

A guide to Doncaster City Council's Housing Allocations Policy



City of
Doncaster
Council

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Information can be made available in other formats such as large print, Braille etc on request

Introduction

This is a guide to Doncaster HomeChoice and includes information on Doncaster City Council's Housing Allocations Policy on how applicants are prioritised and how properties are let.

Although we have over 20,000 Council Homes in Doncaster, we get less than 1,200 a year to re let. We have more demand for family houses and younger person flats from people with a priority for rehousing than we have properties available.

Therefore, if you are in need of this type of accommodation you also need to consider private rented accommodation and other types of housing as we can't help everyone.

How to use Doncaster HomeChoice

We advertise Council, Housing Association (Registered Provider) and private landlord homes.

You can register online:

www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/homechoice/

You need to fully complete the housing register application online and provide:

- Proof of your current address
- National Insurance number
- Photo identification if you have it
- Proof of child benefit/child tax credits with your children's details if applicable
- Confirmation of your local connection to Doncaster
- Proof of immigration status from the Border and Immigration Agency if applicable
- A landlord reference
- Your service record if you have served in the Armed Forces

Your application will remain inactive and you will not be able to bid until we receive this information. If you do not supply this within 28 days your application will not be registered.

You may not be eligible or may not qualify to join the housing register. Some examples are where you:

- Have outstanding housing related debt over eight weeks in arrears
- Have any anti-social behaviour/poor tenancy conduct
- Have been rehoused within the last 12 months to one of our properties and have no priority reason to move
- Are a person from abroad who is subject to immigration control and are not eligible for assistance
- Do not have a local connection with Doncaster
- Are an owner of a property with equity in excess of £120,000
- You are living in supported housing and are not ready for independent accommodation

Full details are available on our website
www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/homechoice/.

Each case will be assessed individually and we will write to you to confirm the outcome of your application.

If your application is accepted we will send you your login reference, memorable date, band, registration or effective dates and you can start to place bids at
www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/homechoice/.

The bidding cycle runs weekly from 5pm Wednesday and closes 11.59pm Sunday. You can place bids on available properties within this time.

You can revise your bids at any time over the four days, as the time you bid does not affect your final position in the bidding short list.

Don't wait up to bid – bids are not on a first come first serve basis, so you can bid at any time during the bidding cycle and you will only know your final queue position when bids are sorted at the end of the bidding cycle.

Unless stated in the advert, properties will be advertised with priority order to applicants in band order:

- Platinum
- Gold
- Silver
- Bronze
- Transfer List
- General

You can bid in various ways during the bidding cycle:

- Online at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/homechoice/
- At your local St Leger Homes Office

If you need help and support with applying or bidding please contact us on 01302 862862 and we can offer help, advice and support.

Remember you can also nominate someone else to act on your behalf.

If you have a change in circumstances you need to update your application as soon as possible as this may affect your banding and we may need up to date documents.

You may not be able to bid until you have provided your updated information.

If you change your telephone number or email address, update this as soon as possible as if we are unable to contact you your application may be cancelled.

Bands

What are the bands?

There are five bands in total Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, General and a separate Transfer List.

Platinum, Gold and Silver are priority bands, Bronze is for those who need to move but do not have a priority. The transfer list is for existing Doncaster Council tenants only who are not in a priority band and have been a tenant over 12 months. The General Band is for house owners with equity of less than £120,000.

You will be placed in the most appropriate band that reflects your assessed housing need, based on the information supplied in your application form and supporting evidence.

If you are in a priority band you will have an effective date when your priority was awarded and a registration date. If you are not in a priority band you will have a registration date only.

If you are a serving or former Armed Forces Personnel, we will back date your registration date to reflect your length of service on receipt of your service record.

Platinum Band - effective date applies

- If you have been assessed as Statutory Homeless under the relevant legislation. We will award Platinum priority if alternative suitable accommodation is not available
- If you are assessed as having limited housing options in the homeless relief duty or are in temporary accommodation, homeless unintentionally and with a priority need
- Former Statutory Homeless applicants who reapply within 2 years of acceptance of a private sector offer and are unintentionally homeless
- If you are unable to return home from hospital, as your current property does not meet your medical needs or where temporary accommodation would be inappropriate
- If your home requires major works making it uninhabitable and an assessment has been carried out as to whether you can resolve your own housing needs
- If you are from the Armed Forces or are former Armed Forces personnel in need of housing within 5 years of discharge – this will include those leaving the Armed Forces with no suitable accommodation, those injured or disabled needing housing, bereaved spouses, civil partners and divorced or separated partners
- If you are an agreed foster carer not in suitable accommodation to foster and are not able to resolve your own circumstances
- If your home is in the Doncaster Borough and has been approved for demolition or clearance by the Council
- Tenants vacating adapted properties where the adaptations to a property are no longer required by a member of the household, and the Council is requesting an urgent move due to the extensive nature of the adaptations with an identified applicant in need

Platinum Band - effective date applies

- Doncaster Council Tenants releasing a council house to be let by moving into a bungalow or age designated flat.

If you are engaging in a resettlement pathway in supported housing who have been assessed by the support provider as no longer requiring the support of the service and:

- Where the move to independent accommodation is appropriate
- There is resettlement /longer term support in place
- And the vacancy created will be filled by an applicant nominated by our Home Options Service Single Point of Access team

Gold Band – effective date applies

- If your home is overcrowded by two or more bedrooms
- If you are occupying a property that has been assessed as a category one hazard under the Health and Safety Rating System with a vulnerable group in residence
- If you are in critical need for rehousing due to medical or welfare reasons
- If you need to move to a particular location as not doing so would mean suffering hardship – this includes Doncaster Council tenants affected by welfare reform who are under occupying their home by two or more bedrooms and have been assessed by the Tenancy Sustainability team
- If you live in a Doncaster Council service tenancy or tied tenancy and it is coming to an end
- Any young person that the Council has assessed and owes a duty to house under the Children Act

Gold Band - effective date applies

- If you have been assessed as at risk of homelessness and have a local connection under part VII of the 1996 Housing Act and Homelessness Act 2002 as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.
- Applicant requiring rehousing due to violence or harassment – this assessment will be made through a multi-agency panel
- If you are being supported by agencies as needing to make a planned move due to Domestic Abuse

Silver Band – effective date applies

- If your home is overcrowded by one bedroom
- Applicants taking up a particular employment, education or training opportunity
- Doncaster Council tenants who are under-occupying their current home by one bedroom and request to move to smaller accommodation – this includes those affected by welfare reform assessed by the Tenancy Sustainability team
- If you are in substantial need for rehousing due to medical or welfare reasons
- If you have been assessed as homeless without having a priority need and have a local connection under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002, as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and qualify to join the Housing Register

Silver Band - effective date applies

- If you have been assessed as intentionally homeless and having a priority, and have a local connection under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002, as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and qualify to join the Housing Register
- Tenants vacating adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer needed by a member of the household
- Social housing tenants who need to move closer to work or take up an offer of employment

Bronze Band - registration date applies

- You do not fall into the priority bands but still want to move
- You were a homeless applicant in any category and refused one reasonable offer and your application has previously been suspended for 6 months

General Band - registration date applies

- Applicants who own, or have a financial interest, a property and have equity of less than £120,000
- This includes applicants pending an assessment

Transfer List - registration date applies

Doncaster Council tenants with low or no housing need who have been a tenant of their home for 12 months can apply to go on the separate transfer list.

If there is a housing need Doncaster Council tenants will be assessed in the same way as all customers and can apply at any time.

To make best use of homes you may be restricted to certain types of accommodation depending on your household.

These are some examples:

- Bungalows will initially be given to applicants over 60 years old and to disabled customers with appropriate recommendations for adapted accommodation
- Some adapted properties will be advertised with priority to applicants assessed as requiring the adaptations already carried out to the property

If a property is age designated and the age limit has been lowered below 60 then priority will be given in the first instance to:

- Applicants over 60 in priority band order
- Remaining applicants in priority band order
- This excludes applicants in the General band who will be considered after all other applicants including those on the transfer list

This table gives examples of property types and sizes you may be eligible for:

Property and bedroom eligibility guide

Description	Type					Bedrooms	
	Bedsit	Flat	Bungalow	Maisonette	House	Minimum	Maximum
Single person	✓	✓	✓	✓		1	2
Single person + overnight access to 1 child		✓	✓	✓		1	2
Single person + overnight access to 2 or more children		✓	✓	✓		1	3
2 adults		✓	✓	✓		1	2
Couple		✓	✓	✓		1	2
Household + 1 child		✓	✓	✓	✓	2	3
Household + 2 children		✓	✓	✓	✓	2	3
3 adults		✓	✓	✓	✓	2	3
Household + 3 children		✓	✓	✓	✓	3	4
Household + 4 children		✓	✓	✓	✓	3	4
Household + 5 or more children		✓	✓	✓	✓	3*	5
4 adults		✓	✓	✓	✓	2	4

*Three bed accommodation will only be allocated if it does not result in a household being statutory overcrowded or living in unacceptable and cramped living conditions.

*Additional priority will be given to applicants with a 4+ bedroom housing need in the Platinum and Gold Bands due to the lack of housing stock of larger properties.

Shortlisting and offers

When you bid, once the bidding cycle has finished your final queue position will be shown on your St Leger Homes account page.

Relevant checks will be carried out and the first eligible applicant who qualifies will be offered the property. If this applicant refuses the offer the property will be offered to the next eligible applicant.

If we reach your turn we will contact you to confirm if you are still eligible then we will inform you of the property details including the full address, and confirm this as an offer in writing. You will then be contacted by an Officer who will arrange to show you around the property when it is available to view.

You will have a maximum of 24 hours after your viewing to make a decision about your offer.

Refusal of an offer

The number of offers you can be made before your application is suspended or your priority removed is restricted to one or two reasonable offers. This also applies to offers of adapted accommodation and nomination through Doncaster Council's Accessible Housing Register.

One reasonable offer to Platinum band applicants which if refused, your application will be suspended for 6 months, and you will not be able to bid during this time.

One reasonable offer to all Homeless category applicants in any band and if refused, your homeless priority will be removed and your application will be suspended for 6 months and you will not be able to bid during this time.

Two reasonable offers if you are in any other band and are not homeless, which if refused, your application will be suspended for 6 months, and you will not be able to bid during this time.

Each case will be assessed individually as to the reason for the refusal. You will be informed in writing and given the right of review within 28 days of the decision if your priority is removed or if you are suspended.

Adapted properties

If you are assessed as requiring a property with adaptations, you may be placed onto Doncaster Council's Accessible Housing Register (AHR) where there is a need for a substantially adapted property and be informed of suitable property types and adaptations that meet your needs.

If you need a lesser adapted property you will be able to bid on adapted properties that are advertised but ensure you read the full details page of the advert before you bid to make sure the adaptations will be suitable for you.

If you bid and the adaptations aren't suitable then you will not be offered the property and will be bypassed.

Direct match

There will be certain circumstances when a property will not be advertised in the normal way. This is known as Direct Match.

Direct Matches are a very small proportion of total lets and are made up of the following:

Purpose built or extensively adapted properties

Some extensively adapted or purpose-built properties will be allocated through a nomination from the Accessible Housing Register.

Housing Assessment Panel

Where circumstances are not covered fully by the Allocations Policy, or may need further assessment, referrals are made by professionals to the Housing Assessment Panel. Each case will be looked at individually and assessed before a decision is reached, including multi agency meetings.

Direct Offers to Homeless applicants

Where properties are required for specific management purposes the qualifying person will receive one reasonable offer of accommodation.

Suspensions

Some circumstances may result in your application being suspended for up to 12 months. Some examples are:

- Prisoners who do not have a release date within three months
- If we find out that you have become ineligible or non-qualifying to remain on the register, we will suspend your application whilst we carry out our enquiries. This may be because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour
- If you are in a resettlement pathway but are not ready to move into independent living
- If you are unable to access housing costs and we prevent you from becoming homeless, your application will be suspended until you can afford accommodation

We will then back date your registration and any relevant priority to the date you originally applied.

Review

You are entitled to a review in the following circumstances:

- If you are ineligible or non-qualifying to join the register
- Where you feel you have been unfairly treated in the allocation process
- Where you have been removed from the register other than at your request
- Where you disagree with your banding
- Where you disagree with your registration or effective date
- Where you disagree with the removal of your priority

The Review Process

In all cases you must make a request within 28 days of the date of the letter informing you of the decision.

Where you do ask for a review of the decision you will be invited to submit any further information.

You are not required to provide reasons for challenging the decision however it may help your case to provide such information in writing. The Officer involved in the original decision will not be involved in the review.

Homelessness reviews will be carried out by our Home Options Team. If you are still unhappy with the decision, this will be managed through our Customer Care team.

Regeneration schemes

Where a demolition area has been agreed to allow for regeneration it may be necessary to ring fence properties in adjacent areas for applicants whose homes are to be demolished by Doncaster Council.

Other housing options

If you are looking to rent a home in Doncaster you may want to consider alternative housing options as we don't have enough housing to relet to meet everyone's needs. Remember, you may not be able to access housing in your areas of choice due to cost or availability so need to be flexible if you want to move.

Mutual Exchange

You may be eligible to do a mutual exchange if you are a council or housing association tenant. You can look for an exchange and make an application through their national Homeswapper website free of charge if you are a Doncaster Council Tenant.

- Joining www.homeswapper.co.uk dedicated mutual exchange service. This is free for Doncaster Council tenants and will help you find a Mutual Exchange
- If you are a tenant, in most cases this is the most realistic way of moving due to the current demand for housing

Before an exchange can take place, both exchange partners must get their landlords permission. An exchange can be refused for a number of reasons that are set out in Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985. Your landlord will notify you of the outcome in writing.

Housing Associations (Registered Providers)

Housing Associations provide affordable housing in many areas of Doncaster. They build new homes and improve existing properties mainly for rent.

Some Housing Associations in Doncaster only have properties for elderly or disabled people. Most however supply a mix of property types including general needs houses and flats suitable for families, couples or single people.

Some Housing Associations are advertising some of their vacancies with Doncaster HomeChoice to give you a wider choice. You can bid on these properties in the normal way but you will be contacted by the Housing Association if you are successful

Please see the full information on the property for any restrictions as they may have additional eligibility criteria.

For more information about Housing Associations please visit our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/homechoice/

Home Options

If you need advice on your housing options, or are at risk of becoming homeless, our Home Options Service may be able to help.

They can offer you advice and support to help you retain your current home or further assistance if that isn't possible.

Contact Home Options as early as you can:

Phone: 01302 736000

Email: housingoptionsteam@doncaster.gov.uk

They work with many types of providers to help you find the home you need as quickly as possible.

Notes



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