

Housing Support for Families of Children with SEND

Date of meeting: 10 February 2025
Title of report: Housing Support for Families of Children with SEND.
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Brief <p>This report is to provide the Commission with an opportunity to review the housing and related support offer for families of children with SEND and to make recommendations for improvement and/or development. Additionally, this report will enable the Commission to assess how the corporate wide offer (Housing, SEND, Social Care and Early Help) is coordinated to support families of children with SEND.</p> <p>This summary will provide an overview of the housing offer; presentation of alternative housing options for other more suitable accommodation and assurance of wider corporate offer to parents, in the absence of housing solutions.</p>
Executive summary <p>This report sets out the current position in relation to housing need support for families with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It acknowledges the significant pressures these families face and provides an overview of how support is currently organised across the system.</p> <p>Families are supported to explore and navigate the housing options available to them, including the Housing Register, mutual exchange schemes, and the Private Rented Sector (PRS). However, the report recognises that the effectiveness of these pathways is constrained by the severe shortage of suitable social housing in Hackney, particularly larger homes and properties that can be adapted to meet specific needs. Demand significantly exceeds supply, leading to lengthy waiting times and difficult prioritisation decisions. This Commission should note that, while action is being taken to increase the supply of appropriate housing, this will not be sufficient to meet existing demand in the short to medium term. The availability of affordable and suitable housing in Hackney is limited and for many families the swiftest resolution to their housing challenges will be a move out of the borough.</p> <p>The report also highlights that more intensive, dedicated support is targeted at families with the highest levels of need, particularly where children have complex SEND and cases are open to Children's Social Care. In these situations, the Disabled Children's Service (DCS) works in partnership with health and housing colleagues to address the most acute challenges, including safeguarding concerns or delays to hospital discharge arising from unsuitable accommodation. This approach reflects a necessary focus on</p>

prioritising limited resources towards those families facing the most significant risks, while acknowledging the wider unmet need across the cohort.

In summary there is no single support service for families of children with SEND to navigate their housing challenges and the response is council departments working collaboratively and with health partners to mitigate risk and navigate the best solutions in challenging circumstances.

Report to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

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Purpose of the report

- 1.1. This report provides members with an overview of the housing and related support offer for families of children with SEND and a summary of the corporate wide offer (Housing, SEND, Social Care and Early Help) available to support these families.
2. **Recommendations**
2.1. Commission members are asked to note the contents of this report and consider the housing and corporate wide offer available to support families of children with SEND.
3. **Background**
3.1. It has been well documented that London is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis and the borough of Hackney is no exception. Many Hackney residents are living in insecure, unaffordable and/or overcrowded housing. Living in unsuitable accommodation is known to have a detrimental effect on a household's health and wellbeing as well as impacting negatively on future life chances leading to poverty, inequality and hardship.
3.2. This is particularly true for households with specific accessibility and support needs, including those with children with SEND and residents with physical disabilities. These groups are disproportionately affected, as they often require adapted or larger properties which are in extremely short supply. Furthermore, these households are more likely to experience financial strain exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, as their housing requirements often intersect with higher care-related costs and systemic barriers to suitable accommodation.
3.3. Hackney Council's Strategic Plan 2022 - 26 reflected the challenge faced in meeting future housing demand in the borough - "Hackney continues to build affordable homes and improve the private rented sector, including through licensing schemes and improving temporary accommodation. The high cost of housing and the greater complexity of need in communities, is, however, making meeting housing needs and finding temporary accommodation for homeless people virtually impossible."
3.4. The crisis has inevitably led to a profound increase in demand for social housing which the supply of new homes cannot keep pace with. In 2021, the Council revised its allocation policy to be more transparent and less complex to use. It was designed to be more easily understood, fair and accessible and focussed on identifying and responding to extreme housing needs. The policy therefore allocates properties to those with the most acute housing needs. It attempts to promote a greater understanding that social housing is in short supply and that for many a much more realistic option is to explore other avenues to find suitable housing.

4. How Social Housing is allocated

4.1. Hackney Council is statutorily required to have in place a published allocation scheme as set out in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 and as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011. The allocation scheme is available on the Hackney Council website ([HERE](#)).

4.2. The purpose of this policy is to explain how the Council decides how available social housing is allocated. It sets out the Council's eligibility, qualifying and housing need criteria to ensure priority is fairly allocated. At a time of increasing demand and reduced supply, the Council must prioritise applications to ensure that the limited stock of social housing that becomes available goes to those in greatest need. This includes households that have significant health needs that require them to move or those that are severely overcrowded.

4.3. Hackney Council uses a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system with three primary bands to prioritise housing applications:

- **Band A** (Emergency Need): The highest priority, reserved for emergency cases such as immediate risk to life, inability to be discharged from hospital due to lack of suitable housing, or emergency rehousing due to an Ombudsman decision. Households in this band are typically made a direct offer of accommodation and do not have to bid.
- **Band B** (Significant Need): This band is for qualifying applicants that include those with significant medical or welfare needs that their current housing makes significantly worse, statutory homelessness, or severe overcrowding (lacking two or more bedrooms).
- **Band C** (Specific/Lower Need): For households with a moderate medical condition that would benefit from a move but is not significantly exacerbated by their current home, or those needing specific types of housing like older persons' accommodation.

4.4. For families with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the existence of a medical condition or disability is not enough on its own to determine priority. The critical factor is whether the current accommodation significantly exacerbates or worsens a long-term medical condition to the extent that they are unable to access the property and/or utilise essential rooms.

4.5. To support an application on medical grounds, comprehensive evidence of the condition or disability must be provided. This typically includes reports from sources such as:

- Occupational Therapists (OTs)
- Consultants
- Autism assessment reports
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS)
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

4.6. Additionally, an Occupational Therapy Assessment is important to determine whether reasonable adaptations to the current home could meet the needs and mitigate risks. If adaptations are deemed feasible, the application for a move on medical grounds may not be successful. All medical evidence submitted is professionally analysed to provide an expert opinion and recommendation.

4.7.

4.8. The guidance given to residents on how we assess the impact of medical conditions is attached at **appendix 1**. This is intended to provide consistency in decision making; having a less uniform approach could open us to legal challenges and concerns over indirect discrimination.

4.9. We are currently examining our advice and guidance on the Hackney Council website to try to ensure that Hackney residents, including those whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are able to better understand how they can join the register, how applications are prioritised and what evidence is needed.

4.10. We also want to make residents fully aware of not only the level of demand for social housing and how this may affect their application, but the other steps that may be open to them to alleviate housing needs.

4.11. Families whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities who meet this criteria are accepted onto the Housing Register, however, the level of demand is such that households are likely to wait a considerable period before a suitable property becomes available. This is particularly acute for those households needing larger or ground floor accommodation.

4.12. As of December 2025, there are more than 7,800 households on the Housing Register, of which more than 2,000 have disability as a factor in their housing need (26%). Last year a total of 669 social housing properties were made available to let from Hackney Housing and Registered Providers in the borough. The properties that became available were:

- 49% (327) = studios/1 bedroom
- 27% (180) = 2 bedrooms
- 16% (107) = 3 bedrooms
- 6% (40) = 4 bedrooms, 5 bedroom, 6 bedrooms

4.13. We try to encourage those on the housing register to think very carefully when placing a bid on properties that become available to let; ensuring the property aligns to the medical recommendations.

4.14. The Medical Team has strong working relationships with Hackney Ark and NHS Occupational Therapists (OTs) who attend regular meetings. Furthermore, the Medical Team participates in quarterly liaison meetings with OTs from neighbouring London Boroughs such as Tower Hamlets, Kensington & Chelsea, Newham, Islington, Barnet, and Camden to collaboratively discuss assessments and factors affecting households with SEND children.

5. Increasing supply

5.1. Clearly, the supply of suitable lets is an acute issue, and the Council is actively building new family homes, focusing on social rent, with over 1,000 delivered since 2011 and plans for another 1,000 by 2026, utilising sites such as former car parks and garages, with projects like Nye Bevan Estate and Millfields Road developing family-sized, energy-efficient properties for residents in housing need.

5.2. There are a number of projects that are current or upcoming:

- Estate Regeneration: Building on underused land (car parks, garages) across estates like Nye Bevan, Morpeth Grove, and De Beauvoir.
- Specific Sites: Cherbury Court (St John's Estate), Britannia (under construction, due 2026), Tower Court (completed).

- Family Focus: Projects like Millfields Road are delivering 3-bedroom homes with studies and outdoor space, built to Passivhaus standards.
- Goal: Deliver 1,000 new council homes at social rent by 2026, with many dedicated to families and local residents.

5.2.1. Even with these developments in place, it will not be sufficient to address the level of need within the borough in light of the continuing growth in demand. Consequently, we must look at what other solutions may be viable for households with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

6. Support to access other options for rehousing

6.1. The wait for a suitable property can be considerable, often lasting many years. During this time, whilst waiting for a suitable option, household needs change as children grow older, for example, other siblings or household members requiring their own bedrooms.

6.2. We encourage applicants to explore other options, including adaptations, or properties out of borough or in the private rented sector. We understand this requires residents to make difficult and considered choices when the alternative is a long wait for suitable social housing in Hackney.

6.3. For those currently living in social housing, we encourage them to consider a mutual exchange or examining schemes such as HomeSwapper and House Exchange which allows social tenants to swap their homes with other social tenants anywhere in the UK. Similarly Homefinder UK is a national housing mobility scheme helping families find accommodation outside the borough. This has the benefit of potentially moving to an area where the housing demand is less acute and the opportunity for a further move as family circumstances change is better: for example, where there are other children in the household who are currently able to share a bedroom, but will require their own bedroom as they grow up. Moving to an area where the availability of larger family accommodation is higher could facilitate more opportunities to secure a property with an additional bedroom in the future.

6.4. In light of the challenge of limited social housing supply, the fastest way to resolve housing issues related to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is to seek more suitable accommodation in the private sector, and for some this may be the only realistic solution. There is understandable reticence for some households to take this route with genuine concerns about stability, property maintenance and affordability. However, the passage of the Renters Rights Act does begin to address some of these issues, by significantly overhauling the private rented sector, primarily by ending "no-fault" evictions and replacing fixed-term contracts with a uniform system of periodic tenancies. Equally important the Act extends Awaab's Law (with strict timelines for fixing hazards like damp and mould) and the Decent Homes Standard to the private sector.

6.5. The Benefits and Homeless Prevention service will support those households willing to take this option; assessing their needs, advising them of the realistic and achievable housing options available to them and the actions and changes needed to accomplish these aims. There will be some families that require a lighter touch and be able to utilise the number of toolkits that can assist in identifying a suitable home.

6.6. The Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service helps families to access these toolkits. We recognise that affordability will be a significant concern, and that an affordable option may entail a move away from Hackney. The service does work closely with landlords and letting agencies on putting in place a range of incentives and support options that encourages them to remain in the market and offer homes at rent levels achievable by residents on a lower income.

6.7. Other households may need more help, and the service seeks to offer a creative, effective and trauma informed approach to those with multiple disadvantage and co-occurring conditions to support them in either rescuing their accommodation or to assist them in seeking suitable alternatives where we are unable to prevent them from losing their accommodation.

7. For those families who are living in social housing but are open to the possibility of a move into the private rented sector, there are options such as the [Fresh Start](#) scheme.

8. **Other support options for households with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

8.1. The Children's Community Occupational Therapy (OT) Service is commissioned by LBH to deliver an integrated health and social care offer for children and young people who are unsafe or unable to fully access their home environments. The service embeds social care OT assessment and risk mitigation within an ICB-funded health model and is strengthened through commissioning by special schools, mainstream schools and Homerton's neonatal unit. This integrated approach reduces service hand-offs and enables timely, proportionate responses to risk across home, education and health settings.

8.2. The service operates two core pathways. The Physical Disabilities Pathway supports children with physical disabilities through equipment provision, manual handling support and minor and major adaptations, with annual reviews where ongoing needs exist. The Safe Environment Pathway supports autistic children and those with additional needs who have limited safety awareness or impulse control. Interventions focus on skill development, parent coaching and environmental adaptations, progressing from least restrictive measures to more restrictive adaptations only where robust risk assessment demonstrates necessity.

8.3. Demand for the service continues to increase. In 2024/25 the service received 299 referrals, a 9% increase on the previous year and a 15% increase since 2022/23, driven primarily by growth in Safe Environment referrals linked to an increase in autism diagnosis. Physical Disability referrals remain stable. The housing crisis has increased the time children remain in unsuitable accommodation, intensifying safeguarding risk and requiring greater senior oversight. Home visits are typically offered within three weeks, exceeding the five-week KPI.

8.4. Adaptations are delivered through a robust governance framework. Minor adaptations are managed by housing providers, while major adaptations are considered through a weekly Children's Social Care OT Adaptations Panel, aligned with Adult Social Care OT processes. The panel ensures consistent decision-making, value for money and escalation of high-risk cases. Cases remain open until works are completed and reviewed to confirm risks have been mitigated.

8.5. The service has developed a multi-agency fire safety and restrictive adaptations risk assessment process to address tensions between fire safety legislation and safeguarding risks for children who may abscond. Decisions balance fire safety, child development and environmental risk to identify the safest proportionate solution. OTs request adaptations following assessment and panel approval but are not providers. Restrictive measures are used in a small minority of cases where alternatives have been insufficient.

8.6. Governance is strengthened through integrated working with the Medical Assessment Team, Disabled Children's Service, Hackney Ark clinical leadership, Dynamic Support Register processes and Private Sector Housing enforcement where landlords obstruct

necessary adaptations. Risks are rarely eliminated but are reduced to a manageable level; cases are escalated where mitigation cannot be achieved. The service is developing a borough-wide window safety pathway to improve access, streamline processes and increase awareness of home safety risks. Key development needs include improved data on absconding and falls, faster window restrictor repairs, and greater flexibility in housing allocation where safety and access are the primary concerns.

9. Here to Help (previously Money Hub)

9.1. Here To Help is a multidisciplinary team, offering a range of discretionary grants assessment and award and income maximisation activities, with grassroots outreach at its heart. Since it commenced in November 2022, Here To Help has achieved £6.91m in increased incomes, of which around £1.7m is disability benefits. Many children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families may be eligible for health related benefits and Here To Help provides a specialist service supporting residents to apply for those benefits and challenge decisions up to higher tribunal levels. In line with its commitment to outreach into the community, Here To Help attended the 'Preparing for Adulthood' event in October 2024 and 2025 for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families.

10. Support from Disabled Children's Service (DCS)

10.1. The Disabled Children Service works with children with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families providing short breaks, care packages, support and safeguarding interventions.

10.2. Challenges in respect of housing needs often arise within our work. Over the past 12 months we have worked with approximately 20 families whose housing needs were significantly impacting family functioning and the child's needs. The main areas of concern that we encounter in relation to housing need are:

10.2.1. **Overcrowding:** This tends to be the most common area of need. Whilst we know that overcrowded housing is a national challenge, for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families the impact of overcrowded housing is heightened. It can mean that required adaptations cannot be made; children's special educational needs related behaviours are exacerbated by a lack of space and families' sleep is affected. For example we are working with a primary aged autistic child living with his family in overcrowded housing sharing a bedroom with his two siblings. As the child has poor sleep and regularly wakes in the night his siblings' sleep is also impacted. In another example a family of four are living in a one bedroom flat again heightening behaviours of the child with special educational needs and/or disabilities due to a lack of space. Often we see this overcrowding with families that are living in temporary or hostel accommodation and those living in unsuitable private rented accommodation.

10.2.2. **Unsuitable Housing to meet needs:** Over the past 12 months the Disabled Children's Service has worked with 3 families in which their disabled child could not be discharged from hospital due to unsuitable housing. This is often due to the family's current property being unsafe due to the layout, having a lack of space to accommodate specialist equipment such as oxygen or being inaccessible for wheelchair users. For example a 1 year old child who has been in hospital since birth and has had extensive neonatal support. The child requires ongoing respiratory support. The family's current accommodation is not safe for any form of respiratory support as it does not meet the safety threshold for oxygen installation at home.

10.2.3. **Housing Condition:** Most commonly concerns are raised in respect of the condition of their housing impacting the child and family's health and wellbeing. This can be issues

such as damp and mould in properties, pests and poor accessibility for wheelchair users. For example, a 16 year old child who has significant health needs and a learning disability; is a wheelchair user, fed through a feeding tube directly into their stomach and resides in a 2 bed property on the 3rd floor. The lift in the property stops working on a weekly basis. When this happens the child is unable to leave the property and is housebound.

10.3. **What the Disabled Children Service do to address housing challenges**

10.3.1. Given the national and local housing picture these issues can be complex to resolve. The DCS works closely with partners in health, education and housing to ensure a multi agency response to housing challenges. We have strong relationships with our Occupational Therapy (OT) partners who attend the weekly DCS Care package panel. In the first instance we will always refer to OT for a home safety assessment to explore whether adaptations could make the home safer or more suitable for the disabled child. The OT service will also raise any concerns with DCS where during a home safety assessment of a child known to DCS gives cause for concern. We will then work with partners to address the concern.

10.3.2. The Disabled Children's Service has built good relationships with housing managers who are responsive when needs are escalated to them. Housing colleagues attend regular network meetings to ensure that there are multi agency plans in place to address the need. However, because of the supply issues these issues are not swiftly resolved but housing colleagues make extensive efforts to identify suitable properties/options to meet the need. An example of this is DCS, Health OT, the Continuing Health Care nursing team and hospital staff working collaboratively to identify a property which could safely accommodate equipment to enable a child to be discharged home from hospital. The allocated social worker and colleagues from the Continuing Care Nursing team and OT viewed properties with the parent to assess the safety and suitability of the property.

10.3.3. In issues of overcrowding the Disabled Children Service will explore with families how space within the home is being used and what could be done differently to make best use of available space for example the use of bunk beds or creating temporary partitions. For disabled children living in overcrowded homes with lack of access to outside space, consideration is given to providing additional social activities hours via their care package to support emotional regulation and provide respite for parents and siblings. Families with a disabled child in receipt of the middle or high rate DLA who do not receive a care package can also access an individual budget via our Short Breaks service to purchase short periods of respite including, for example, after school activities.

10.3.4. The DCS escalates issues regarding repairs and meets with Housing colleagues with the parent to seek a resolution in respect. Where progress is limited this will be escalated to the DCS service manager who raises the concern with housing managers.

11. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services**

11.1. The Council SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) teams manage the local authority's statutory duties for children and young people aged 0–25. The primary remit is to ensure that individuals with additional needs receive the right support to achieve the best possible outcomes.

11.1.1. The Council's Core Statutory Responsibilities include:

- **Needs Assessments (EHCNA):** coordinating and overseeing requests for Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments.
- **EHC Plans (EHCPs):** drafting, issuing, and maintaining EHC Plans, which outline a child's specific educational, health, and social care requirements.

- **Annual Reviews:** managing the legal process of reviewing EHC Plans annually to ensure the provision remains appropriate and reflects the child's progress.
- **School Placements:** identifying and consulting with schools to secure suitable education placements, whether in mainstream or specialist settings.
- **Funding Allocation:** provide Element 3 high needs funding to educational settings to enable them to make appropriate special provision for children.

11.2. Hackney has seen a sustained and significant rise in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) over the past decade. In 2015 there were around **1,535** EHCPs in place, increasing steadily year on year to **3,839 by 2026**. The growth has been particularly sharp since 2019, with numbers rising by well over **1,800 plans in seven years**, reflecting increased identification of SEND, greater parental reliance on statutory assessment, and growing pressure on education, health and social care services.

11.3. The Education Health and Care Planning Team consists of 17 planning coordinators who have to coordinate, draft and disseminate the plans. There are 10 other coordinators who support children Post 16. A single plan can take multiple days to create, making the management of this challenging in light of the growing need and rising numbers of children and young people being the subject of an EHC plan.

11.4. The statutory **Hackney 0-25 SEND Local Offer website** provides a comprehensive directory of services designed to support children and young people with special SEND and their families. The website offers a wide range of information about support across: education, health, social care, leisure (accessible community activities), and preparation for adulthood (training, employment, and independence). By centralising information on available provision and how to access it, the SEND Local Offer aims to empower parents and young people to navigate services, processes and support by providing relevant, up-to-date information and guidance.

11.5. Activity and engagement with partners to create, develop and maintain the Local Offer information is intended to support the borough to map and gap services and aid in commissioning decisions ensuring local services remain responsive to the community's specific needs in the Borough.

11.6. The 0-25 SEND Local Offer and Participation Lead encourages and supports services to develop parent facing information and works closely with the Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum to ensure their views and priorities are captured and acted on. They help link the forum up with services and speakers to help parents better understand and navigate services and support. Through outreach sessions they gather feedback from parents on a range of issues and through this identify themes for focussed attention e.g. experiences of young people with ADHD in schools and health services, experiences of families in unsuitable housing, access to holiday play schemes for children and young people with complex and high support needs. Dependent on capacity they provide project support for various SEND initiatives e.g. the Preparing for Adulthood event and related guide.

11.7. The 0-25 SEND Local Offer includes a dedicated *Housing Options and Advice* section, which brings together information relevant to children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND and their families where housing needs intersect with disability, support and preparation for adulthood. The section provides signposting to housing advice and homelessness support, information on accessing the Hackney housing register, and guidance on independent living. It also outlines supported accommodation options,

including supported lodgings, Shared Lives arrangements and supported housing providers. While it does not replace Hackney Council's core housing services, the Local Offer acts as a central gateway, helping families and young people understand available housing pathways and how to access appropriate support as part of wider provision to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

11.8. New/updated information has been shared with families with Children with SEND about the role of the children's Integrated Occupational Therapy service and their Safe Environments Assessments that supports autistic children and their families via parental coaching and environmental adaptations. New information has been developed by housing services about the Medical Needs Assessments process. A series of workshops have been delivered locally by Shelter in e.g. Family Hubs and GP practices, including one commissioned by the Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum (HSPCF). These highlighted adaptation options (permissions and funding) and definitions of statutory overcrowding. Changes have been made to the DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) process. Hackney CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) information has been updated highlighting their advice sessions. Many families continue to access advice and support e.g. to apply to be on the housing register and other services and welfare benefits including practical support such as form filling and uploading eligibility and medical evidence, from the Hackney Ark Resource Centre.

11.9. In 2025 parents via the Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum, identified housing difficulties related to having children with additional needs and disabilities as a priority issue. Meetings were arranged with relevant services to capture and escalate the issues they raised. The forum was connected with speakers and services. Services were connected with parents to support mutual understanding of the challenges both parties face.

12. Children and Family Hubs

12.1. The Children and Family Hubs offer a comprehensive range of support services for families. A key priority is providing specialised housing advice by Shelter at the Family Hub to families with children who have SEND.

12.2. Our Early Help Family Support Practitioners assist families in addressing complex issues that impact their well-being. This support includes:

- Assistance with housing and financial struggles.
- Support for mental health, parental conflict, or substance misuse.
- Dedicated guidance for families of children with SEND facing housing instability.
- Dedicated risk assessments, guidance and support around home safety for children with SEND.
- Targeted outreach to families living in temporary accommodation inviting children and families including those with SEND into suitable spaces where children can explore and play safely.
- Target childcare places for children living in hostels or other temporary accommodation with cramped conditions.
- Targeted support to apply for furniture and white goods for families including those with SEND following housing placements.
- Family Practitioners deliver parent drop-ins at primary schools where the school has identified that the family may benefit from support. This may be the first conversation parents have with a practitioner about their child who may be experiencing dysregulation. This early conversation has identified SEND pathways, or housing advice, and bridged relationships between the parents and the school.

12.3. **Specialist Housing Advice through Shelter**

12.3.1. We partner with Shelter to provide independent, specialist housing expertise directly within the Hubs. This partnership includes:

- Practitioner Training: Workshops for staff working with families in housing need.
- Case Consultations: Professional advice for practitioners managing complex housing cases.
- Weekly Advice Surgeries: Dedicated sessions held in every Children and Family Hub for one to one work with families, which may lead to an allocated Shelter worker.

12.4. **Independent Advice from Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

12.4.1. Families can access independent housing advice through the Citizens Advice Bureau at all Children and Family Hubs and selected Children's Centres. This service focuses on the specific housing rights and needs of children with SEND.

12.5. **Family Financial Resilience Partnership (FFRP)**

12.5.1. As one of 12 London Boroughs participating in this initiative, Hackney provides high-quality social welfare advice through the CAB and the East London Legal Advice Centre. This project offers:

- Expert advice on the intersection of SEND and housing rights.
- Independent support to help families navigate complex welfare systems.

12.5.2. Practitioners are aware of the limited housing stock, and the challenges securing housing. They have been encouraged to rethink their approach to advocacy which has meant supporting families to consider housing offers out of the borough where appropriate with new opportunities.

Cleared by:

- Cllr Sade Etti, Cabinet Member for Homelessness Prevention, Housing needs and Rough Sleeping, 4 February 2026
- Cllr Anya Sizer, Deputy cabinet member for Families, Early Years and SEND, 4 February 2026
- Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor for London Borough of Hackney, 4 February 2026

Appendix 1



Background

When you apply to join the housing register we ask if anyone in your household has a medical condition which affects them accessing rooms in their home such as the bathroom, kitchen or bedroom.

We don't need to know about every medical condition. We only need to know about long-term medical and health conditions which make it difficult for you or a household member to function in your home.

We don't need to know about:

- Temporary conditions such as broken bones, pregnancy, gallstones, hernias etc
- Conditions which can be well-managed through medical treatment so that you can live and function in your home environment e.g. diabetes, hayfever/allergies, sinusitis, anemia, high blood pressure or heart disease which can be maintained by medication
- Mobility issues if the type of property that you live in doesn't cause difficulties for you e.g. if your home is on the ground floor, your property is level access or it can be adapted
- Repairs which can be remedied

The online Health Form

The Health form will ask you about the medical condition, how it affects you or a member of your household's daily living and how the property affects or is impacting the condition.

When you return the Health form to us and provide any information we've asked for we will carry out a medical assessment to determine if the property is impacting any of the medical conditions.

Purpose of a medical assessment

An assessment helps us to understand whether someone has a specific housing need because of a medical condition.

An assessment can determine how suitable someone's current home is for them and may suggest whether an occupational therapy assessment is required.

When someone joins the Housing Register the outcome of a medical assessment can determine the type of homes that are suitable for them to bid for.

Providing us with information

You should complete and return the online Health form to us.

You should provide us with medical records and reports which relate to the medical conditions you tell us about, such as:

- General practitioner's (GPs) summaries
- Occupational therapist's reports
- Medical consultant's Outpatient clinic letters
- Physiotherapy, speech and language reports
- Adult Social Care, Care Act Assessments
- Autism spectrum diagnostic reports, Hackney Ark home safety assessments, sensory impairment assessments and wheelchair assessments
- Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Please do not provide us with:

- Appointment letters
- Proof of disability benefits
- Photocopies of your blue badge, bus pass or of the medication that you take
- Photos of body parts or or damp, mould or pest issues in your home
- Letters of support from GPs, social workers or other advocates

How we assess the information that you provide to us

Pre-screening

When we receive your Health form we check that the medical condition meets the minimum level for further assessment.

To qualify for an assessment the medical condition must be long-term and the condition worsened by your current home environment.

For this reason we will not make an assessment on short-term health conditions such as broken bones or pregnancy. Conditions like diabetes or heart disease which are not affected by your home will not meet the threshold for further assessment.

Assessment

Your Health form will be assessed by a qualified health professional such as an occupational therapist or qualified nurse from our Medical Team.

We will use the information and supporting documentation provided to determine:

- The medical condition
- The extent that the medical condition is affected by your current housing conditions and any risks

- Potential adaptations to remove or minimise any risk

Our medical advisers consider the information provided by health professionals involved with your care. On occasion we will use the consent that you have provided to us to contact health professionals involved in your treatment or care.

When assessing the risk caused by someone's current housing circumstances we consider how that risk can be mitigated. This includes considering how a home could be adapted in order to make it more accessible.

Damp, mould, dust and broken lifts are considered to be maintenance and remedial issues as these can be repaired.

Advisers do not consider the impact of overcrowding during a medical assessment. This is considered separately during the housing register application process.

Outcomes of a medical assessment

As all medical conditions and circumstances are unique to each individual there is no set outcome and recommendations vary.

Our medical assessments may recommend that your household requires a particular type of property (such as a wheelchair accessible property, a property with a wetroom/shower room or a property that is step free).

The outcome of a medical assessment is not determined by the severity of a medical condition. It is determined by assessing the impact that the home has on the medical condition.

If you disagree with an outcome

If you disagree with the outcome you have the right to appeal.

You can submit an appeal in writing within one calendar month of the date of our letter. The easiest way to submit an appeal is by email to Reviewsandappeals@hackney.gov.uk.

If you disagree with our decision you should tell us clearly why you disagree with the decision.

If you think that there is information or evidence which we weren't aware of when making our decision then you should provide this to us when you appeal. Please provide us with all of the extra information or evidence that you would like us to consider.

You don't need to provide us with any information or evidence that you have already supplied.

A home visit can be carried out to observe your environment and how you access rooms in your property. We encourage you to agree to a home visit when you appeal against a medical decision.

If you fail to provide additional information or evidence a decision will be made based on the evidence that was available to us during the initial assessment.

A decision will be made in 56 days of receiving your request for an appeal, or as soon as is practically possible. Once we have made a decision about your appeal we will write to you with the outcome.