

Summary of FOI responses to a Housing Committee investigation on social housing allocations

February 2026

Information requested by the Committee

On 29 August 2025, the following Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were sent to the 33 local authorities in London:

Request one – for each of these requests, information was requested for each year from 2016-17 until either 2024-25 or the most recent year available.

1. Please provide the average waiting time (in days) for households on your housing register:
 - a. Overall
 - b. Broken down by required bedroom size (e.g. waiting list time for 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, 3 bedroom, 4+ bedroom properties)
 - c. For households on the waiting list meeting any reasonable preference criteria
 - d. For each individual reasonable preference category (homelessness, owed a duty, occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing, medical or welfare grounds, to avoid hardship).
2. If you apply any additional preference categories, please provide:
 - a. a description of each category
 - b. the number of households in each
 - c. the average waiting time for each category.
3. Please provide the number of applications to join your housing register that were denied per year and as a proportion of applications received
4. Please provide the following figures broken down by ethnicity of lead tenant per year:
 - a. The number of applications to join your housing register that were denied
 - b. The number of households on your register
 - c. The average waiting time for households on your social housing waiting list

Request two -

1. Please provide a copy or statement of your current disqualification or exclusion policy — including any criteria by which an applicant may be excluded from your housing register.
2. Please state any incentives you have for existing tenants who are under-occupying to move to different accommodation
3. If you use mutual exchange, how many how many social renters over the last 5 years have made use of this policy?

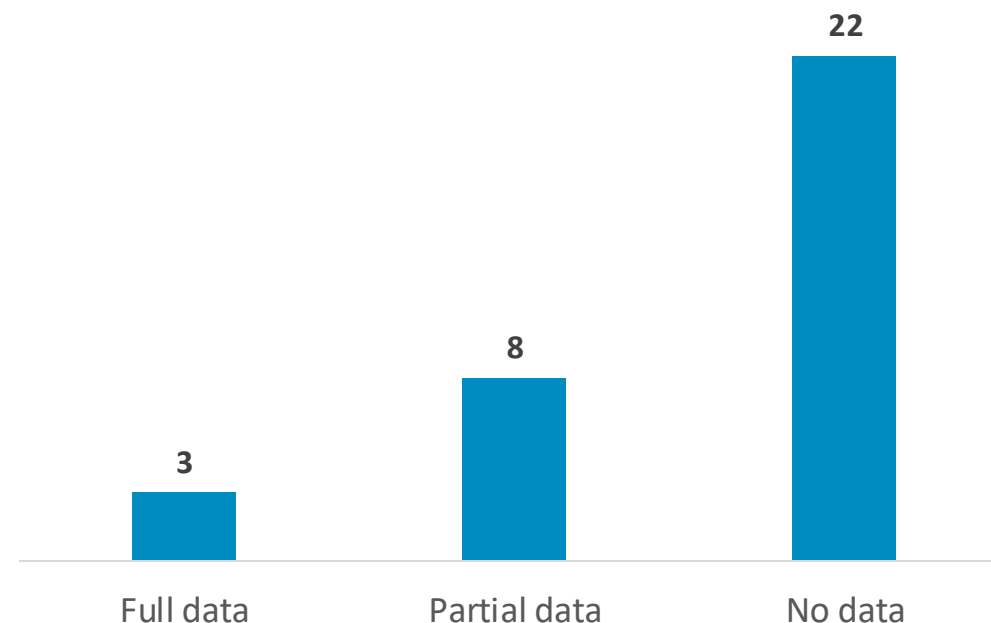
Background and key summary

- On 29 August 2025, FOI requests were sent out via email. Questions were designed by Research Unit staff in consultation with the Housing Committee project team.
- The primary purpose of the FOI requests was to gather data to understand allocation policies across London and their impact on Londoners (for example, with relation to waiting times).
- All 33 London boroughs, including the City of London, were contacted. Response rates differed for each question, as set out on the relevant page. Several boroughs were only able to provide some of the information requested.
- Due to the low response rate for certain requests, it is not possible to draw conclusions based on this data about waiting times across London.
- In some instances, boroughs did not respond to requests for information. Where reasons for not providing information were given, these included: boroughs not collecting or recording such information; changes to systems which meant past information was not accessible; and information being recorded in a way that meant it could only be reported manually, which would be prohibitively time-consuming.

Overall average waiting time by year from 2016-17 to 2024-25

- 11 of 33 boroughs provided a waiting time for at least one year, generally the most recent or current figure (33 per cent).
- Of these, three boroughs provided data for every year of the requested timeframe (9 per cent of all boroughs). Eight boroughs provided partial data.
- 22 boroughs did not provide data on overall waiting time (64 per cent). Of these, one provided data on time taken to receive an offer.*

Data provided by borough to request for overall waiting time by year

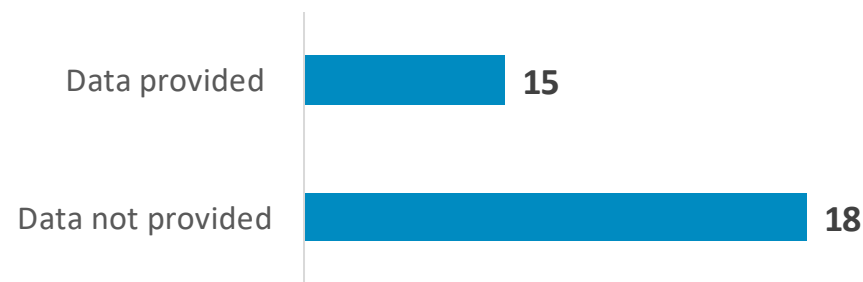


*The London Borough of Redbridge provided data on time taken to receive an offer, as it does not record waiting times. Households may not accept the first offer made to them, for example if they believe offered accommodation does not meet their needs. Data for Redbridge for overall waiting time is recorded here as 'no data'.

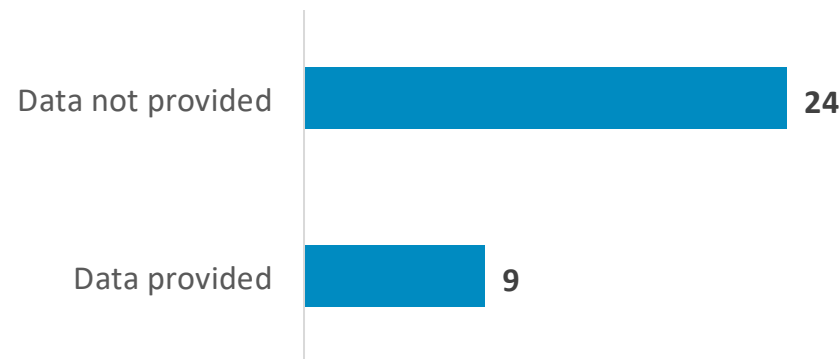
Average waiting time by bedroom size and reasonable preference

- 15 boroughs provided at least the most recent year data on waiting time by bedroom size (45 per cent).
- 18 boroughs did not provide any data on waiting time by bedroom size (52 per cent).
- Nine boroughs provided at least some data on waiting time by reasonable preference category (27 per cent).
- 24 boroughs provided no data on waiting time by reasonable preference (73 per cent).

Data provided by borough to request for waiting time by bedroom size



Data provided by borough to request for waiting time by reasonable preference category



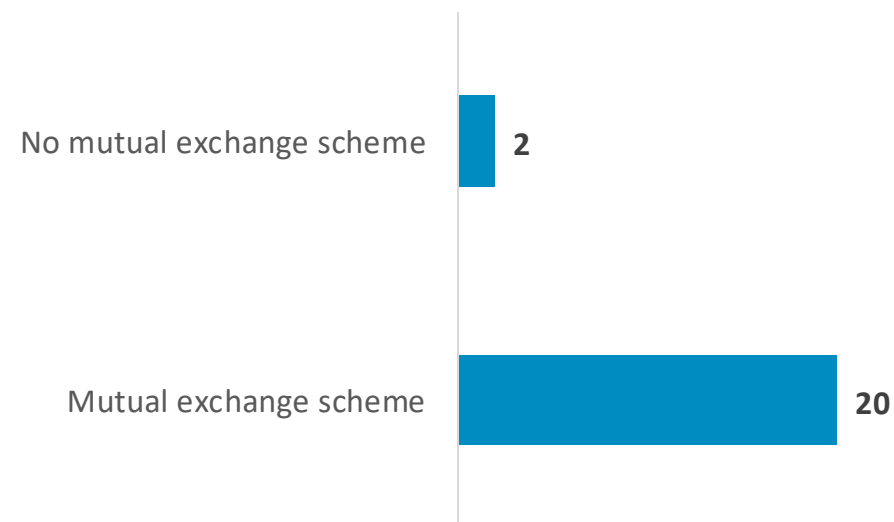
Breakdown by ethnicity

- Data was requested on the demographic breakdown of the lead tenant for: households on the register, denied applications to the register and waiting times for social housing.
- 13 of 33 boroughs (39 per cent) provided data on the ethnicity of the lead tenant for households on their housing registers
- Four of 33 boroughs (12 per cent) provided data on the ethnicity of denied housing register applicants
- Eight of 33 boroughs (24 per cent) provided data on the average social housing waiting times by ethnicity of lead tenant.

Mutual Exchange schemes

- 22 boroughs provided information on their mutual exchange schemes (67 per cent)
- Of those who provided information, all but two had a mutual exchange scheme. Bexley and Hillingdon advised that they did not have a mutual exchange scheme.
- Not all boroughs could provide data on the number of households that had used mutual exchange schemes in the past five years. Due to boroughs reporting data for different timeframes, comparisons on the number of households using the scheme are not comparable across boroughs.

Boroughs with mutual exchange schemes



Incentives for downsizing

- 23 boroughs responded to the request for details of any incentives offered to social housing tenants under-occupying housing (70 per cent).
- Of those 23, all but one indicated that they provided incentives for households that downsized. Bexley reported that it does not provide downsizing incentives.
- The incentives on offer varied by borough but often involved a cash incentive per bedroom given up and/or assistance towards removal costs.

Number of boroughs offering downsizing incentives

