - 2 children: **£47,800**
 - 3 children or more: **£50,200**
- **Joint applicants with:**
 - no dependent children: **£50,200**
 - 1 child: **£56,700**
 - 2 children: **£59,800**
 - 3 children or more: **£63,900**

Automatic annual adjustments

The Housing Agency has reviewed existing data and proposes to **introduce automatic annual adjustments in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI)**.

From 1 April 2027, the figures shall increase annually on 1 April by a percentage equal to the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index published by the Cabinet Office for the preceding September, rounded up to the nearest whole pound.

Linking thresholds to CPI would create a clearer, more predictable system. Applicants would better understand how thresholds may change each year, and the policy would remain up to date without requiring frequent manual amendments. This approach helps ensure that eligibility criteria keep pace with inflation and do not erode over time.

4 Do you agree with the proposed income threshold increases?

Please select only one item

- Yes, I agree
- No, I disagree

Any further comments?

5 Do you agree with the proposed automatic annual uplift of thresholds?

Please select only one item

- Yes, I agree
- No, I disagree

Any further comments?

Proposed change 2: Removing certain 'priority' points that do not reflect housing need

As part of the review, the Housing Agency has assessed whether current priority criteria genuinely relate to housing need. Some criteria have been found to be outdated or too broad, and therefore no longer appropriate.

The proposal is to remove additional priority currently given for:

- Income level alone
- Living in a private sector tenancy

And to remove the reduction of priority for households with:

- Financial assets above £15,000

Why remove these criteria

To ensure that priority is only given where circumstances worsen a household's housing need, priority will no longer be awarded for the following:

1. Having a low income:

A low income doesn't always mean someone is living in poor housing. For example, a person on a lower income might be living in a safe, suitable home, while someone with a higher income could be living in overcrowded or unsuitable conditions. **Housing conditions — not income — should be the main factor**

2. Living in a private tenancy:

Not all private rentals are the same. Someone might be renting a good-quality home at a reasonable cost, while another household may be living with family or friends in cramped or unsuitable conditions. Again, **the focus should be on actual living conditions**, not the type of tenancy

Priority will **not** be reduced for:

3. Having financial assets or property:

Current policy removes priority if a household has property or assets worth £15,000 or more. But this can be unfair — for example, owning a car worth £15,000 doesn't mean someone can sell it to secure long-term housing. What matters most is whether their **current living situation** is safe and suitable. There are already rules in place to make sure that people who can afford to secure their own housing cannot join the public sector housing list. This safeguard remains unchanged.

Removing these criteria ensures that priority is based on actual housing need rather than broad assumptions.

6 Do you agree that the pointing schedule should be based upon housing need only?

Please select only one item

- Yes, I agree
- No, I disagree

Any further comments?

Proposed change 3: Introducing discretion for local housing authorities on residential requirements

The Housing Agency proposes to extend discretion to local housing authorities in relation to certain residency requirements. This would bring the policy in line with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and ensure authorities can exercise their discretion appropriately.

This discretion is particularly important in safeguarding situations.

3-month immediate residency requirement

At the moment, anyone who wants to join the public sector housing waiting list must have lived on the Isle of Man for three months immediately before applying. For most people this is straightforward — but for others, it creates real difficulties.

For example, a disabled person may need suitable accommodation before they can safely return to the island. But under the current rule, they cannot join the waiting list until they have already been living here for three months.

This means some of the people who need help the most are unable to even get onto the list.

The amendments propose to let someone join the waiting list without waiting the full three months if the housing authority believes the circumstances justify it.

This flexibility is especially important for people who are vulnerable, at risk, or unable to secure suitable accommodation without support.

10-year residency requirement

Anyone currently applying for public sector housing must have lived on the Isle of Man for a total of at least 10 years.

While this rule works in many cases, it can create real challenges when a household is facing serious risk or urgent housing need. In situations where someone's safety, health, or wellbeing is at stake, waiting until they meet the full 10-year requirement may not be realistic or fair.

For example, a person has been living on the island for 8 years and is experiencing a relationship breakdown. They have children here at school who are part of a wider extended family. They require accommodation to ensure they do not need to leave the island.

The proposed change would allow local housing authorities to reduce the 10-year residency requirement when there is a good reason to do so. This gives authorities the ability to respond to exceptional or urgent situations where strict rules would otherwise prevent someone from getting the help they need.

3-year within a local authority residency requirement

At present, applicants must have lived within a specific local housing authority area for at least three years before they can be allocated public sector housing in that area.

While this rule helps prioritise long-term local residents, it can also create difficulties in cases where a household has a genuine and urgent housing need but has not yet met the full three-year requirement.

For example, a person fleeing domestic abuse who cannot reasonably meet the standard 3-year immediate residency requirement before applying to another local authority to leave the vicinity of a perpetrator.

The proposed change would give local housing authorities the power to reduce the three-year local residency requirement when there is a good reason to do so.

These changes do **not** widen access to public sector housing. Instead, they ensure that local authorities can respond appropriately to welfare and safeguarding needs without being constrained by rigid rules.

7 Do you have any comments regarding the proposed policy change to incorporate discretion relating to any of the residential periods (3 months, 3 years, or 10 years)?

