



# Social Housing Annual Lettings Report 2023/24



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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 2023 to 31 March 2024 and the demand for social housing at 31 March 2024.

The Housing Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 can be found [on our policy page](#) under the ‘Housing’ heading.

### **Social housing lettings: April 2023 to March 2024**

Information is provided on the number, size and type of social rented properties that were let to qualifying households between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. 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 2024**

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. A snapshot is also taken of the supplementary waiting list.

### **Other information**

Details are also provided on the number of mutual exchanges and management transfers that took place outside of the Allocations Scheme between 2023-2024, 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 homelessness</li> </ul>

	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 80 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 2022. In November 2023 as part of the Housing Allocation Scheme 1 year review, the Cabinet agreed an end date of 25 September 2025 be introduced for applicants with 'legacy' rights to move from a flat to a house under the previous allocations scheme.

### **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>2023/24</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>36</b>
2022/23	358	328	30
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>

<sup>+</sup>Source: Local Authority Housing Statistical Returns (LAHS)

Fig.1

Our total lettings figures for 2023/24 decreased from previous years; this can be attributed, at least in part, to more lettings to homeseeker applicants than transfer applicants within the year. Lets to homeseeker applicants do not return a property to be re-let.

### Properties let by priority need

This chart shows the percentage of properties that were let by priority need between 2023-2024.

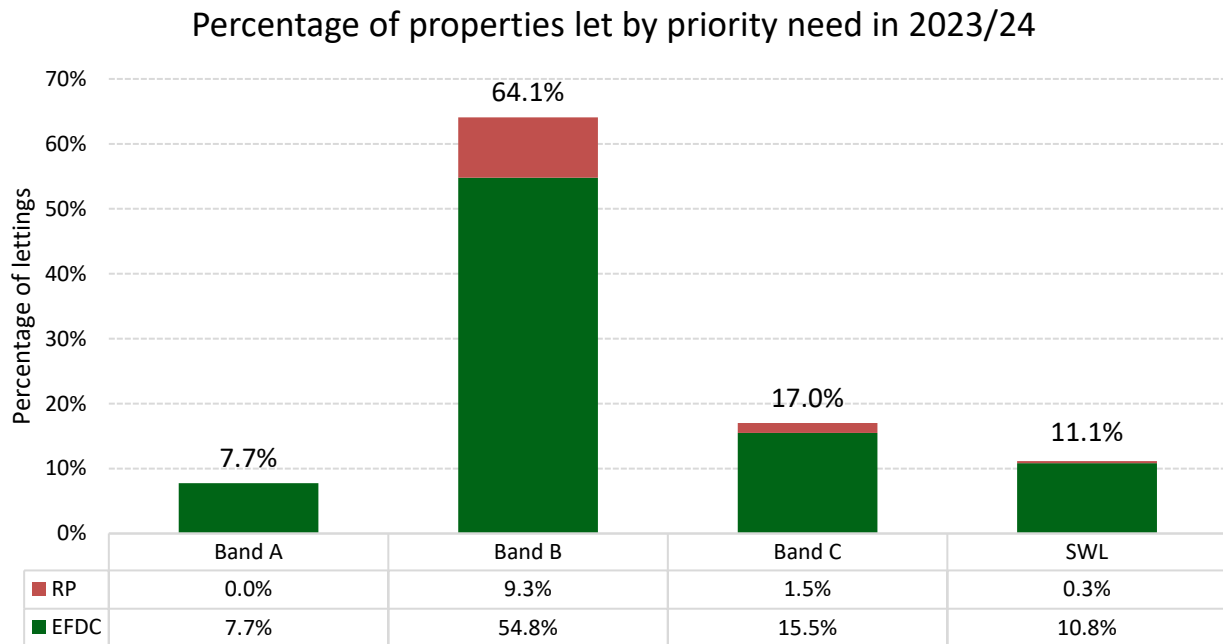


Fig.2

The highest percentage of properties were let to applicants in Band B (64.1%) followed by Band C (17.0%). The fewest number of lettings were made to applicants in Band A (7.7%), this is also the smallest band in terms of numbers of applicants.

Lettings to homeless applicants are reflected in the 'Band B' section of the graph. In the 2022/23 report, homeless lets between 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 were reflected in the 'Band B' section of the graph. Homeless lets made under the old Housing Allocations Scheme between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were direct lets and captured in a separate bar on the graph. This explains why the 'Band B' section on the graph (64.1% of lets) is significantly higher than the previous year's 'Band B' section (44.7% of let).

### 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) by landlord between 2023-2024.

Percentage of properties let via Choice Based Lettings (CBL) in 2023/24

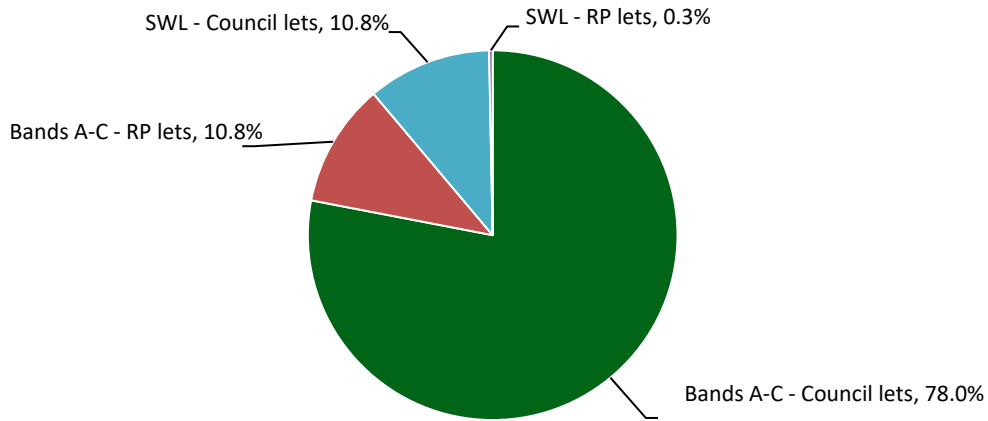


Fig.3

The majority of lettings were Council properties via choice-based lettings Bands A-C (78.0%). 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 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. Homeless applicants in Bands A-C have been separated in the chart as the seven-year residential criteria does not apply to them. In order for them to be eligible for housing assistance under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, they must have a local connection to the district.

Percentage of lettings from in district and out of district applicants in 2023/24

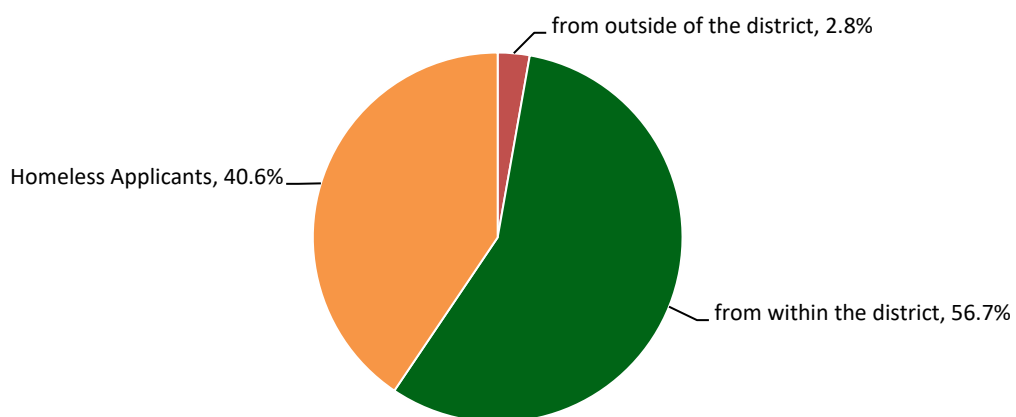


Fig.4

The majority of properties were let to existing residents of the District (56.7%).



## 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 2023-2024.

Percentage of lettings by stock type and landlord in 2023/24

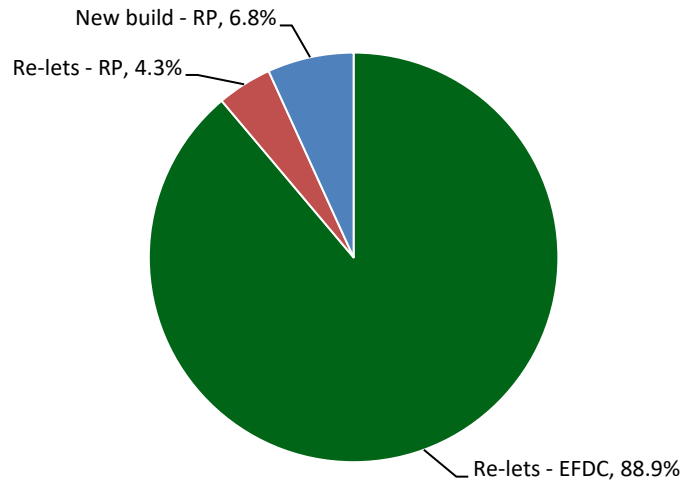


Fig.5

The majority of lettings between 2023-2024 were to existing Council properties that had become vacant (88.9%). The remaining lets were to RP stock, 6.8% being new build stock and 4.3% existing stock. We did not acquire any properties through the open market during this period or let any of the Council's new build properties.

## Properties let by rent type

This chart shows the percentage of properties that were let at social rent levels compared to affordable rent between 2023-2024.

Percentage of lettings at social rent and affordable rent in 2023/24

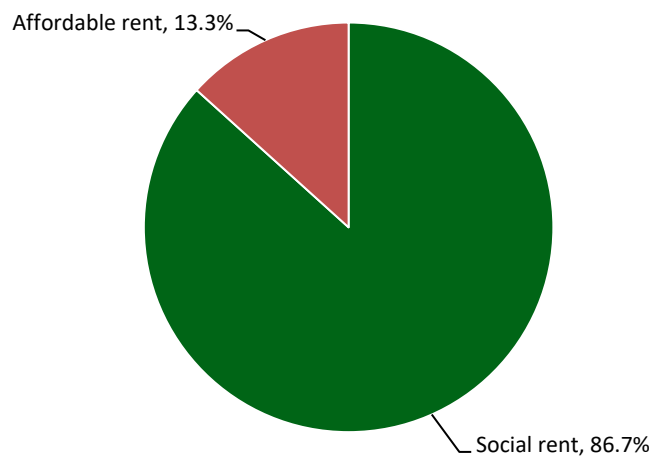


Fig.6

The majority of properties were let at social rent (86.7%) and just over 13% were let at affordable rent between 2023-2024.

The following chart provides a further breakdown of lettings for affordable rent and social rent by landlord and applicant need between 2023-2024.

### Percentage of lettings by landlord, need and rent type in 2023/24

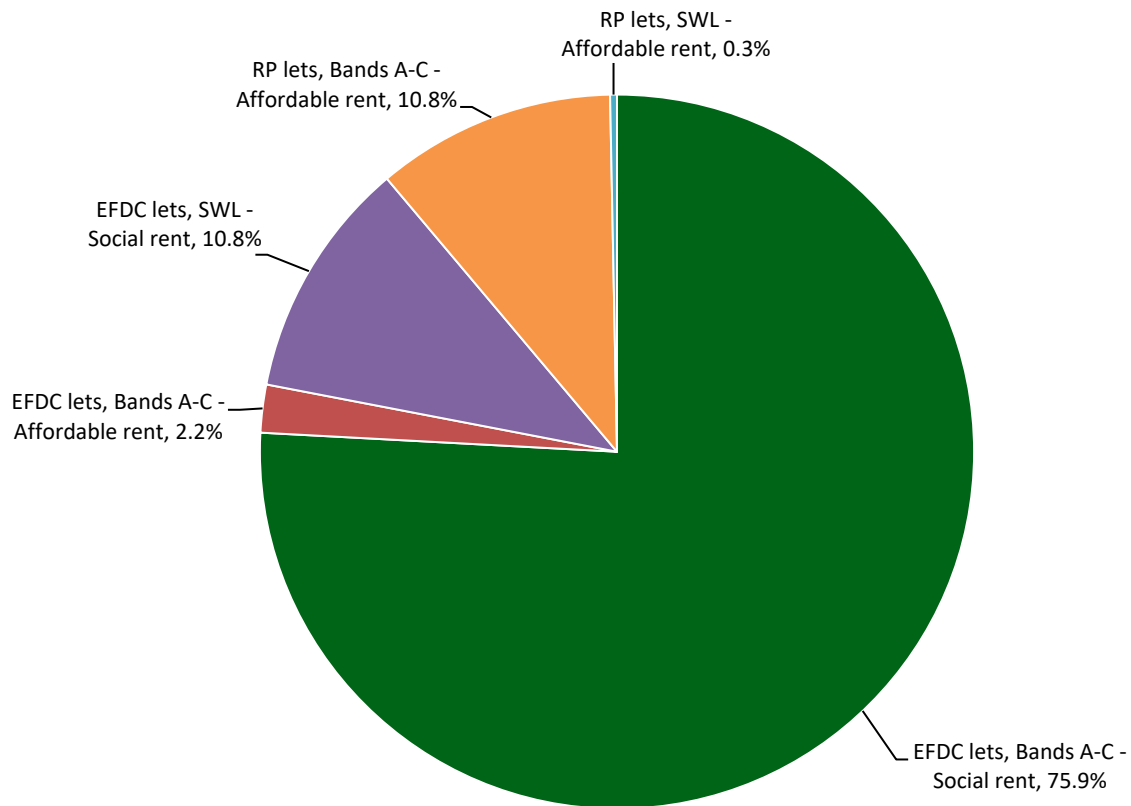


Fig.7

Just over three quarters of all lets (75.9%) were of Council properties made to applicants in Band A-C at social rent, with only 2.2% of Council properties let to Band A-C applicants at affordable rent.

Only 10.8% of properties let were RP properties let to Band A-C applicants, all of which were at affordable rent.

## Properties let by dwelling type

This chart shows the number of lettings by property type i.e., flat, house, maisonette, bungalow and independent living accommodation to Band A-C applicants and SWL applicants between 2023-2024.

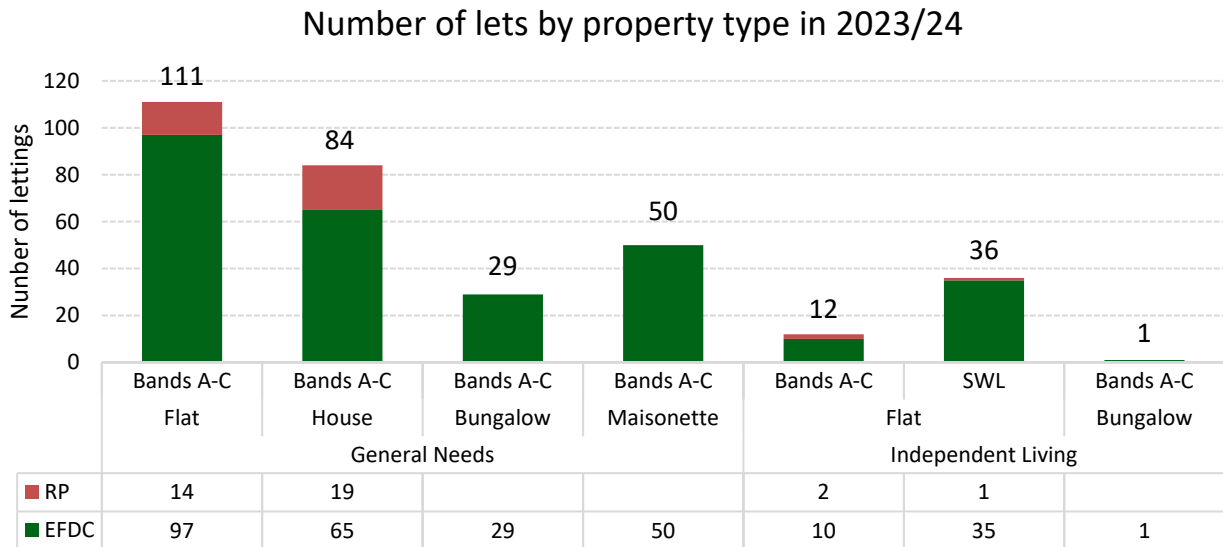


Fig.8

The majority of properties we let during this period were flats (111).

All independent living lettings to the supplementary waiting list applicants (36) were to flats. Whilst 13 independent living properties (12 flats and 1 bungalow) were let to Band A-C applicants.

## Properties let by bed size

This chart shows the number of properties that were let by bed size to Band A-C applicants and SWL applicants between 2023-2024.

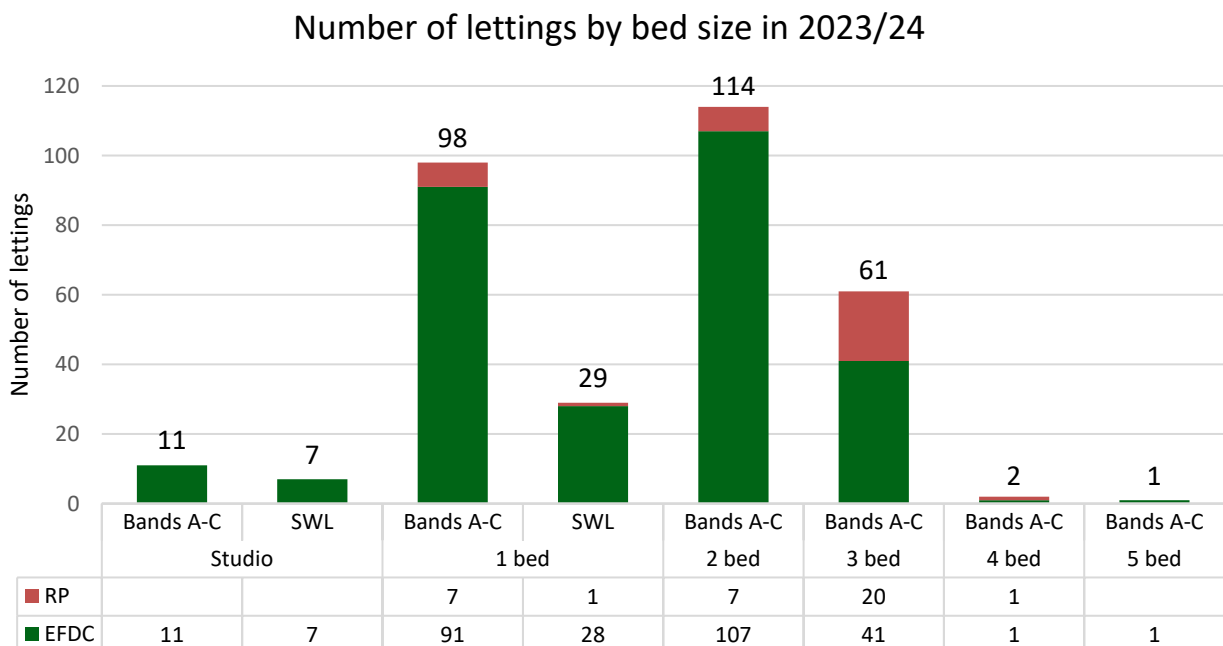


Fig.9

The majority of lettings in 2023/24 were for 1 bed properties (127), closely followed by 2 bed properties (114).

## 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 and SWL applicants between 2023-2024.

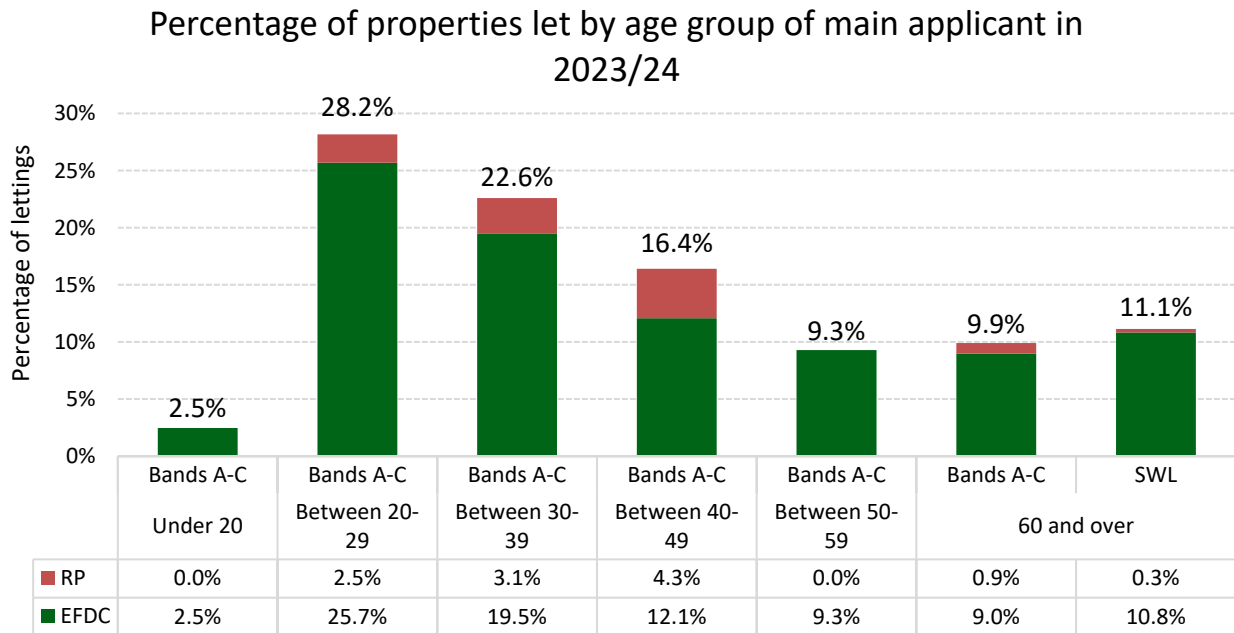


Fig.10

The majority of lettings were made to main applicants in Bands A-C between the ages of 20-29 (28.2%), followed by Band A-C with main applicants aged between 30-39 (22.6%).

## Applicants with medical or welfare needs

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

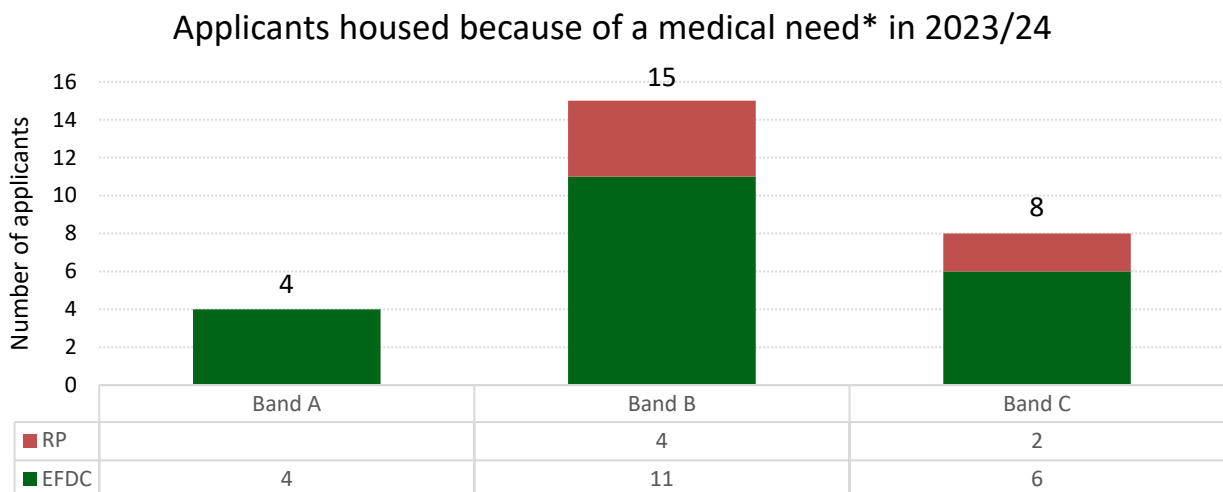


Fig. 11

\*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.

The introduction of a medical need category in Band B as part of the new Allocations Scheme in September 2022, has allowed for more lets to Band B for medical needs than Bands A and C compared to the previous year. There are a number of reasons why applicants with a medical need in Band B may be more successful in bidding over Band A. 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 need\* as at 31 March 2024

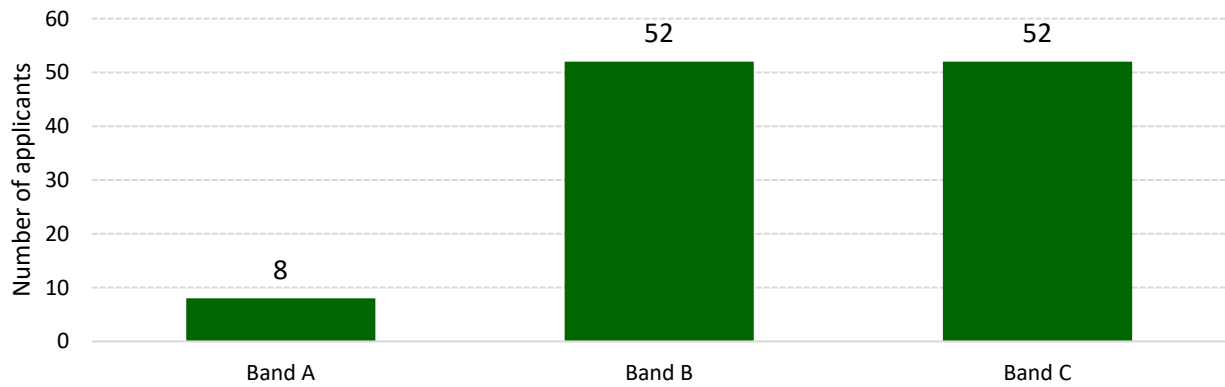


Fig. 12

\*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 2023-2024. 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 2023-2024

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

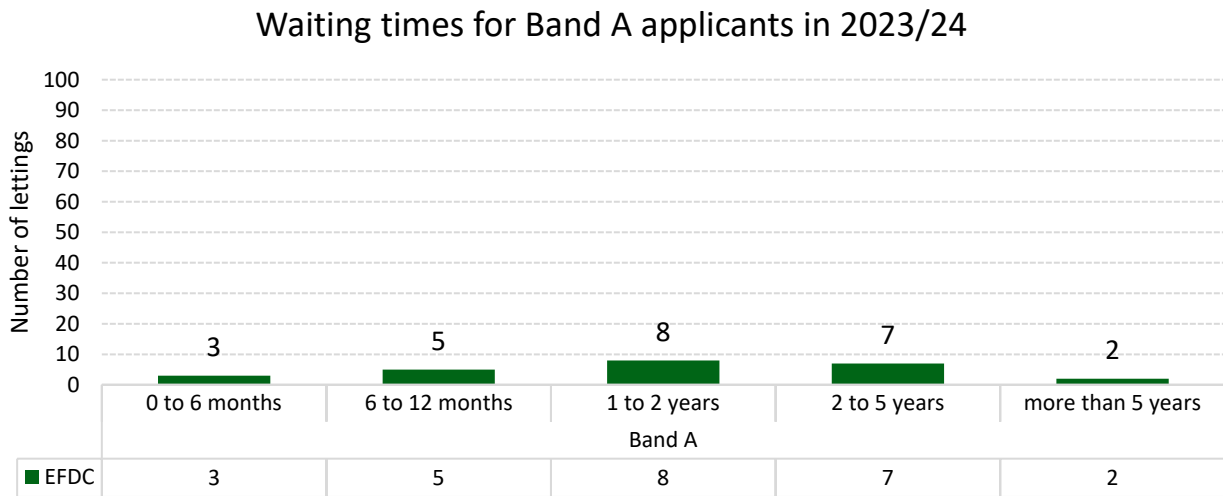


Fig.13

In line with previous years, the waiting time for Band A applicants housed in 2023/24 varied between less than six months to more than five years. This is affected by the size and type of home needed and whether they had urgent need to move or were choosing to downsize. Waiting times also largely depends on the regularity with which applicants choose to bid, which may be affected by the property configuration and location they need.

### Waiting time for Band B applicants housed between 2023-2024

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

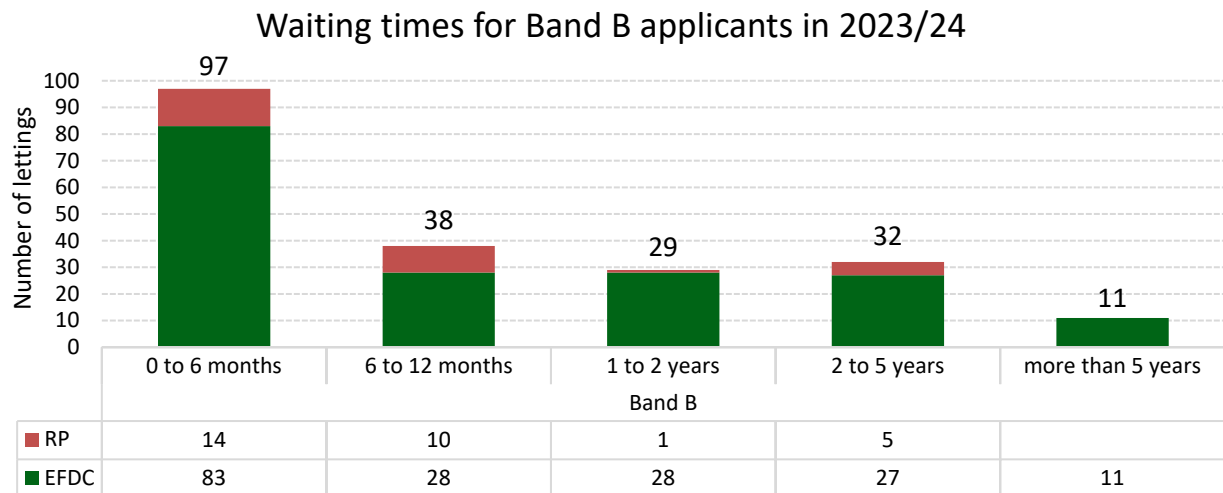


Fig.14

Band B homeless applicants typically waited between 0-6 months to be housed. Under the current allocations scheme, all accepted homelessness applicants are placed on Band B; these applicants tend to have fewer requirements and only receive one offer of a property (otherwise we will discharge our duty to them). Therefore, they tend to be housed more quickly than other applicants.

### Waiting time for Band C applicants housed between 2023-2024

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

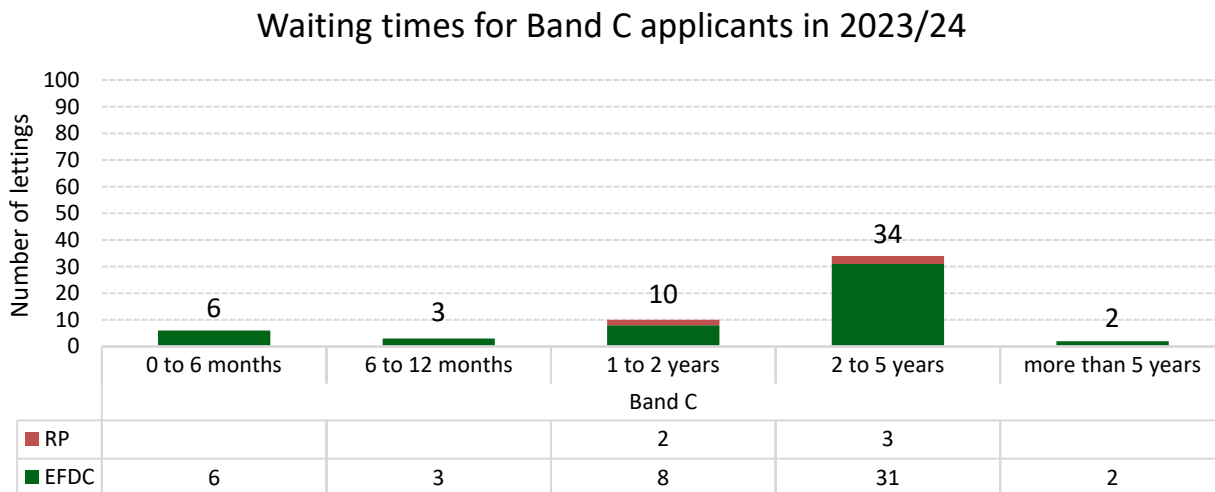


Fig.15

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 supplementary waiting list applicants housed between 2023-2024

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

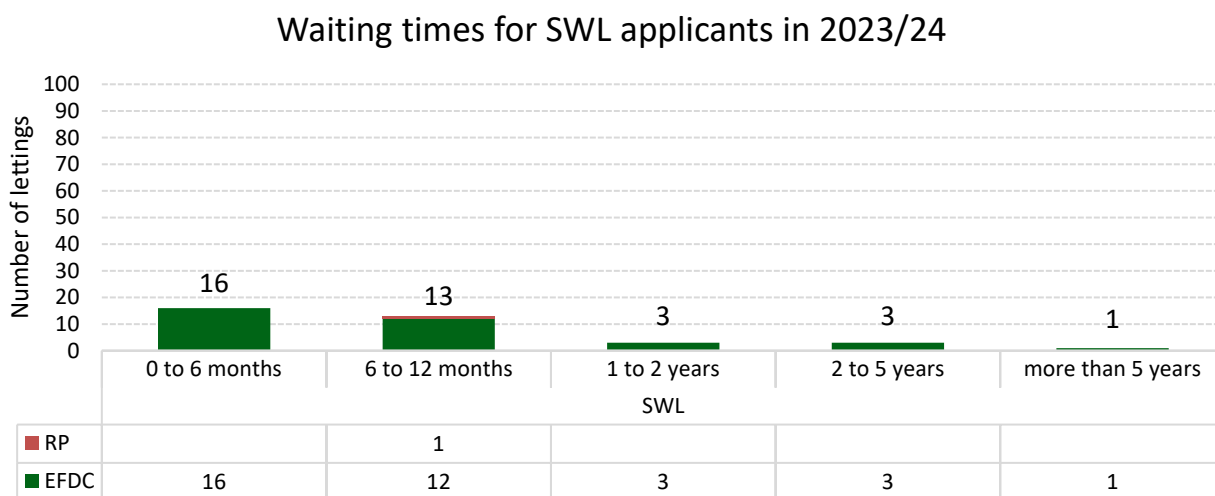


Fig.17

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. This has not changed since last year.

# THE HOUSING REGISTER

## Applicants on the housing register between 2020 and 2024

This table is the number of applicants on the housing register at 31 March every year from 2020 to 2024. 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	Total SWL Applicants
<b>31 March 2024</b>	<b>1,383</b>	<b>292</b>
31 March 2023	1,276	
31 March 2022	1,308	
31 March 2021	1,355	
31 March 2020	1,291	

Fig.18

The waiting list has increased since last year, mainly due to an increase in homelessness applications. This will include those who can no longer access private sector lettings, because of currently dwindling supply.

## Applicants waiting to move by Band and bed size

This chart shows the number of applicants waiting to move on 31 March 2024 by priority Band and bed size.

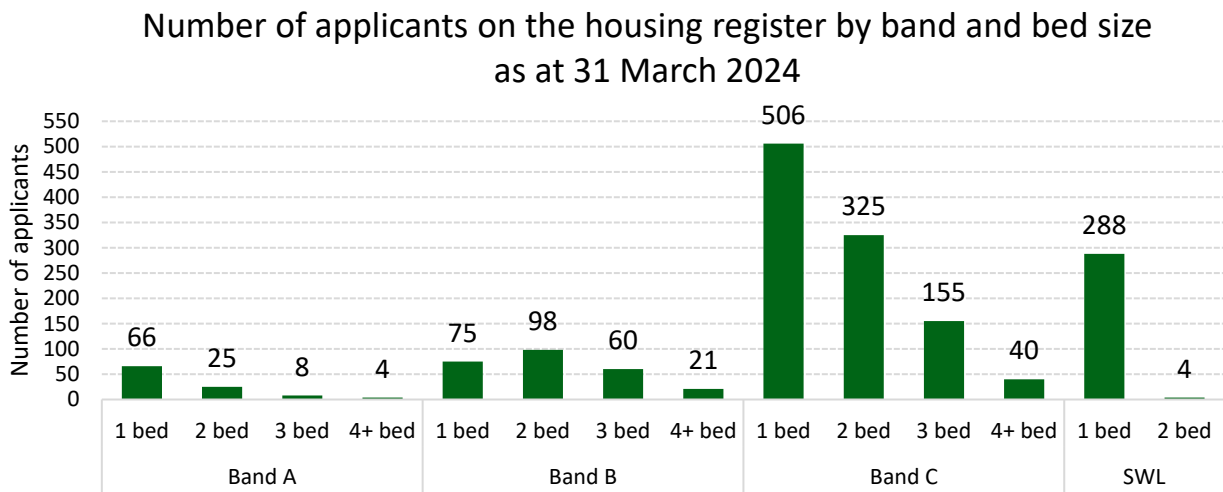


Fig. 19

There were 103 applicants in Band A, 254 applicants in Band B and 1026 applicants in Band C. An additional 292 applicants were on the supplementary waiting list (SWL). Band C has the largest number of applicants by far, the majority of which are sharing facilities and require their own 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 is mainly for 1 bed properties. The demand from Band B applicants is 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 2023-24 and on the housing register on 31 March 2024.

Number of members of the Armed Forces or their bereaved partners on the housing register or housed in 2023/24

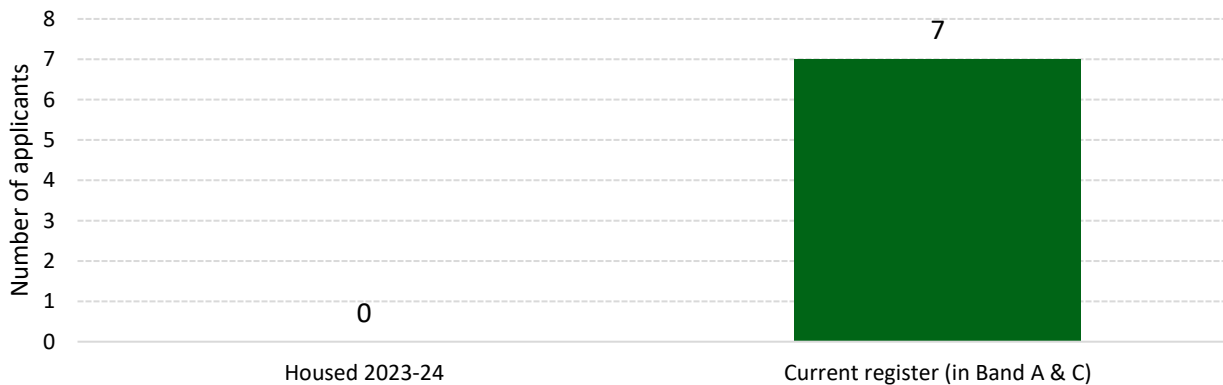


Fig.20

A total of six applicants were in Band C and one applicant in Band A on the housing register on 31 March 2024. No lettings were made to these applicants in this category during 2023-2024, 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. We are planning an exercise to contact the ex-service personnel on the waiting and determine why they are not bidding and whether they wish to remain on the list.

## Homeless households waiting to move

The chart below gives a snapshot as at 31 March 2024 of the number of homeless households waiting to move, by the size of property that they required.

Number of applicants on the housing register due to homelessness by band and bed size as at 31 March 2024

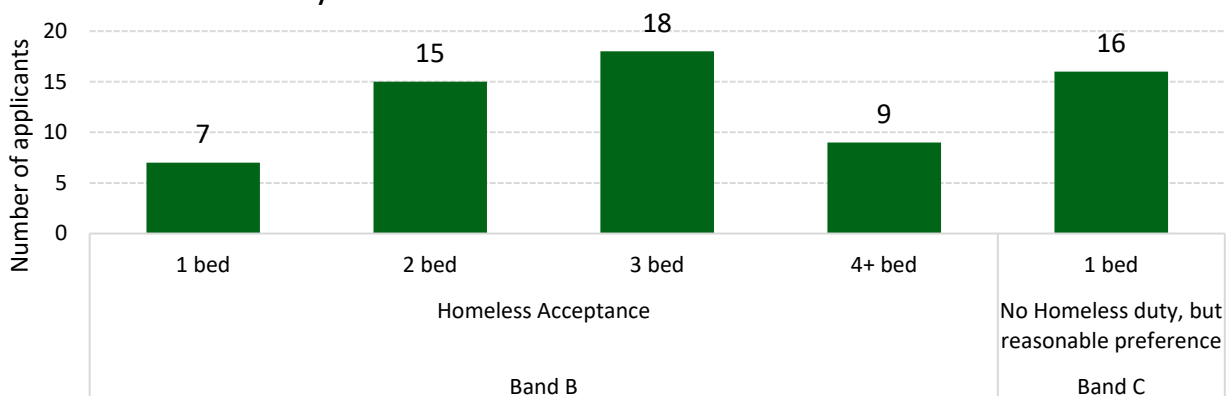


Fig.21

The highest demand has been for 1-bed properties; required for 7 homeless households where we had accepted a main duty and a further 16 households where we did not accept a main duty. This was followed by 18 main homeless duty households needing 3-bed family sized homes and 15 households requiring 2-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 2019/20 and 2023/24

This table shows the number of mutual exchanges that took place each year between 2019/20 and 2023/24.

Year	Total	Intra - district	Inter - district
2023/24	48	26	22
2022/23	57	41	16
2021/22	82	64	18
2020/21	69	59	10
2019/20	74	63	11

Fig.22

Of the 48 mutual exchanges that took place between 2023-2024 most (26) were between tenants who both or all lived in the District.

### Number of management transfers between 2023-2024

This chart shows the number of management transfers that the Council made by bed size between 2023-2024.

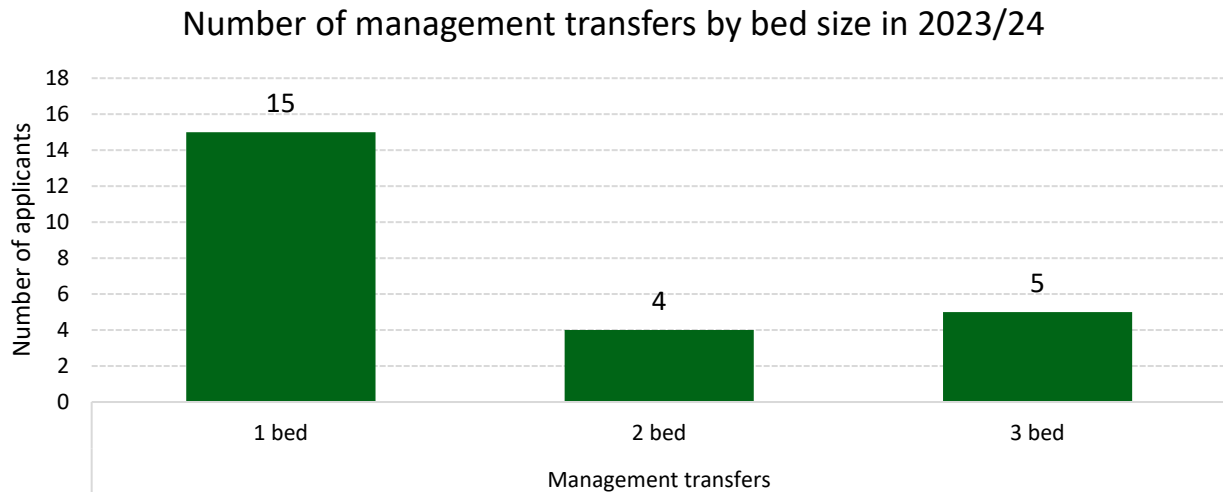


Fig.23

There were 24 management transfers between 2023-2024. The vast majority were into one-bedroom properties (15).

## Percentage of management transfers by age group between 2023-2024

The following chart shows the percentage of management transfers by age-group of the lead tenant that were arranged in 2023-24.

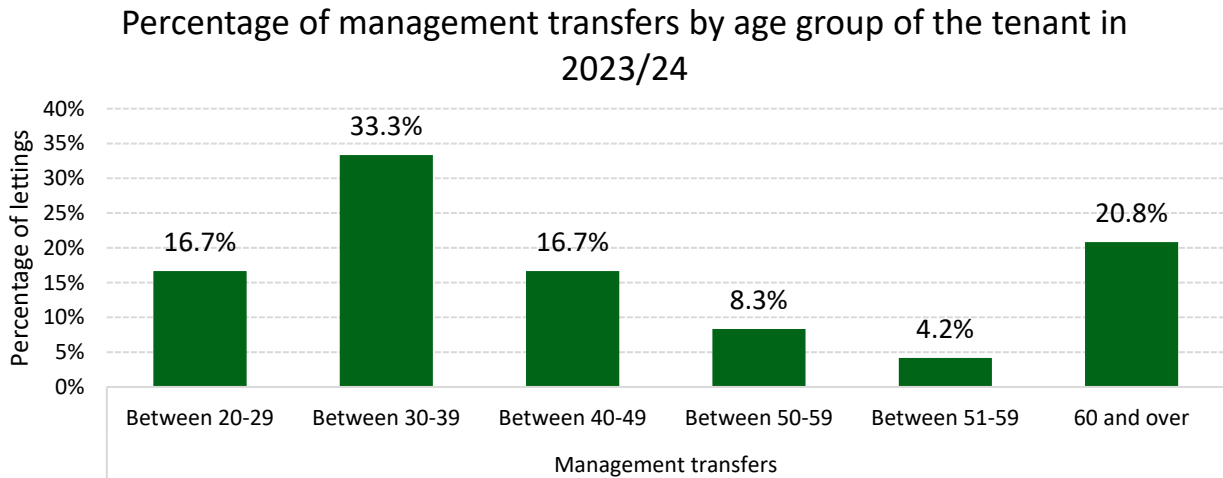


Fig.24

Most households who moved via management transfer had a lead tenant between 30-39 years old (33.3%).

## Management transfers required by bed size

The chart below shows the number of management transfer households waiting to move as at 31 March 2024. Typically, management transfers are to properties with the same number of bedrooms as the tenant's existing property.



Fig.25

Of the 16 households that the Council had identified as needing a management transfer on 31 March 2024, twelve 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 2019/20 and 2023/24

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

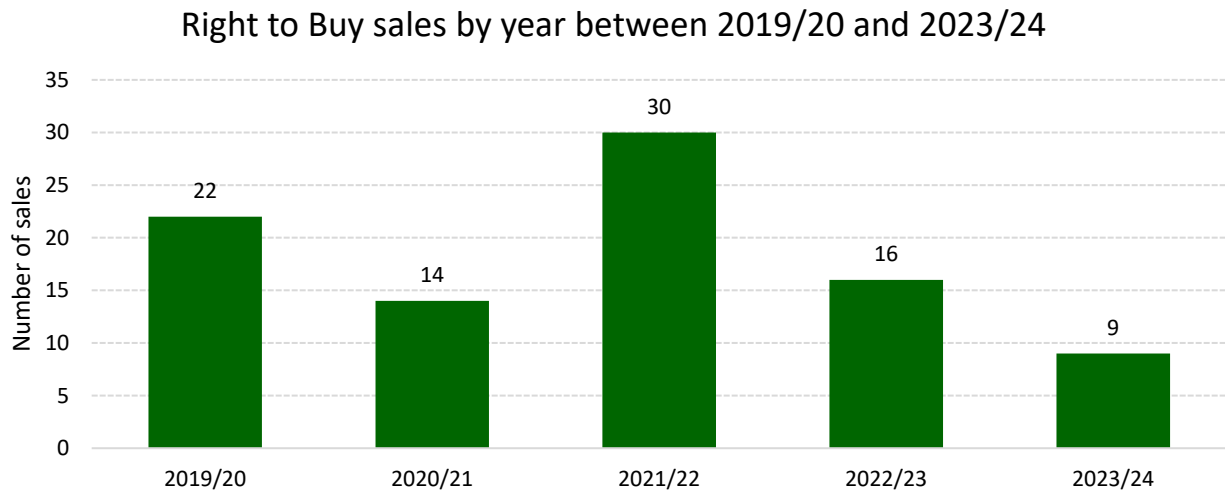


Fig. 26

The number of sales and applications fluctuate each year and often depend on the financial climate and the maximum level of discount allowed.

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 2024, is £102,400. 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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