Housing Services

Easy-read version

DRAFT Traveller Pitch Allocation Policy

1. Overview

This policy explains how Lewisham Council allocates pitches at the Pool Court site in Catford to households from a traveller background.

The policy covers:

- Who can apply for a pitch
- How to apply for a pitch
- How applications are assessed
- How decisions are made about pitch allocations
- How pitches are offered

2. Definitions

What is a Gypsy and Traveller?
For this policy, a Gypsy and Traveller is a person from a travelling community, regardless of their race or background, whose traditional way of life involves travelling or living in caravans. This includes people who no longer travel because of age, health needs or education needs. It does not include travelling showpeople or circus people. The terms "traveller" and "from a traveller background/community" are used throughout this policy to refer to people who meet this definition.

Pitch
This is a space on a Gypsy and Traveller site for one household to live on.

Culturally unsuitable accommodation
This is accommodation that does not allow people from a traveller background to maintain their cultural way of life.

For more detailed definitions, please see Section 2 of the main policy.

3. How can you apply to live on a pitch?

If you want to apply to live on a pitch you must be:

- From a traveller background and meet the definition of Gypsy and Traveller above.
- Be at least 16 years old (you can apply from age 16 but you will not be offered a pitch until you are 18)
- Able to live in the UK without any immigration restrictions.

We will look at the size of your household when deciding whether a pitch is suitable for you. You can include people in your application that normally live with you, such as:

- Your husband, wife, civil partner or long-term partner
- Your children
- Someone who needs your care and support
- Someone who provides care and support to you

You might be disqualified from applying to live on a pitch if:

- You do not meet the definition of a Gypsy and Traveller
- You do not have the correct immigration status
- You already have lawful and culturally suitable accommodation
- If you or any member of your household has been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour within the last 2 years and have been given a possession order.

If you owe rent arrears to Lewisham Council or one of our partner landlords, you can apply for a pitch, but you will not be offered a pitch until the arrears have been cleared.

4. How does Lewisham Council decide who gets a pitch?

We will create a Waiting List of people who want to live on a pitch. Everyone on the Waiting List will be placed into a priority band based on their housing need and personal circumstances.

The priority bands help us decide who should be offered a pitch first. People with the highest level of need will be placed in the highest priority band.

More information about the priority bands and the circumstances we take into account can be found in Section 6 of the main policy.

The three priority bands are:

Band 1 – High Priority

You belong to the traveller community and you meet one or more of the below criteria:

- Are homeless and/or living in temporary accommodation that is not culturally suitable
- Have a serious medical condition and/or serious welfare or safety challenges
- Have a strong connection to Lewisham. For example:

    - You have close family in Lewisham
    - You have caring needs in Lewisham
- You are overcrowded on an existing Lewisham Council pitch

Band 2 – Medium Priority

You belong to the traveller community and you meet one or more of the below criteria:

- Are living in safe, but culturally unsuitable housing, which is having a negative impact on you or your family.
- Have a medical need in Lewisham
- Have a connection to Lewisham through school or work

Band 3 – Low Priority

You belong to the traveller community and you meet one or more of the below criteria:

- Are living in housing that is safe and stable, but not culturally suitable for you, and you have no urgent housing needs
- Have no connection to Lewisham

For the first allocations, if two or more households have the same priority, the pitch will go to the household with the strongest family connected to the historic Thurston Road site in Lewisham. In future allocations, if two households have the same priority, the pitch will go to the household that has been on the Waiting List the longest.

5. Assessing your application

There are two stages to assessing your application.

1. Stage 1- We will begin reviewing your application when you give us all the information we need. We will then tell you which Priority Band you are in, and your Priority Date. Your Priority Date is the date we confirm that qualify to join the Waiting List.
    a. If your situation changes, or if you provide new information, this may mean that we have to change your Priority Band or Priority Date.
2. Stage 2- Before you can receive an offer of a pitch, you will need to provide evidence to support your application. You will have to provide all the information we need as soon as possible, usually within 3 working days at offer stage.

The application form will tell you what type of evidence you may need to provide to support your application.

If you do not provide the information and evidence that we ask for this could lead to you not being offered a pitch.

6. What happens if you are offered a pitch

- We will tell you if you have been successful and offer you a pitch.
- You will be invited to visit the pitch. You will have 5 working days to arrange and accept the viewing of the pitch.
- If you do not give us a response within 5 working days, then we will offer a viewing to the next highest priority applicant on the Waiting List.
- After viewing the pitch, you will have 3 working days to accept the offer.
- If you accept the offer, a Lewisham Council officer will arrange a meeting with you and explain your rights and responsibilities under the Pitch Licence Agreement.
- You will then sign a Pitch Licence Agreement before you can move onto the pitch. A Pitch Licence Agreement is a legal document that sets out the rules you must follow when living on a pitch.