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# Formal Analysis and Challenge: Potential Systemic Risks to Vulnerable Groups within the Draft Housing Allocations Policy

**Purpose:** To formally challenge specific provisions within the Draft Housing Allocations Policy that pose systemic risks to meeting statutory duties (Public Sector Equality Duty - PSED, Homelessness Reduction Act - HRA) and strategic objectives. This analysis focuses on the potential for the policy to inadvertently **exclude or generate adverse outcomes for refugees and sanctuary seekers**, undermining the city's commitment to social justice.

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## 1. Eligibility and Qualification Criteria: Compliance and Disproportionality Risk

The proposed local connection rule and strict asset limits create significant, preventable barriers for recently recognized refugees, threatening statutory compliance and generating adverse social outcomes.

Risk/Issue	Strategic and Statutory Impact	Policy Recommendation/Challenge
<b>Local Connection Rule and Non-Priority Refugees</b>	Creates a systemic barrier for a highly vulnerable cohort— <b>newly granted refugees classified as non-priority homeless</b> —who cannot meet the three-year local connection due to recent displacement. This increases the risk of <b>destitution, rough</b>	<b>Mandate an Explicit Exemption:</b> Introduce a formal, clear <b>exemption</b> from the three-year continuous local connection rule for all individuals granted refugee status within the last five years, aligning with national eligibility guidance.

	<p><b>sleeping, and social harm</b>, directly undermining the Council's obligations under the <b>Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)</b>.</p>	
<p><b>Complex Homeless Presentations (Family Reunion)</b></p>	<p>The policy is ill-equipped to manage the immediate, complex needs of <b>family reunion</b> cases where the principal applicant has less than three years of residency. This poses a significant risk of <b>immediate family homelessness</b> upon arrival.</p>	<p>Develop and resource <b>bespoke assessment and triage protocols</b> in collaboration with statutory partners to prioritize family reunion cases, ensuring immediate safeguarding and allocation regardless of the prior local connection duration.</p>
<p><b>Disproportionality of Outcome (Equality Act Risk)</b></p>	<p>The new criteria risk generating a <b>disproportionality of outcome</b>, effectively creating a <b>two-tier housing justice system</b> where access is weighted by historical residency. This poses a serious challenge to the <b>Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)</b> regarding race and other protected characteristics.</p>	<p><b>Mandate Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>  <b>Review:</b> Confirm the EIA explicitly models and mitigates this systemic risk. The policy must clearly establish a mandatory <b>future review cycle</b> for the EIA to continuously track and report on outcomes for refugee cohorts.</p>
<p><b>Asset Limits (Property Owned Abroad)</b></p>	<p>Disqualification based on property ownership anywhere risks being procedurally unjust, as the asset is often <b>legally or physically inaccessible</b> due to conflict. Arbitrary application of this rule results in the penalization</p>	<p><b>Implement Trauma-Informed Verification Protocols:</b>  Mandate and resource a formal process requiring <b>trauma-informed verification</b> of the genuine accessibility, liquidity, and relevance of any foreign</p>

	of victims of displacement.	assets before using them as a basis for disqualification.
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## 2. Homelessness Mitigation and Service Sustainability

The policy's focus on managing the register must not lead to the **externalisation of homelessness costs** and social harm onto the city's support services and streets.

Risk/Issue	Strategic and Statutory Impact	Policy Recommendation/Challenge
<b>Potential Increase in Unseen Homelessness and Exploitation</b>	The policy's deterrent effect will predictably <b>increase hidden homelessness, rough sleeping, and vulnerability to exploitation</b> (e.g., modern slavery). While statistics on the waiting list may improve, the city can be severely affected by increasing street homelessness.	<b>Mitigation Strategy Required:</b> The Council must immediately detail <b>how it is preparing to deal</b> with this potential increase, including <b>investment in long-term, sustainable alternative solutions</b> (e.g., social letting agencies, comprehensive rent deposit schemes) to prevent homelessness outside of the allocation scheme.
<b>Access to Private Rented Sector (PRS) Barriers</b>	Vulnerable groups (e.g., refugees on benefits, lacking deposits or UK tenancy history) face insurmountable barriers to accessing the PRS. Excluding them from the social register without viable alternatives is not	<b>Mandate a Hand-Held Approach:</b> Formalise and resource a specific <b>"hand-held" housing pathway</b> to provide intensive support for those with systemic access barriers (benefits reliance, lack of deposits) to access

	sustainable.	secure, affordable housing.
<b>Abuse of Discretion and Staff Governance</b>	The extensive reliance on subjective criteria for 'Unacceptable Behaviour' and disqualification creates a risk of <b>misuse of discretion by staff</b> , leading to inconsistent application and potential legal challenge.	Implement clear <b>safeguarding and governance protocols</b> to ensure fair, transparent, and consistent application of discretionary rules, supported by mandatory <b>trauma-informed training</b> for all allocations staff.

### 3. Policy Review, Oversight, and Stakeholder Engagement

The integrity of the policy process requires robust, proactive engagement with experts and a clear commitment to governance.

Risk/Issue	Strategic and Statutory Impact	Policy Recommendation/Challenge
<b>Validity and Inclusivity of Consultation</b>	Consultation relying heavily on accessible online surveys risks <b>selection bias</b> and excludes the voices of the most marginalized (those in deprived areas, with low digital literacy or language barriers), undermining the <b>validity of the policy review</b> .	<b>Mandate Active Engagement:</b> Commit to an <b>active, resource-intensive engagement strategy</b> which includes holding policy consultation meetings with Councilors in <b>community locations and deprived areas</b> , directly reaching vulnerable populations for feedback, rather than inviting them to Council premises.
<b>Lack of Formalised</b>	The success of complex allocation policies relies	<b>Formalise Partnerships:</b> The Council must commit

<b>Partnership</b>	heavily on expert input and delivery support from the VCS. Failure to mandate this risks a policy that is unenforceable or ineffective on the ground.	to making <b>SPRING, City of Sanctuary, the Refugee Council, Red Cross, Shelter, and other community organisations</b> active and formalized partners in both the ongoing review and implementation processes. This ensures policy is informed by expert, on-the-ground knowledge of need.
<b>Communication Failure and Records</b>	Failure to provide clear, accessible communication risks penalizing applicants for non-compliance with bidding rules or update requests.	<b>Mandate Language and Support Protocols:</b> Detail how the Council will use services like the <b>Language Line</b> and the involvement of VCS partners (e.g., COSS) to maintain robust, accessible <b>records of notification and communication</b> for all critical interactions with refugee applicants.
<b>Policy Success Measurement</b>	Measuring success solely on the reduction of the waiting list masks potential adverse social outcomes (e.g., increased hidden homelessness).	The policy must define <b>how the council will measure its success</b> using metrics rooted in social justice and inclusion, such as tenancy sustainment rates for vulnerable groups and verifiable reductions in hidden homelessness.