



# Social Housing Annual Lettings Report 2022/23



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## INTRODUCTION

This report provides information on the allocation of social housing in the District of Epping Forest (“the District”) between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and the demand for social housing at 31 March 2023.

A review of the Allocations Scheme for 2022-2027 resulted in some changes which became effective in September 2022. The new Housing Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 can be found [on our policy page](#) under the ‘Housing’ heading. The implementation of the new Scheme took place halfway through the financial year 2022-2023 and this report reflects lets under both the old and new Schemes. We continue to closely monitor and review the effectiveness of the new Scheme and the impact that this may have on lets, particularly in Bands B and C.

### **Social housing lettings: April 2022 to March 2023**

Information is provided on the number, size and type of social rented properties that were let to qualifying households between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. It includes typical waiting times and profiling information on age, mobility needs and ethnicity of the applicants that have been rehoused.

The report covers Council owned stock and properties owned by other registered providers of social housing (RPs), including housing associations.

### **Housing register snapshot: 31 March 2023**

A snapshot is taken on 31 March every year of the number of applicants on the housing register. The breakdown in this report includes the number of households waiting for 1-bed, 2-bed, 3-bed or 4+bed properties in priority Bands A-C, and homeless households to whom the Council owes a main housing duty (or ‘main homeless duty’).

### **Other information**

Details are also provided on the number of mutual exchanges and management transfers that took place outside of the Allocations Scheme between 2022-2023, and the number of properties that former tenants purchased from the Council under the Right to Buy.

## CONTEXT

### **Eligibility for social housing**

The Government sets out who is eligible for social housing in England depending on whether they are a British citizen and how long they have been habitually resident in the country and/or their immigration status.

The Council determines who qualifies for social housing in the District based on whether they fulfil the local eligibility criteria specified in the Allocations Scheme or if the Council has accepted a main housing duty under homelessness legislation.

### **The housing register**

The housing register is a list of applicants in housing need who qualify for at least one offer of social rented housing in the District. Applicants on the housing register are awarded one of three priority bands: Band A – Emergency Need, Band B – Urgent Need, or Band C – Moderate Need. Band A represents the highest priority and Band C represents the lowest.

## **Choice-based lettings and direct lets**

The majority of lettings are made to households on the housing register through the Council's choice-based letting scheme (CBL).

Applicants are required to actively consider available Council and other RP properties that are advertised and updated weekly on a database known as LOCATA through the HomeOption website ([www.homeoption.org](http://www.homeoption.org)).

Applicants can express an interest in suitable vacant properties by selecting up to three properties per week to bid on. Bids are then placed in order for each property. The bid from the applicant in the highest band who has been waiting the longest is usually then selected and offered that property if it meets their needs.

Direct lets (DL) are usually only made in exceptional circumstances, for example to Council tenants that we to move by way of management transfer. For more information, please see Section 9 of our Housing Allocations Scheme – 'Allocations Outside of the Scheme'.

## **Affordable rent and social rent**

The rent charged for social housing is either 'affordable rent' or 'social rent'. Affordable rent is set at up to 80% of the market rent for the property and social rent is set using a formula that takes account of local earnings and house-prices. Affordable rent is typically higher than social rent.

The majority of Council owned re-let properties are at social rents. More new build properties are set at affordable rent than social rent. Affordable rents are typically used for properties we have had to re-purchase or, more commonly, from new developments where the grant funding arrangements require a specific balance of affordable and social rents.

## **Accessibility and adaptations**

A number of households include one or more occupants with disabilities or mobility needs and require a property with level access such as a bungalow or ground floor flat. Occasionally additional adaptations may be necessary such as a level-access shower, handrails, a stair lift or a fully wheelchair adapted property.

When adapted properties become available to let then households with an identified need for those specific adaptations are usually prioritised above households without that need.

## **Sheltered housing supplementary waiting list**

Independent Living housing (previously sheltered housing) is advertised via CBL and sometimes attracts limited interest from applicants on the Housing Register. The Council keeps a Supplementary Waiting List (SWL) of applicants aged over 60 who can bid for sheltered housing in the District without meeting all the criteria required to join the housing register.

If a qualifying applicant on the housing register does bid for an individual sheltered housing property, then they will be given priority over applicants from the SWL who have also submitted bids.

## **Main housing duty (main homeless duty)**

Main housing duty means the duty that the Council has accepted to rehouse a homeless household under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. This duty applies when a household is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and has a priority need (referred to as 'main homeless duty' on the graphs in this report for ease of reference).

## Priority Bands A-C

The following table gives a breakdown of the main categories of need within each priority Band for a choice based letting within the Allocations Scheme for 2022-2027.

Band	Main categories of need
<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Members of the Armed Forces with serious injury, illness, or disability</li> <li>ii. Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces</li> <li>iii. Home seekers with an assessed need to move on emergency medical grounds or emergency grounds relating to disability</li> <li>iv. Home seekers with an assessed need to move on emergency welfare grounds</li> <li>v. On the recommendation of the Councils medical advisor applicants with specific accommodation requirements will be given priority for suitable properties as they become available above other applicants in the Band (e.g., adapted or ground floor properties etc.) regardless of the date they joined the Band.</li> <li>vi. Downsizers seeking fewer bedrooms than current social housing property</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Home seekers living in insanitary, overcrowded, or unsatisfactory conditions</li> <li>ii. Home seekers with an assessed need to move on urgent medical grounds or urgent grounds relating to disability, including learning disabilities</li> <li>iii. Home seekers with an assessed need to move on urgent welfare grounds</li> <li>iv. Home seekers needing two or more additional bedrooms compared to their current accommodation</li> <li>v. Home seekers needing to be one household but are having to live apart</li> <li>vi. Home seekers needing to move to a particular locality</li> <li>vii. Applicants who have an agreed fostering or adoption agreement in place with Essex County Council, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child.</li> <li>viii. Home seekers accepted by the Council as being statutorily homeless and owed the main housing duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)</li> <li>ix. Existing council sheltered tenants wishing to move within their scheme or to another scheme</li> <li>x. Existing council tenants over 60 living in 1 bed property wishing to move to sheltered accommodation</li> <li>xi. Home seekers who the Council has placed into supported housing (after a period of at least 9 months) if they are ready to move on and the Council does not owe a main homelessness duty</li> </ul>
<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Members of the Armed Forces with no housing need, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge</li> <li>ii. Spouses and children of existing and former Armed Forces Personnel, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge</li> <li>iii. Home seekers with an assessed need to move on moderate medical grounds or moderate grounds relating to disability</li> <li>iv. Home seekers with an assessed need to move on moderate welfare grounds</li> <li>v. Home seekers needing one additional bedroom compared to their current accommodation</li> <li>vi. Home seekers sharing accommodation with another household</li> <li>vii. Home seekers needing to be closer to their place of work</li> <li>viii. Home seekers in the Council's interim accommodation awaiting their homelessness decision</li> <li>ix. Home seekers to whom the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty, where there is a requirement to afford reasonable preference on the ground of</li> </ul>

	homelessness x. Home seekers who are entitled to a reasonable preference under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended and can demonstrate an exceptional need to either leave their current local authority's area or move to the Epping Forest District
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We also have approximately 100 applicants in Band B who are existing tenants of the Council living in 2 or 3 bed flat accommodation, who wish to move to a house. This band existed in the previous Housing Allocations Scheme 2018-2022 but was removed from the new Housing Allocations Scheme 2022-2027. We allowed any existing applicants in this band to remain on the register but stopped allowing any new applicants in this band as of 26th September 2023.

### **Management transfers**

Occasionally the Council has to move an existing Council tenant to an alternative property for housing management reasons. This may be due to an emergency for medical or personal safety reasons, or as a permanent decant to carry out major works or to regenerate or demolish their existing home.

# LETTINGS INFORMATION

## Number of properties let by year

This table shows the number of properties that have been let to qualifying applicants in housing need each year over the last five years.

Year	Total	Council properties	RP properties
<b>2022/23</b>	<b>358*</b>	<b>328*</b>	<b>30*</b>
2021/22	404	361	43
2020/21	379 <sup>+</sup>	338 <sup>+</sup>	41 <sup>+</sup>
2019/20	532 <sup>+</sup>	488 <sup>+</sup>	44 <sup>+</sup>
2018/19	426 <sup>+</sup>	353 <sup>+</sup>	73 <sup>+</sup>

\*Adjusted figures, source: Local Authority Housing Statistical Returns (LAHS) \*Provisional figures 2022/23

Fig.1

Our total lettings figures for 2022/23 are slightly lower than we had anticipated; this can largely be attributed to unforeseen changes to our voids supply midway through the year, which caused some delays to our void turnaround timescales.

## Properties let by priority need

This chart shows the percentage of properties that were let by priority need between 2022-2023.

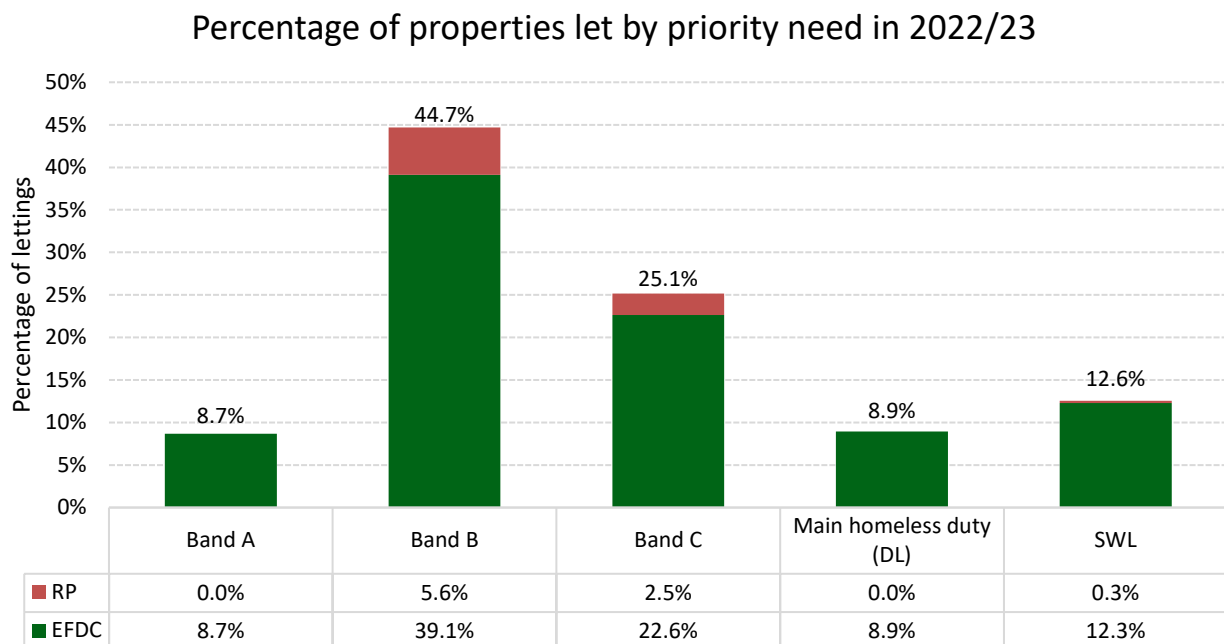


Fig.2

The highest percentage of properties were let to applicants in Band B (44.7%) followed by Band C (25.1%). The fewest number of lettings were made to applicants in Band A (8.7%), this is also the smallest band in terms of numbers of applicants.

Lettings to homeless applicants between 1st April 2022 and 25th September 2022 (under the old Housing Allocations Scheme) were made as direct lets, so are reflected in the 8.9% 'main homeless duty (DL)', whereas any lets to homeless applicants from 26th September 2022 to 31st March 2023 are in the 'Band B' section of the graph.

## Properties let by choice-based lettings and direct lets

This chart shows the percentage of properties that were allocated via choice-based lettings (Bands A-C and SWL) and main homeless duty direct lets by landlord between 2022-2023.

Percentage of properties let via Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and Direct Lets (DL) in 2022/23

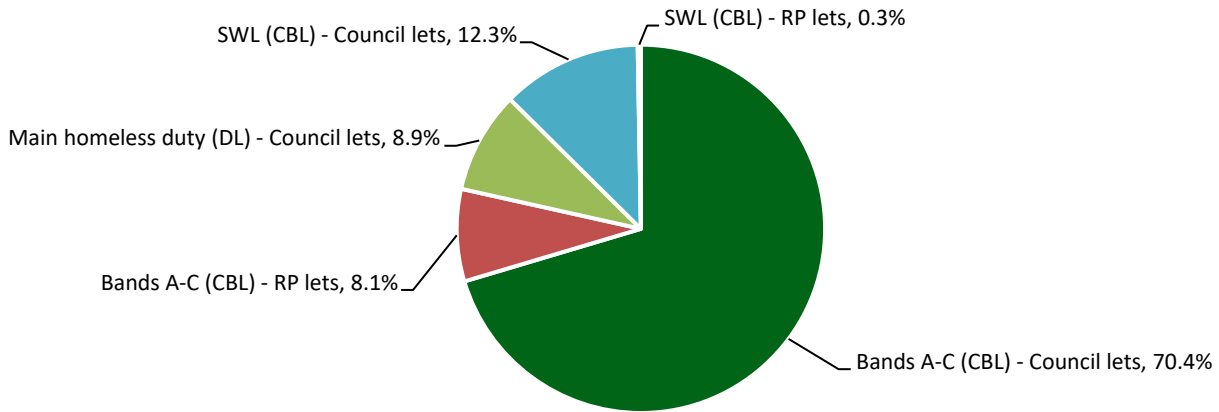


Fig.3

The majority of lettings were Council properties via choice-based lettings (70.4%) and Council properties that were direct lets to main homeless duty households (8.0%). Choice-based lettings of RP properties accounted for a further 8.1% of all lettings. Mutual exchanges and management transfers are not included in the total lets figures.

## Properties let to residents of the District and other local authorities

This chart shows the percentage of Band A-C applicants, main homeless duty households (DL) and SWL applicants that were habitually resident in the District before being allocated a property and those who were previously resident in other local authority areas.

Percentage of lettings from in district and out of district applicants in 2022/23

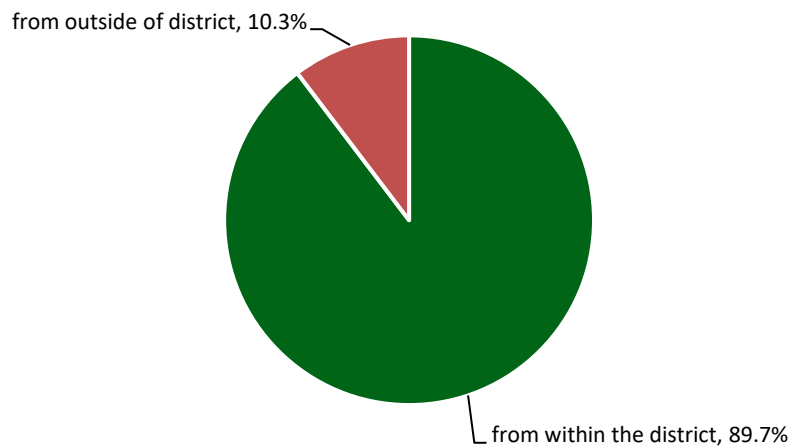


Fig.4

The majority of properties were let to existing residents of the District (89.7%).



## Percentage of re-lets, new-build and acquired properties let

This chart compares the letting of new build Council and RP properties with the re-letting of existing Council and RP properties between 2022-2023.

Percentage of lettings by stock type and landlord in 2022/23

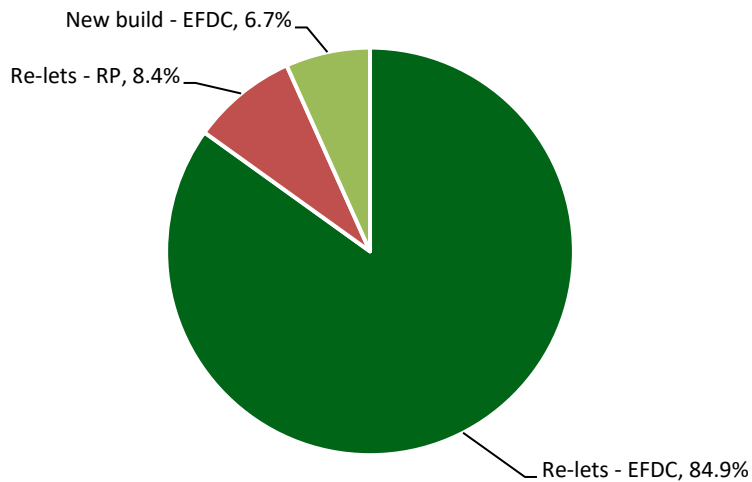


Fig.5

The majority of lettings between 2022-2023 were to existing Council properties that had become vacant (84.9%) followed by relets to RP stock (8.4%). New-build Council housing accounted for the remainder (6.7%). We did not acquire any properties through the open market during this period.

## Properties let by rent type

This chart shows the percentage of properties that were let at social rent levels compared to affordable rent between 2022-2023.

Percentage of lettings at social rent and affordable rent in 2022/23

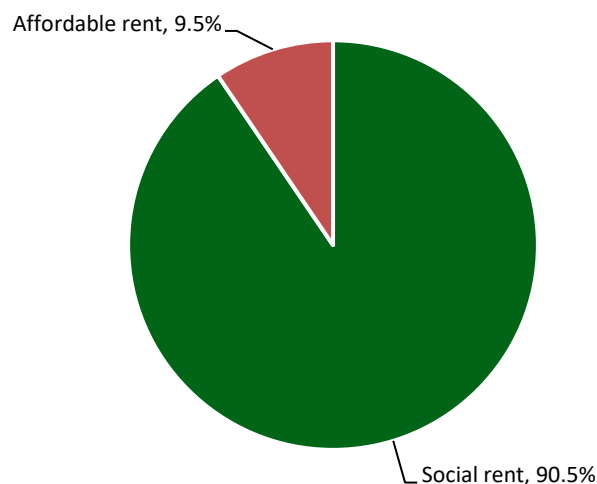


Fig.6

Over 90% of properties were let at social rent and just under 10% were let at affordable rent between 2022-2023.

The following chart provides a further breakdown of lettings for affordable rent and social rent by landlord and applicant need between 2022-2023.

Percentage of lettings by landlord, need and rent type in 2022/23

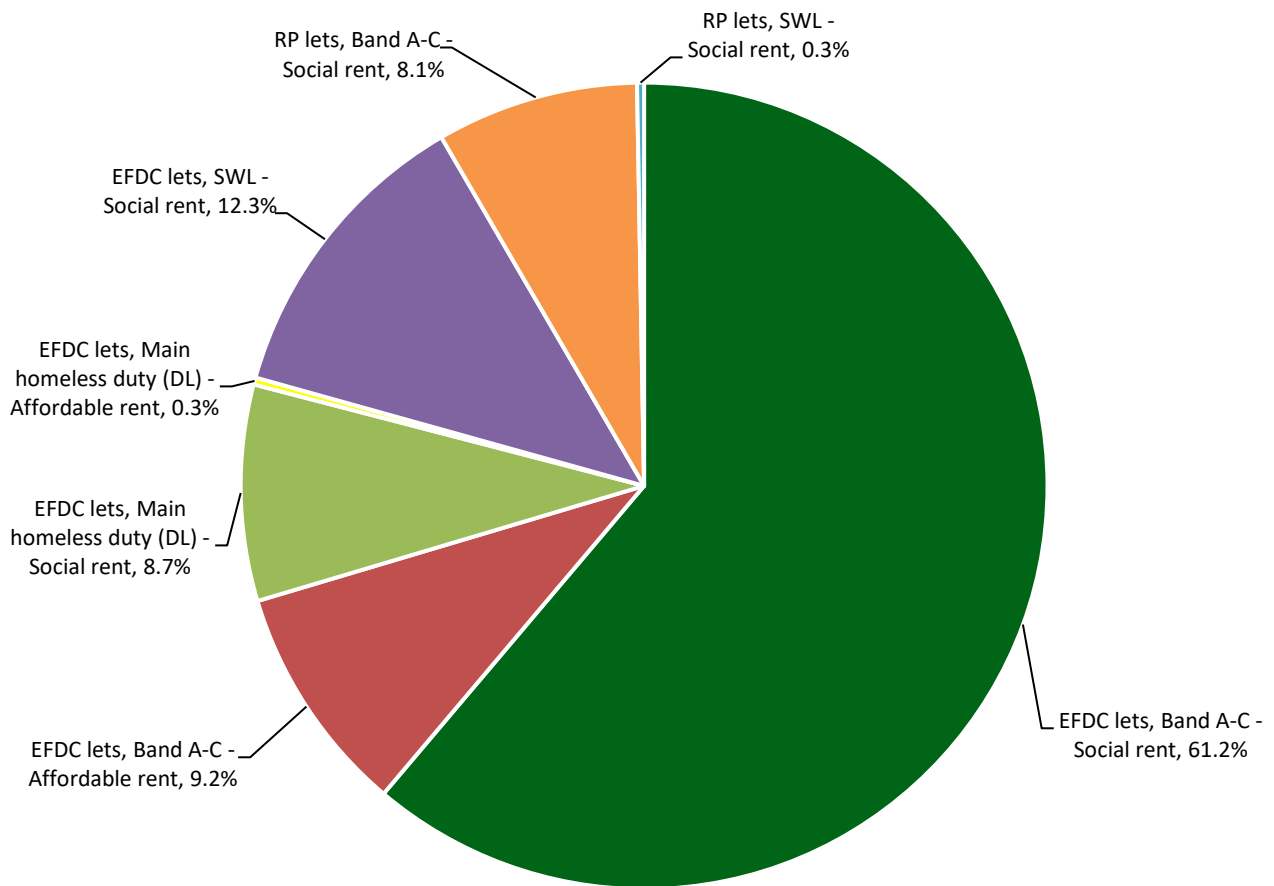


Fig.7

Over half of all lets (61.2%) were of Council properties made to applicants in Band A-C at social rent, with only 9.2% of council properties let to Band A-C applicants at affordable rent.

The majority of Council properties let direct to main homeless duty households were at social rent (8.7%), whilst 0.3% were let at affordable rent.

Only 8.1% of properties let were RP properties let to Band A-C applicants via choice-based lettings, all of which were at social rent.

## Properties let by dwelling type

This chart shows the number of lettings by property type i.e., flat, house, maisonette, bungalow and sheltered accommodation to Band A-C applicants, main homeless duty households (DL) and SWL applicants between 2022-2023.

Number of lets by property type in 2022/23

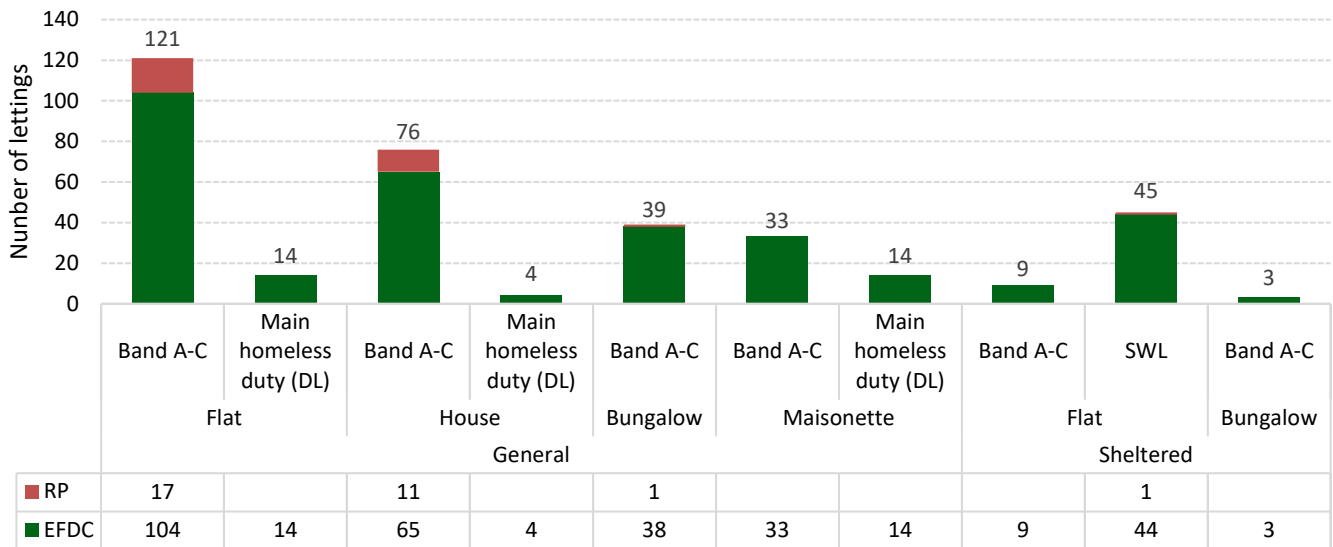


Fig.8

The majority of properties we let during this period were flats, due to the makeup of our housing stock.

All sheltered housing lettings to the supplementary waiting list applicants (45) were to flats. All vacant sheltered housing bungalows were let to Band A-C applicants (3).

## Properties let by bed size

This chart shows the number of properties that were let by bed size to Band A-C applicants, main homeless duty households (DL) and SWL applicants between 2022-2023.

Number of lettings by bed size in 2022/23

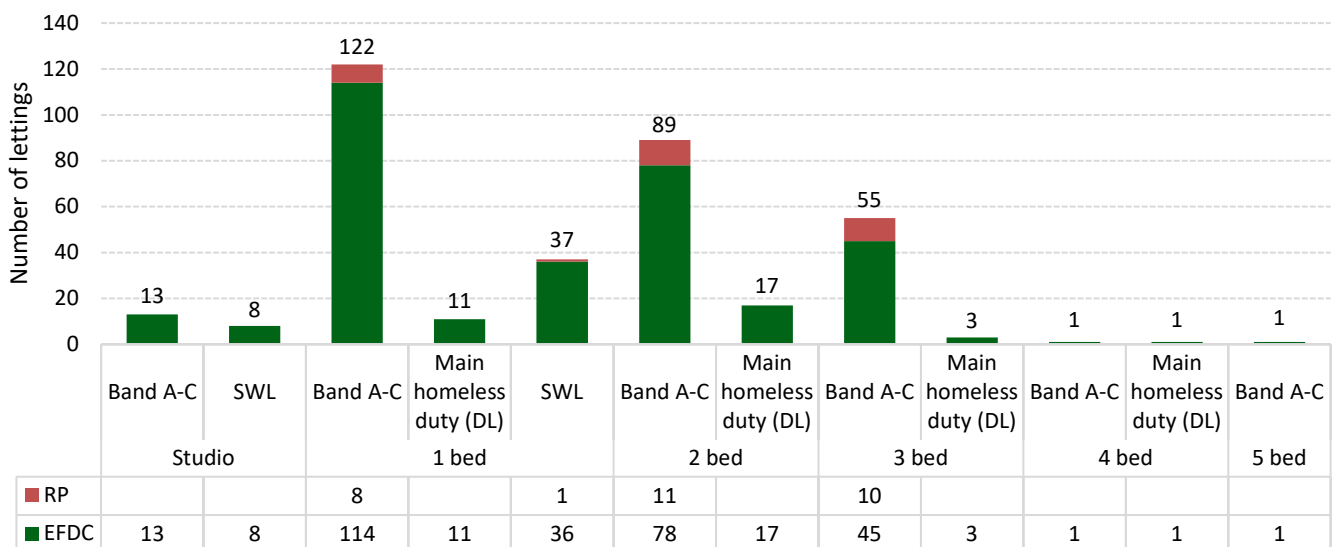


Fig.9

The majority of lettings in 2022/23 were for 1 bed properties. These generally saw the highest turnover of occupants and therefore become vacant more frequently than family sized homes.

## Properties let by age group of main applicant

This chart shows the percentage of properties that were let by age group for Bands A-C applicants, main homeless duty households (DL) and SWL applicants between 2022-2023.

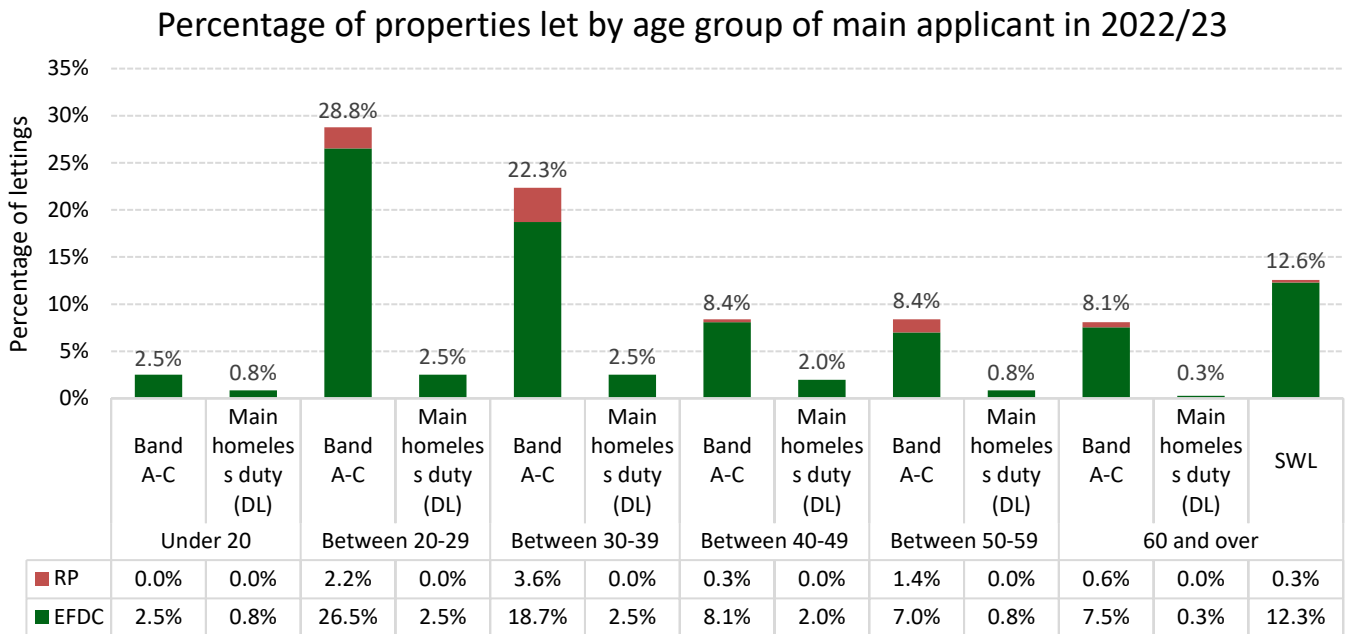
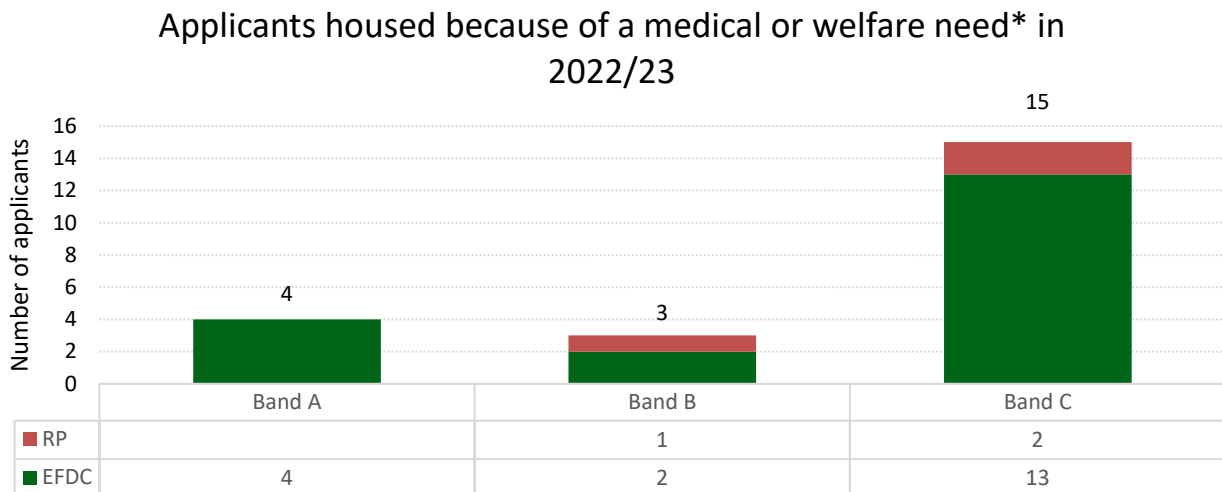


Fig.10

The majority of lettings were made to main applicants in Bands A-C between the ages of 20-29 (28.8%), followed by Band A-C with main applicants aged between 30-39 (22.3%).

## Applicants with medical or welfare needs

This chart shows the number of applicants who were housed due to having a medical or welfare need.

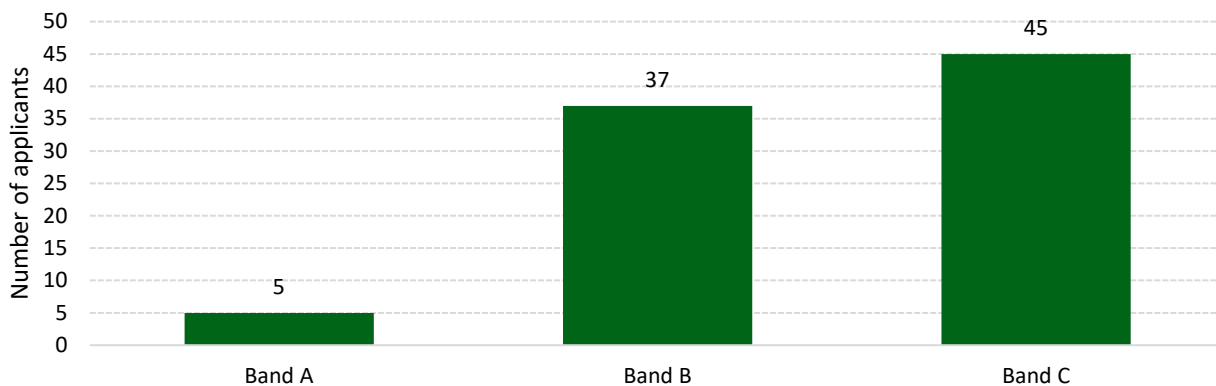


\*Applicants housed because of a medical or welfare need does not include those who were housed for other primary reasons and who also have a medical or welfare need.

We were able to house more applicants with medical needs in Band C than those in Bands A and B during this year. However, it should be noted that the Band B medical need category was not introduced until the implementation of the new Housing Allocations Scheme in September 2022. Next year's report will be a better reflection of this information. There are a number of reasons why applicants with a medical need in Band C may be more successful in bidding. Firstly, we generally only have very few applicants who meet the high threshold for Band A emergency medical need.

Secondly, those with a Band A medical need are likely to have more specific requirements for the type of property they need (for example wet rooms, wheelchair access etc.) and as we only have a small proportion of adapted properties within our stock, they will be waiting longer for a home.

### Applicants on the housing register because of a medical or welfare need\* as at 31 March 2023



\*Applicants on the housing register because of a medical or welfare need does not include those who are on the housing register for other primary reasons and who also have a medical or welfare need.

As mentioned earlier, we only have a small number of applicants who meet the threshold for Band A emergency medical need. The majority of applicants either have a moderate or urgent medical need.

## WAITING TIMES

The following charts show the length time applicants waited who were offered and accepted a property between 2022-2023. Waiting times are typically affected by the size and type of property needed, the applicant's priority banding and bidding history (if applicable) and whether they were maintaining their rent account and conditions of tenancy satisfactorily.

It should be noted that any data about waiting times will always be subjective, as we are operating a choice-based lettings system, meaning that it is ultimately down to the applicants what they choose to bid on. Therefore, an applicant could wait on the register for several years between bids and this would affect the average waiting time data for applicants in that band.

### Waiting time for Band A applicants housed between 2022-2023

This chart shows the length of time that Band A applicants waited before being housed.

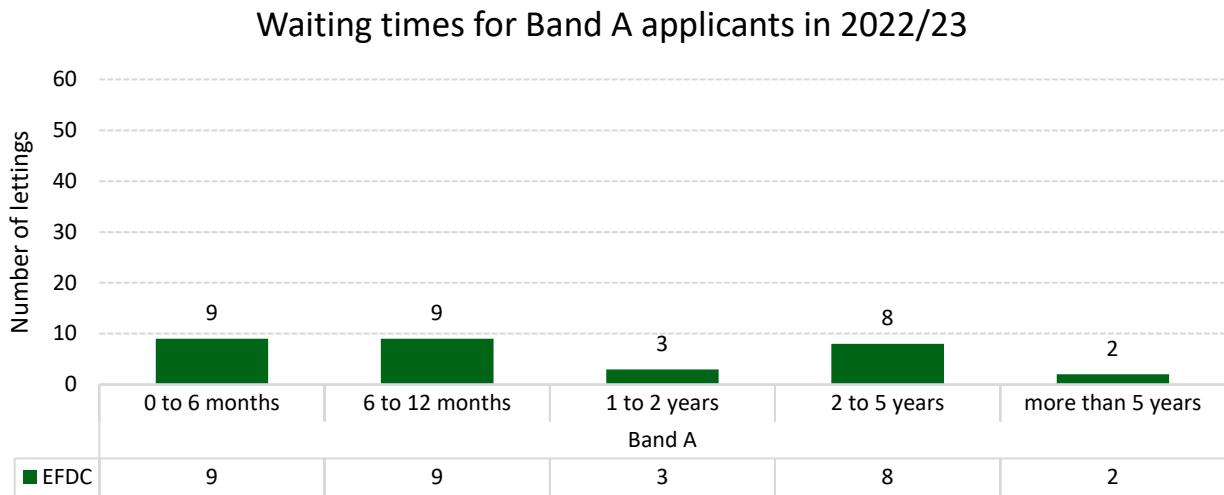


Fig.13

The waiting time for Band A applicants housed in 2022/23 varied between less than six months to more than five years. This is affected by the size and type of property needed and whether they had urgent need to move or were choosing to downsize. As mentioned earlier, this also largely depends on the regularity with which applicants choose to bid.

### Waiting time for Band B applicants housed between 2022-2023

This chart shows the length of time that Band B applicants waited before being housed.

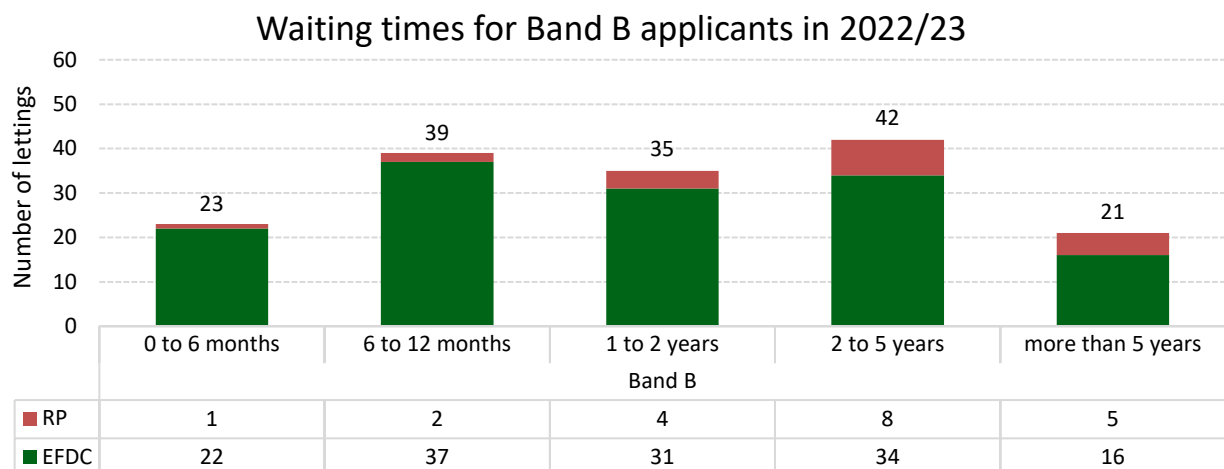


Fig.14

Band B applicants most commonly waited between 2 to 5 years. As with Band A there is a fairly even distribution of applicants who waited anything from less than six months to more than five years. From 26th September 2022 onwards, this band also includes homeless households to whom we have accepted a main housing duty.

### Waiting time for Band C applicants housed between 2022-2023

This chart shows the length of time Band C applicants waited before being housed.

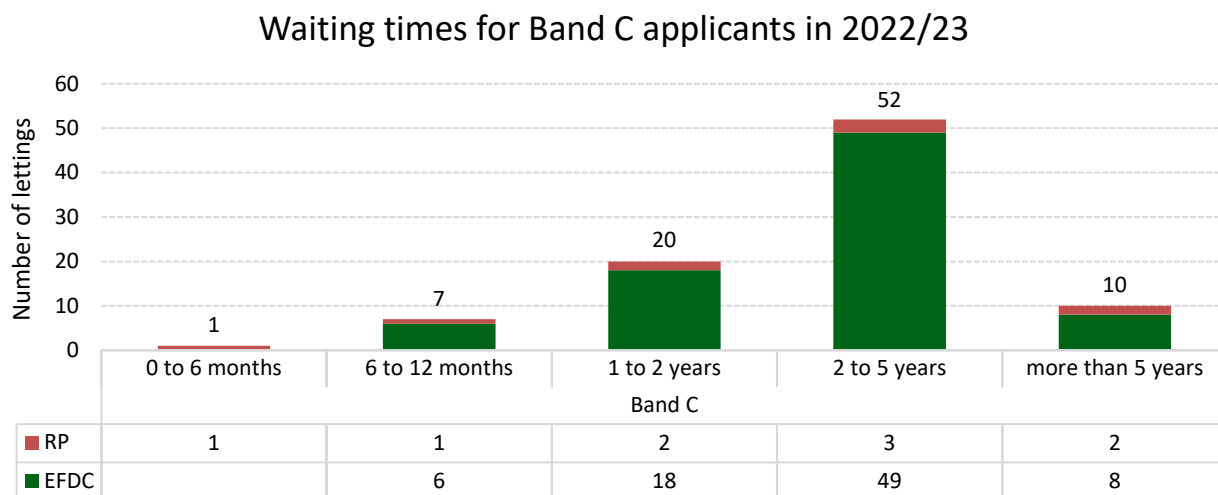


Fig.15

Band C applicants most commonly waited between 2 to 5 years to move. Band C is the lowest priority Band and has the highest number of applicants.

### Waiting time for main homeless duty households (DL) between 2022-2023

The waiting time for main homeless duty households is taken from the date that the Council accepted a main housing duty towards that household, regardless of when a household approached the Council for assistance or the date they may have been placed in temporary accommodation.

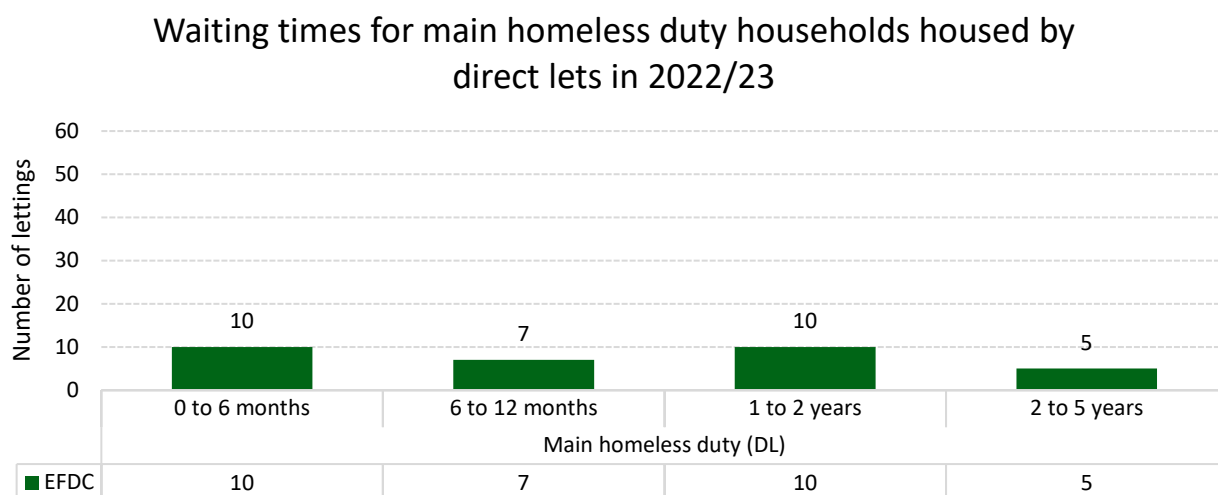


Fig.16

This chart only relates to direct lets between 1st April 2022 and 26th September 2022, after which accepted homeless applicants were able to bid in Band B instead of receiving direct offers. Most homeless households waited between 6 months and 2 years for their final offer of suitable settled accommodation, depending on the size and type of property they needed.

## Waiting time for supplementary waiting list applicants housed between 2022-2023

This chart shows the length of time applicants on the supplementary waiting list waited before being housed.

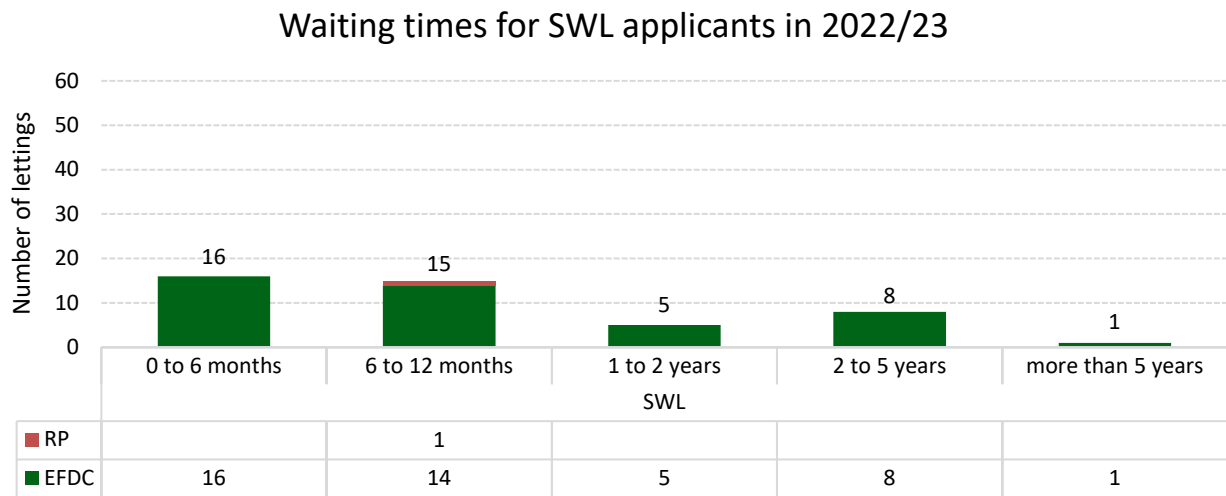


Fig.17

Applicants for sheltered housing on the SWL most commonly waited 0 to 12 months to receive an offer. The relatively short waiting time was due to the low demand for sheltered housing from other applicants who qualified to join the housing register. Applicants requiring sheltered accommodation on our main housing waiting list will always be prioritised over applicants on the Supplementary Waiting List.



# THE HOUSING REGISTER

## Applicants on the housing register between 2018/19 and 2022/23

This table is the number of applicants on the housing register at 31 March every year from 2019 to 2023. It does not include the supplementary waiting list for sheltered housing as those applicants fall outside of the qualifying criteria for the housing register.

Year	Total Active Applicants
<b>31 March 2023</b>	<b>1,276</b>
31 March 2022	1,308
31 March 2021	1,355
31 March 2020	1,291
31 March 2019	1,494

Fig.18

The reduction in the waiting list from 2022 to 2023 can be attributed to management of the waiting list, as well as the implementation of the new Housing Allocations Scheme in September 2022. The new Scheme saw accepted homeless households being allowed onto the register in Band B, but it also saw the removal of other categories such as Band B 'flat to house', meaning that the number of applicants overall has slightly reduced.

## Applicants waiting to move by Band and bed size

This chart shows the number of applicants waiting to move on 31 March 2023 by priority Band and bed size.

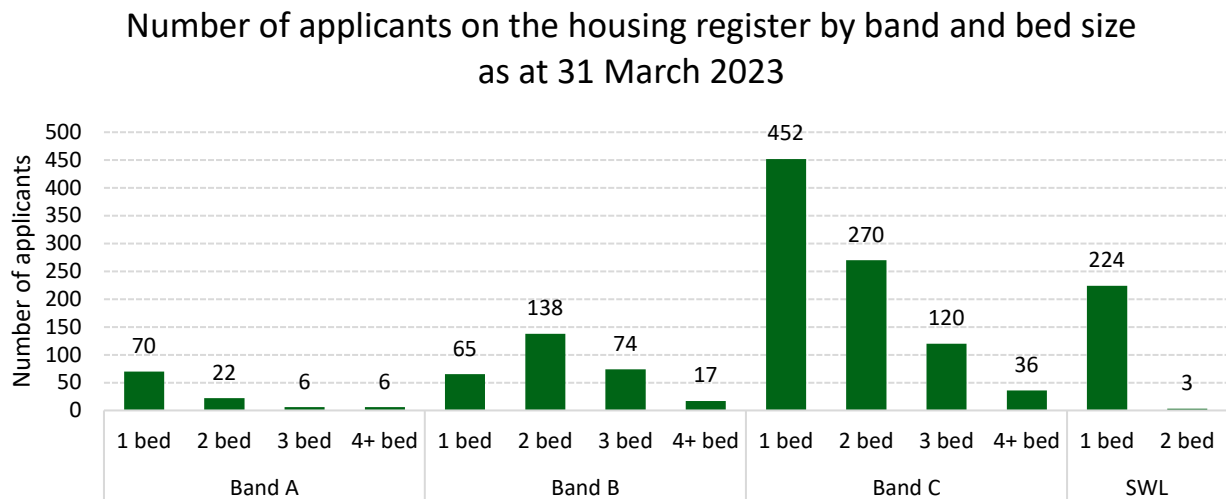


Fig. 19

There were 104 applicants in Band A, 294 applicants in Band B and 878 applicants in Band C. An additional 227 applicants were on the supplementary waiting list (SWL). Band C has the largest number of applicants by far, the majority of which are younger people living at home with their family and wanting to move to their first property, or families who require a property with 1 bedroom larger than their current accommodation.

In common with previous years, the demand from Band A and Band C applicants was mainly for 1 bed properties. The demand from Band B applicants was mainly for 2-bed family sized accommodation.

## Members of the Armed Forces waiting to move

Members of the Armed Forces and former members of the Armed Forces, or their bereaved partners are given specific consideration and priority is awarded based on their circumstances in relation to their service.

This chart shows the number of members of the armed forces or their bereaved partners that were housed between 2022-23 and on the housing register on 31 March 2023.

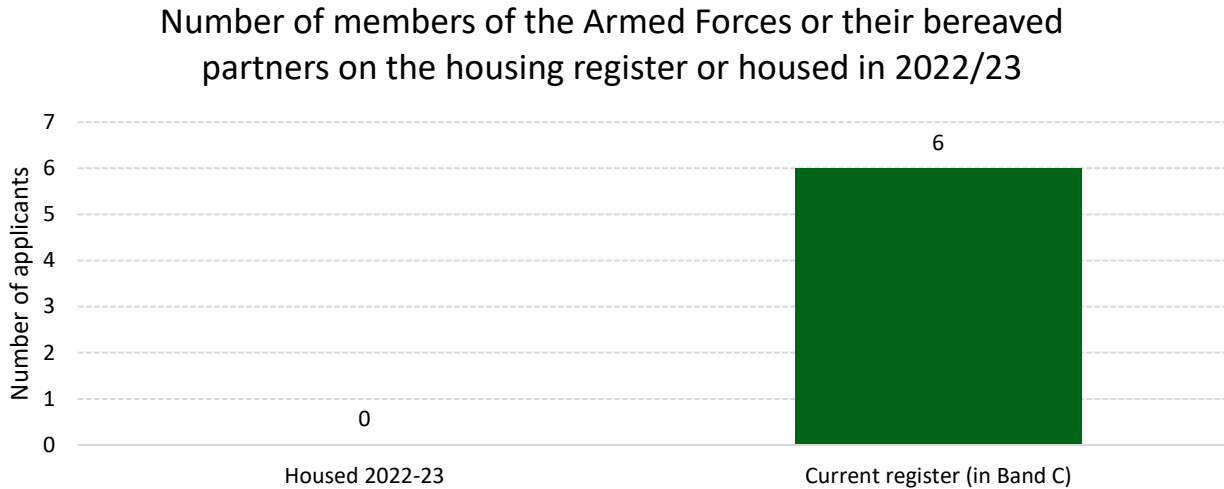


Fig.20

A total of six applicants were in Band C on the housing register on 31 March 2023. No lettings were made to these applicants in this category during 2022-2023, mainly due to the applicants not bidding for the properties available. We are satisfied that ex-services personnel are not being disadvantaged in any way by our current lettings system.

## Homeless households waiting to move

The chart below gives a snapshot as at 31 March 2023 of the number of homeless households waiting to move, by the size of property that they required.

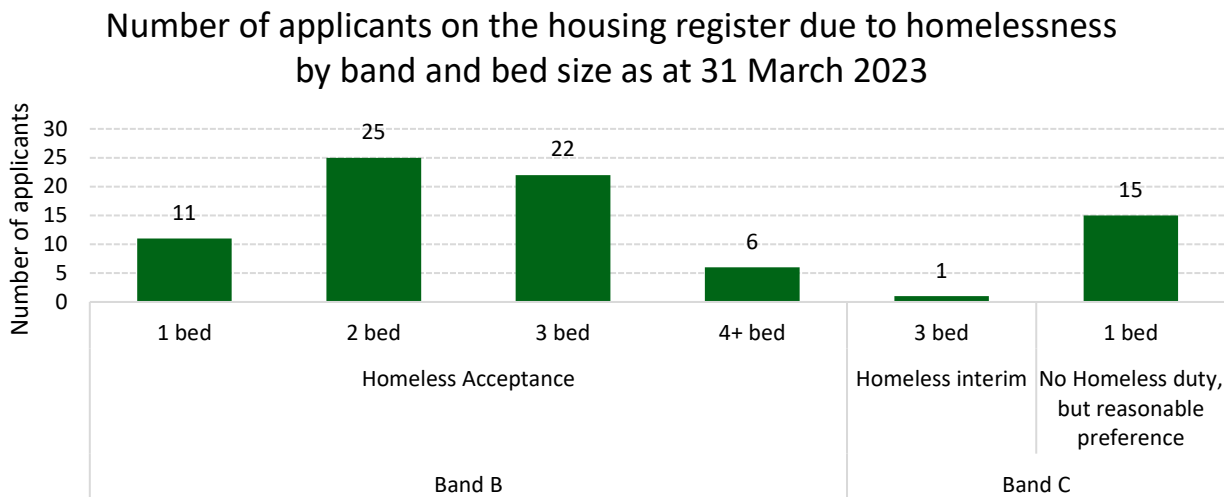


Fig.21

The highest demand has been for 1-bed properties; required for 11 homeless households where we had accepted a main duty and a further 15 households where we did not accept a main duty. This was closely followed by 25 main homeless duty households needing 2-bed family sized homes and 23 households requiring 3-bed homes. Although the demand for 4+bed properties was significantly lower, these larger family sized homes are in shortest supply, consequently larger households are likely to be waiting for significantly longer.

## OTHER INFORMATION

The following information reflects tenant mobility and lettings outside of the Housing Allocations Scheme including mutual exchanges, management transfers and Right to Buy sales.

### Number of mutual exchanges by year between 2018/19 and 2022/23

This table shows the number of mutual exchanges that took place each year between 2018/19 and 2022/23.

Year	Total	Intra - district	Inter - district
2022/23	57	41	16
2021/22	82	64	18
2020/21	69	59	10
2019/20	74	63	11
2018/19	96	82	14

Fig.22

Of the 57 mutual exchanges that took place between 2022-2023 most (41) were between tenants who both or all lived in the District.

### Number of management transfers between 2022-2023

This chart shows the number of management transfers that the Council made by bed size between 2022-2023.

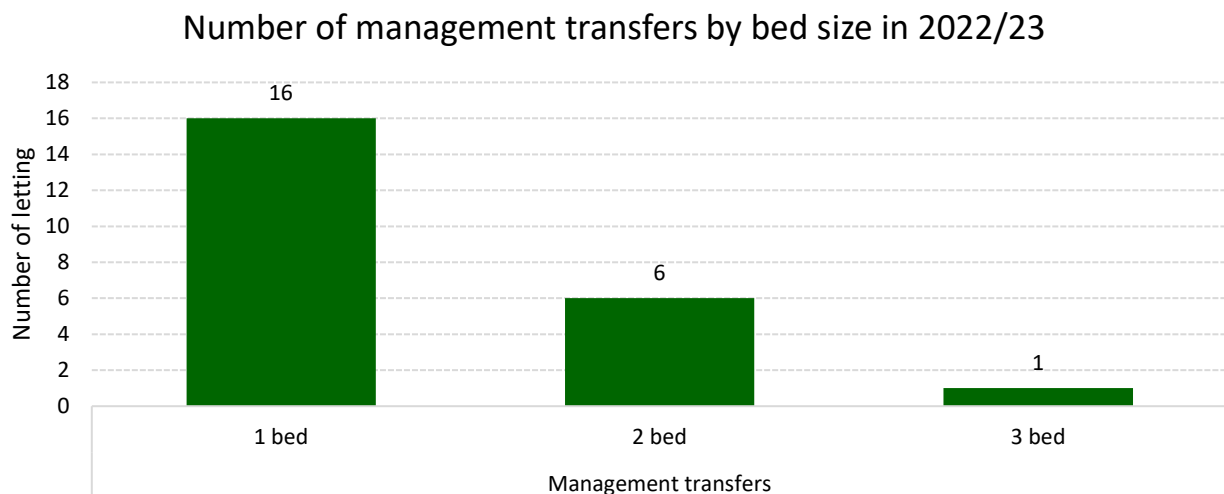


Fig.23

There were 23 management transfers between 2022-2023. The vast majority were into one-bedroom properties (16).

The following chart shows the percentage of management transfers by age-group of the lead tenant that were arranged in 2022-23.

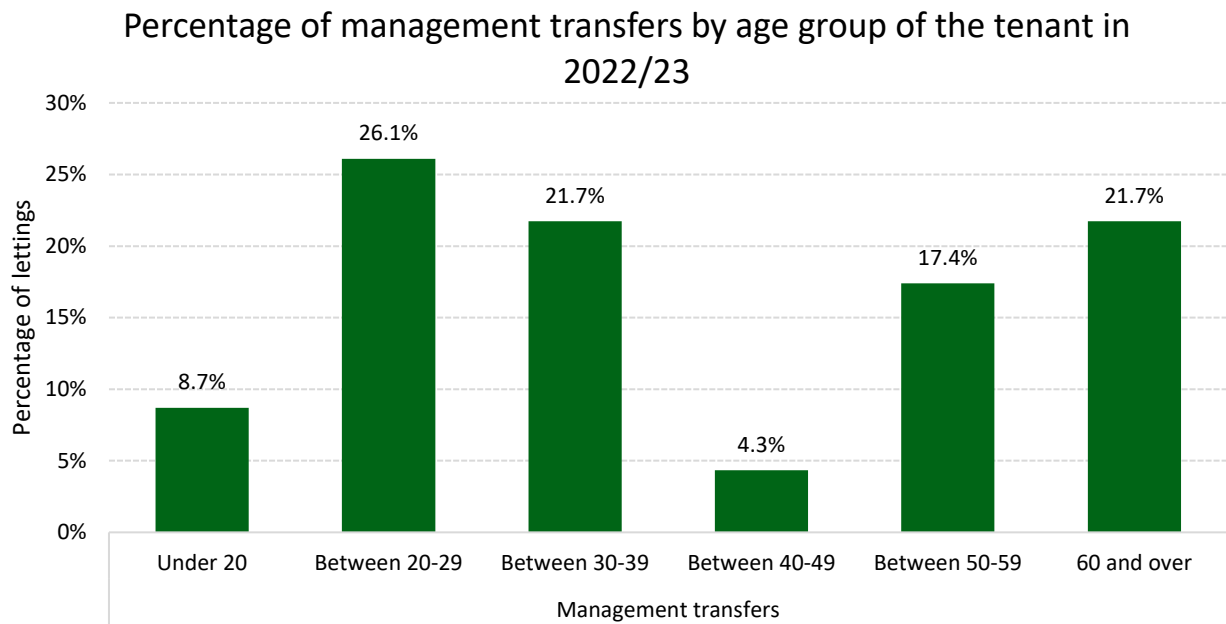


Fig.24

Most households who moved via management transfer had a lead tenant between 20-29 years old (26.1%). Closely followed by those aged between 30-39 years old and 60 and over (both 21.7%).

### Management transfers required by bed size

The chart below shows the number of management transfer households waiting to move as at 31 March 2023. Typically, management transfers are to properties with the same number of bedrooms as the tenant’s existing property.

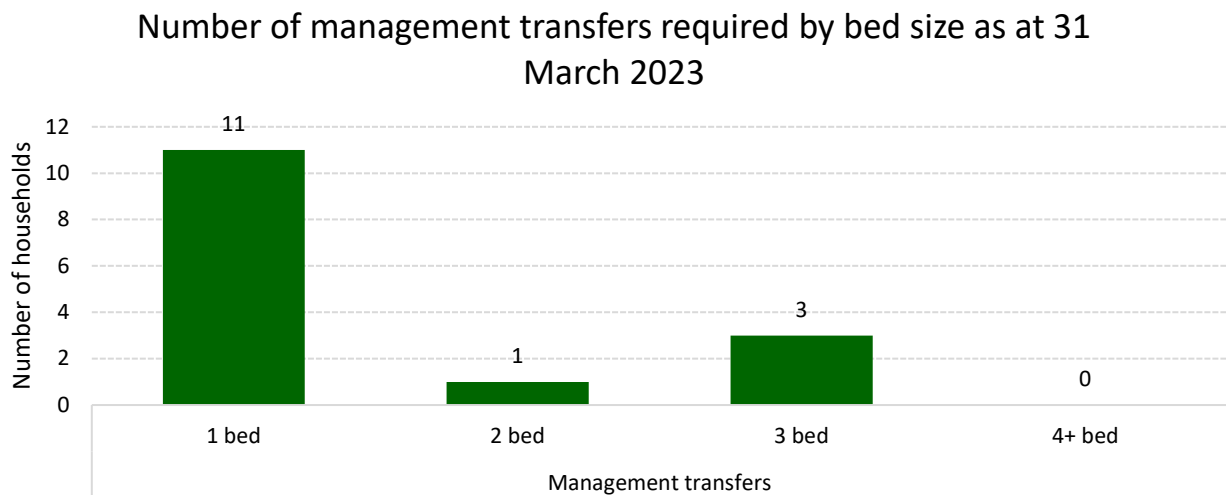


Fig.25

Of the 15 households that the Council had identified as needing a management transfer on 31 March 2023, ten households required a 1-bedroom property, and one household required a 2-bed property. Although only three 3-bed were required, these are in the shortest supply.

## Number of Right to Buy sales by year between 2018/19 and 2022/23

This chart shows the number of Right to Buy sales that have taken place over the last 5 years.

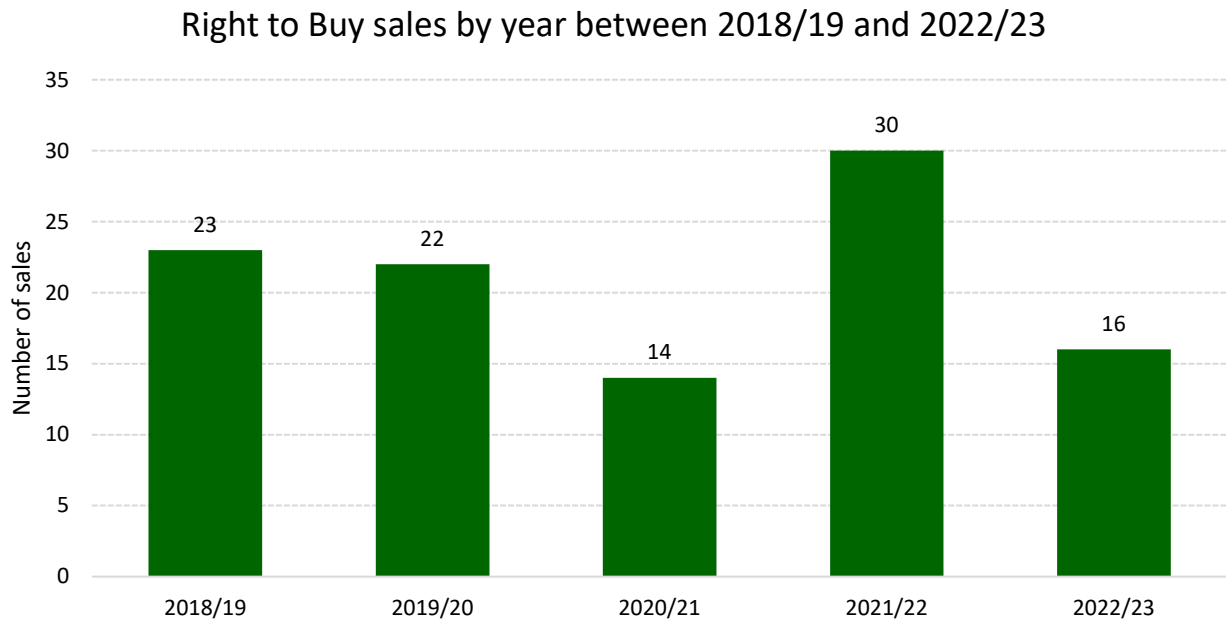


Fig. 26

The number of sales and applications fluctuate each year and often depend on the financial climate and the maximum level of discount allowed. In April 2012, the Government increased the maximum RTB discount threshold from £34,000 to £75,000. This increase in discount saw applications significantly increase.

Since then, the maximum discount has been increased each year in line with inflation and the current maximum discount for the district, as of April 2023, is £96,000. The housing market, the cost of living and particularly the impact on the availability of mortgages led to applications levelling off. EFDC district is a high value area for properties and changes in the housing market impact on the level of RTB applications being received and completing.

Further details on the [allocation of social housing](https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk) in the District can be found on the Councils website [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

If you have any questions or require this information in a more accessible format, please contact:

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