

Social Care eligibility thresholds briefing

Background to social care eligibility criteria

In 2003 the Department of Health issued “Fair access to care services – guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care”. This is “section 7 guidance” which means it was issued under section 7 of the Local Government Social Services Act 1970 and places a legal obligation on local authorities to act in accordance with the guidance. In 2010 the guidance was updated and is now called ‘Prioritising need in the context of Putting People First: A whole system approach to eligibility for social care’. The guidance provides local authorities with a framework for identifying people’s social care needs within a banding system, with the intention of providing “fair access” to care. On assessing individuals’ needs, local authorities must identify which of these bands they fall in to. The four bands are:

- Critical
- Substantial
- Moderate
- Low

Although all local authorities must use this banding system, they have discretion to set their threshold individually within these bands, taking account of their resources, local expectations and costs. The result is that one council may choose to set their threshold at “low”, while a neighbouring council might choose to set theirs at “critical” creating the potential for significant variation in the accessibility of care across local authority borders.

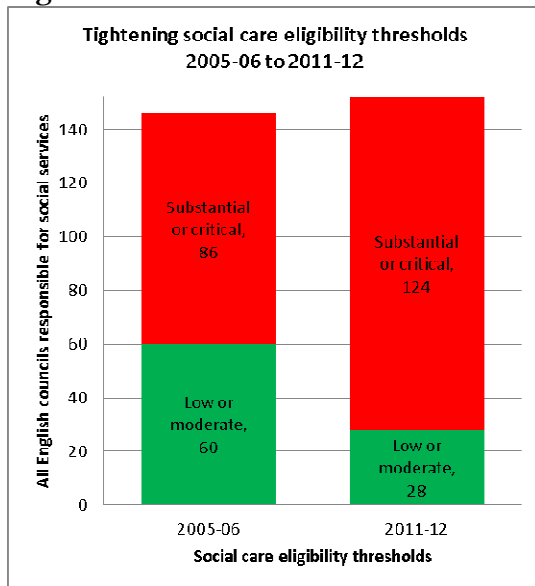
Changes in eligibility thresholds

Since 2003 when the banding system was introduced, eligibility thresholds among local authorities have slowly been creeping up. As a result access to social care is now more restricted now than ever before.

- In 2011-12, only 3 councils provide social care to people falling in to all eligibility criteria bands (low, moderate, substantial, critical).
- 25 provide care to those with moderate needs and above.
- The majority, 119, have a threshold at substantial.
- 5 councils - a higher number of councils than ever before - only provide care for those with critical needs.
- In 2005-06, 40% of councils provided care to those with moderate needs. In 2011-12 this has reduced to 18%.

Figure 1 demonstrates how councils are increasingly shifting their eligibility criteria towards the upper end of the banding system, with 124 councils now restricting care to those with substantial or critical needs, compared to 86 in 2005-06.

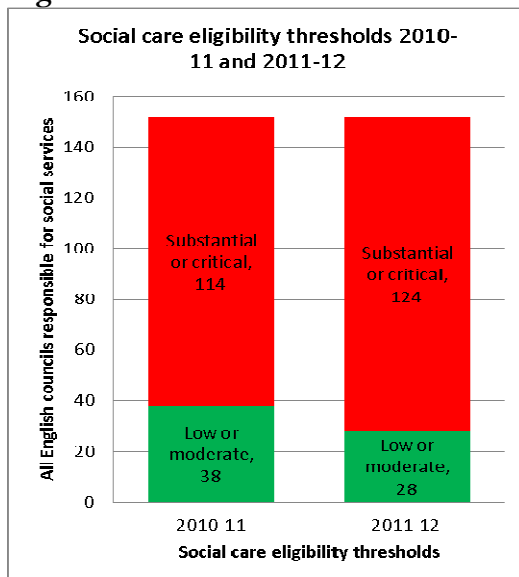
Figure 1



The trend has shown no sign of abating over the last year as local authorities face severe financial constraints due to the poor economic outlook and the cuts to the funding from central government.

Figure 2 demonstrates the tightening in eligibility thresholds that has happened just between 2010-11 and 2011-12.

Figure 2.

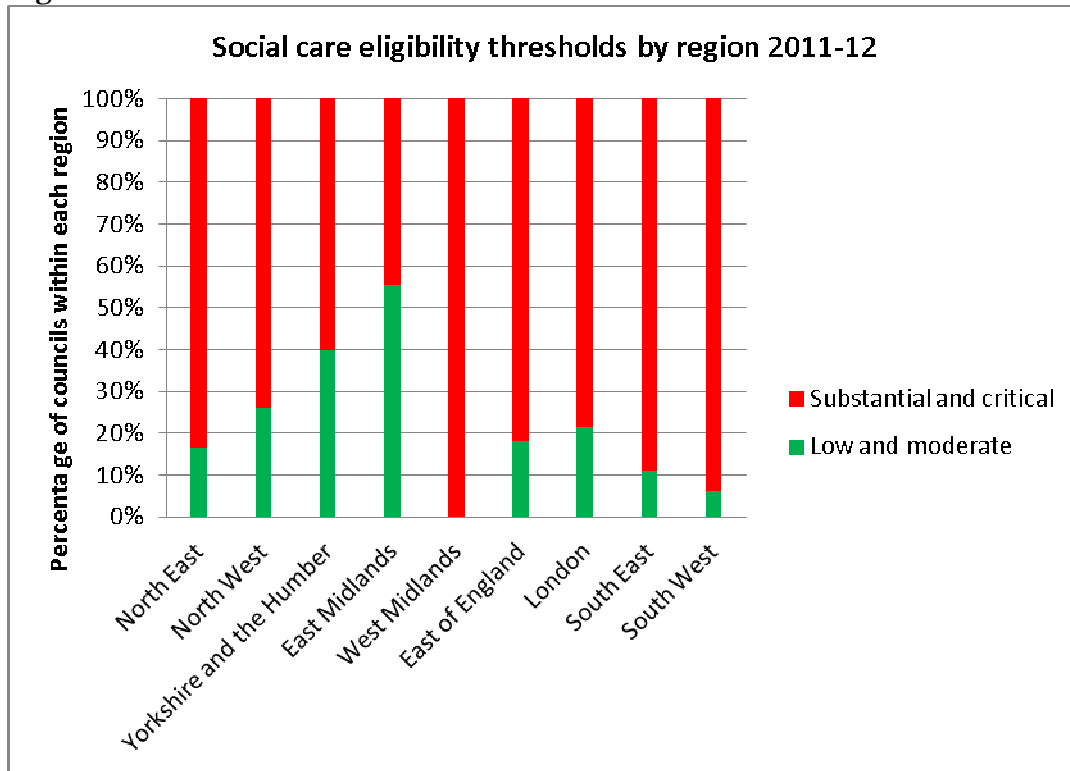


There is regional variation in how the eligibility thresholds are applied. Figure 3 demonstrates the differences among the regions.

- The East Midlands is the most generous region, with over half of its 9 councils providing care for those with moderate needs.

- Neighbouring West Midlands is the least generous region, with all 14 councils restricting care provision to those with substantial needs.
- Only 3 councils still provide care to those with low needs; two of these are in the North East.
- 3 out of the 5 councils that restrict care to those with critical needs are in the South East.

Figure 3



Appendix: Social Care eligibility thresholds by year and local authority. NB missing data for years 2008-09 and 2009-10

Local Authority	Region	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2010-2011	2011-2012
Barking and Dagenham	L	M	S	S	S	S
Barnet	L	S	S	S	S	S
Barnsley	YH	S	S	S	S	S
Bath and North East Somerset	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Bedford Borough	E	S	S	S	S	S
Bexley	L	M	M	S	S	S
Birmingham	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Blackburn with Darwen	NW	M	M	S	S	S
Blackpool	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Bolton	NW	M	M	M	S	S
Bournemouth	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Bracknell Forest	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Bradford	YH	M	M	S	M	M
Brent	L	S	S	S	S	S
Brighton and Hove	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Bristol City	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Bromley	L	M	M	S	S	S
Buckinghamshire	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Bury	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Calderdale	YH	L	L	L	L (upper)	M
Cambridgeshire	E	S	S	S	S	S
Camden	L	S	S	S	S	S
Central Bedfordshire	E	S	S	S	M	M
Cheshire East	NW	S	S	S	S	C
Cheshire West and Chester	NW	S	S	S	S	S
City of London	L	M	M	M	S	S
Cornwall	SW	L	M	S	S	S
Coventry	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Croydon	L	S	S	S	S	S
Cumbria	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Darlington	NE	M	M	M	L	L
Derby City	EM	L	M	M	M	M
Derbyshire	EM	M	M	M	M	M (upper)
Devon	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Doncaster	YH	M	M	M	M	M
Dorset	SW	M	S	S	S	S
Dudley	WM	M	M	M	S	S

Durham	NE	S	S	S	S	S
Ealing	L	S	S	S	S	S
East Riding of Yorkshire	YH	M	M	M	S (upper)	S (upper)
East Sussex	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Enfield	L	S	S	S	S	S
Essex	E	S	S	S	S	S
Gateshead	NE	M	M	S	S	S
Gloucestershire	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Greenwich	L	S	S	S	S	S
Hackney	L	S	S	S	S	S
Halton	NW	S	M	M	M	M
Hammersmith and Fulham	L	M	M	M	M (upper)	M (upper)
Hampshire	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Haringey	L	M	S	S	S	S
Harrow	L	S	S	S	S	S
Hartlepool	NE	M	M	S	S	S
Havering	L	S	S	S	S	S
Herefordshire	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Hertfordshire	E	S	S	S	S	S
Hillingdon	L	M	S	S	S	S
Hounslow	L	S	S	S	S	S
Isle of Wight	SE	S	S	S	S	C
Isles of Scilly	SW	M	M	M	L	L
Islington	L	M	M	M	M	M
Kensington and Chelsea	L	M	M	M	M	M
Kent	SE	M	M	M	M	M
Kingston Upon Hull	YH	S	S	S	S	S
Kingston Upon Thames	L	L	L	S	S	S
Kirklees	YH	L	S	S	S	S
Knowsley	NW	M	M	M	S	S
Lambeth	L	S	S	S	S	S
Lancashire	NW	M	M	M	M	S
Leeds	YH	S	S	S	S	S
Leicester City	EM	S	S	S	S	S
Leicestershire	EM	M	M	M	M (upper)	S
Lewisham	L	S	S	S	S	S
Lincolnshire	EM	M	M	M	M	M
Liverpool	NW	M	M	M	M	M
Luton	E	M	S	S	S	S
Manchester	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Medway	SE	L	L	S	S	S
Merton	L	S	S	S	S	S
Middlesbrough	NE	na	S	S	S	S

Milton Keynes	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Newcastle upon Tyne	NE	S	S	S	S	S
Newham	L	S	S	S	S	S
Norfolk	E	na	S	S	S	S
North East Lincolnshire	YH	M	M	M	M	S
North Lincolnshire	YH	M	M	M	M	M
North Somerset	SW	S	S	S	S	S
North Tyneside	NE	S	S	S	S	S
North Yorkshire	YH	C	S	S	M	M
Northamptonshire	EM	S	S	S	S (upper)	S (upper)
Northumberland	NE	C	C	C	C	C
Nottingham City	EM	M	M	M	M (upper)	M (upper)
Nottinghamshire	EM	S	S	S	M	S
Oldham	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Oxfordshire	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Peterborough	E	M	M	M	M (upper)	M (upper)
Plymouth	SW	M	S	S	S	S
Poole	SW	M	M	M	S	S
Portsmouth	SE	M	M	M	M (upper)	M (upper)
Reading	SE	M	M	M	M (upper)	S
Redbridge	L	S	S	S	S (upper)	S (upper)
Redcar and Cleveland	NE	S	S	S	S	S
Richmond upon Thames	L	M	M	M	M	S
Rochdale	NW	M	M	M	M	M
Rotherham	YH	M	S	S	S	S
Rutland	EM	M	M	M	M	M
Salford	NW	M	M	M	M	M
Sandwell	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Sefton	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Sheffield	YH	S	S	S	S	S
Shropshire	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Slough	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Solihull	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Somerset	SW	M	M	M	M	S
South Gloucestershire	SW	S	S	S	S	S
South Tyneside	NE	S	S	S	S	S
Southampton	SE	S	S	S	s	S
Southend on Sea	E	S	S	S	S	S
Southwark	L	M	M	M	S	S
St Helens	NW	M	M	M	M	M
Staffordshire	WM	S	S	S	S	S

Stockport	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Stockton on Tees	NE	M	M	M	M	S
Stoke on trent	WM	na	S	S	S	S
Suffolk	E	S	S	S	S	S
Sunderland	NE	L	L	L	L	L
Surrey	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Sutton	L	M	M	M	M (upper)	M (upper)
Swindon	SW	na	S	S	S	S
Tameside	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Telford and Wrekin	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Thurrock	E	na	S	S	S	S
Torbay	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Tower Hamlets	L	na	S	S	S	S
Trafford	NW	M	M	S	S	S
Wakefield	YH	S	S	S	S	S
Walsall	WM	S	S	S	S	S
Waltham Forest	L	S	S	S	S	S
Wandsworth	L	L	M	S	S	S
Warrington	NW	M	M	M	M	M
Warwickshire	WM	S	S	S	S	S
West Berkshire	SE	C	C	C	C	C
West Sussex	SE	M	M	M	M	S
Westminster	L	M	M	M	M	S
Wigan	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Wiltshire	SW	S	S	S	S	S
Windsor and Maidenhead	SE	S	S	S	S	S
Wirral	NW	S	S	S	S	S
Wokingham	SE	M	M	C	C	C
Wolverhampton	WM	L	L	S	S	S
Worcestershire	WM	S	S	S	S	S
York	YH	S	S	S	M	M

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