

In our October 2008 newsletter we asked you what you thought of proposed changes to make the HomeChoice scheme even better. Thank you to everyone who got in touch. We are now making changes based on the consultation and these will be introduced from 1 April 2009.

Full details of the changes are given in the charts on pages two, three and four.

The first chart is laid out with four columns. The first column shows how HomeChoice has been working before the changes. The second column shows what the problem has been with this. The third column shows how the system will operate from 1 April 2009. If the change affects you, the fourth column tells you if you need to do anything different after 1 April 2009. To follow the changes to a particular issue read across the row. The second chart shows size and type of property different households can apply for.

Stop press!

We are working with Housing Associations so that some of their available properties can be advertised in HomeChoice. Housing Associations are not-for-profit organisations which own, let and manage rented housing. Keep an eye out for these properties over the next few months. You can bid on them in the normal way, but if you have any questions when you see a Housing Association property advertised contact us on 01302 862628.

Important changes to HomeChoice from 1 April 2009



Be moneywise

In our last newsletter we advised about money management. We asked do you know how much you will need for your rent money? Are you entitled to Housing Benefit? Could you pay by Direct Debit?

For any new readers the main points we covered were:

Website. Information is available on our dedicated money advice website www.slhdmoneywise.co.uk

Training. As part of our popular Tenant Training programme we offer a limited amount of pre-tenancy financial training that could provide you with the knowledge and skills to budget for

your household. It will give you a clear idea of what you need on a weekly basis and help manage your money, how to shop wisely and also how to save for your future.

Rent Arrears. If you have rent arrears or other debts relating to a tenancy you are not normally given a council home until the debt is cleared. Every case is considered on its merits though, and where there are exceptional circumstances, applicants may be offered a tenancy.

If you would like further information please call 01302 862627.



Homechoice before 1 April 2009	Reason for the change	Homechoice after 1 April 2009	If this applies to me, do I need to do anything?
<p>Eligibility for properties The rules of Homechoice say which size and type of properties people can apply for based on how many adults and children live in the household.</p>	<p>Some types of households, particularly smaller households, are not getting a fair share of properties.</p>	<p>The rules on who can apply for which property have been changed. Full details are given in the table below.</p>	<p>Yes. Look at the table below and ensure that you are bidding on the correct size and type of property for your household.</p>
<p>Number of bands Four bands - Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze.</p>	<p>There is a need to clearly identify those who can resolve their own housing situation.</p>	<p>Five bands - Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze and General band.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with at application and review stage.</p>
<p>Financial assessments Financial assessments for Owner Occupiers are undertaken. If this shows the sale of the home would allow them to resolve own housing need, they would remain in Bronze band and only be considered for hard to let properties.</p>	<p>A small number of lets are made to people who are not owner occupiers, perhaps having recently sold a home, but who would have been assessed as able to resolve their own housing need if an assessment had been undertaken.</p>	<p>Financial assessment will be undertaken for all applicants. Those who have the financial resources to resolve their own housing need will be placed in the new general band.</p>	<p>You don't need to do anything right now. Financial assessments will be undertaken at review stage for existing members of the scheme and at application stage for new applicants.</p>
<p>Members of HM forces Can't be considered until 6 weeks before being discharged.</p>	<p>It is currently taking longer to re-house these applicants due to lack of suitable accommodation being available.</p>	<p>Can be considered when they are 14 weeks away from being discharged.</p>	<p>Yes. If you are within 14 weeks of discharge from HM forces at the beginning of April you should ensure you are actively bidding for properties.</p>
<p>Applicants with access to children Applicants with staying access of at least 2 nights in every fortnight, to children up to age 17, can be considered for an extra bedroom.</p>	<p>This is disproportionate with increasing demand for family housing</p>	<p>Applicants with staying access of at least 2 nights in every week (or equivalent), to children up to age 17, can be considered for an extra bedroom.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with at application and review stage.</p>
<p>Cumulative Need (More than one need) People with one qualifying need are treated the same as those with two or more qualifying needs.</p>	<p>Guidance from the Government states that we must take account of people with more than one qualifying need.</p>	<p>A formula has been agreed where some people in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gold band with more than one need may be placed in platinum band, and • Silver band with more than one need may be placed in Gold band. <p>Those in other bands will not be changed.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with at application and review stage.</p>
<p>Category One Hazard Priority re-housing is granted where a category one hazard exists under the Health and Safety system and a vulnerable group is in residence.</p>	<p>Occasionally where someone with priority re-housing doesn't give access for the category one hazard it is to be corrected.</p>	<p>The policy has the following added: "In cases where access to undertake works is reasonably restricted this will result in priority being removed.</p>	<p>Yes. If you have priority for this reason you need to give, or continue to give, reasonable access for the hazard to be corrected.</p>
<p>Need for adaptations reason for immediate re-housing</p>	<p>Occasionally advice may be that adaptations are a better option.</p>	<p>The policy has had the following added: "Priority will only be given if re-housing is assessed to be more appropriate than</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with through review.</p>

<p>Medical or welfare reasons for immediate re-housing Currently priority is given after three months.</p>	<p>This is an arbitrary timescale.</p>	<p>The 3 month rule has been removed.</p>	<p>No. We will update affected applicants.</p>
<p>Hardship The policy states "Applicants that need to move to a particular location as not to do so would suffer hardship to themselves or others"</p>	<p>The policy needs to be clearer regarding travel time, type of transport available, and level of the support needs.</p>	<p>The policy has the following added: "...Additionally the required travel time is impacting on the ability to give or receive support or care in a significant way." We will now assess the whole package of support in a comprehensive way.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with through review.</p>
<p>Tied accommodation Tied accommodation is a job which provides them with accommodation as part of their employment.</p>	<p>Where people are retiring from a job priority is only awarded from the date they are given a Notice to Quit the property.</p>	<p>Priority will be awarded as soon as a retirement date has been agreed.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with at application and review stage.</p>
<p>Non priority need or Intentionally homeless This is a decision made by DMBC's Homeless section in line with various housing acts.</p>	<p>The policy doesn't include all categories of homeless applicants fully addressed in the policy</p>	<p>Homeless applicants without priority need will be placed in Silver band. Applicants in priority need and intentionally homeless will be placed in Silver band.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with at application and review stage.</p>
<p>Medical and welfare reasons The current priorities don't fully make a distinction between Gold and Silver bands.</p>	<p>It isn't fully stated that medical issues only gain priority where there is also a risk caused by them staying in their current accommodation. The policy doesn't state that applicants might lose their priority if they don't bid.</p>	<p>The silver band now includes Applicants in moderate need for re-housing due to medical, health or welfare reasons.</p>	<p>No. This will be dealt with at application and review stage.</p>
<p>Time limits for priority bands The policy states that priority applicants must be actively making realistic bids each week.</p>	<p>The policy has the following added: "... if applicants are not actively bidding on properties where it would be reasonable to do so, their application will be reviewed and they may lose their priority."</p>	<p>The policy has the following added: "... if applicants are not actively bidding on properties where it would be reasonable to do so, their application will be reviewed and they may lose their priority."</p>	<p>Yes. If you have priority you must bid on suitable properties or you may lose your priority status. If you are having difficulties with making bids contact the Homechoice team who will be able to advise you.</p>
<p>Housing Management Lets All management lets are dealt with by the Housing Assessment Panel.</p>	<p>On rare occasions information from other agencies is so sensitive that it needs to be restricted by one person in the organisation.</p>	<p>In these exceptional cases a decision will be made by the Director of Customer Services at St Leger Homes or in their absence the Assistant Director.</p>	<p>No, people who this applies to will be identified through our processes.</p>
<p>Appeal process An appeal process for applicants who disagree with how their application has been dealt with was not included in the original policy.</p>	<p>This doesn't give an applicant a way to challenge a decision.</p>	<p>An appeal process has been introduced on grounds of ineligibility to register, unfair treatment, the effective or registration date, removal of priority or removal from the register. A process and service standards for dealing with reviews has been added to the policy.</p>	<p>No. We will advise of right of appeal from now on.</p>

Description	Bed-sit	Flat	Bungalow	Maisonette	House	Minimum rooms	Maximum rooms
Single Person	YES	YES	YES			1	1#
Two Adults		YES	YES	YES		1	2
Household with one child +		YES	YES	YES	YES	2	3
Household with two children		YES	YES	YES	YES	2	3
Three Adults		YES	YES	YES	YES	2	3
Household with three children		YES	YES	YES	YES	3	3
Household with four children		YES	YES	YES	YES	3	4
Household with five or more children		YES	YES	YES	YES	3*	5
Four Adults		YES	YES	YES	YES	2	4
Single Household with over night access to one child		YES	YES	YES		1	2
Single Household with over night access to two children		YES	YES	YES		2	2
Single Household with over night access to three children		YES	YES	YES		3	3
Single Household with over night access to four or more children		YES	YES	YES		3	4

- Single applicants can also be considered for 2 bed flats due to limited stock of 1 bed flats.

+ - Includes confirmed pregnancy of 21 weeks and over

* - 3 bed accomadation will only be allocated if it does not result in a household being overcrowded

Remember you can bid in these ways;

HomeChoice bid line - 0800 027 6235

By text message - 07781 484771
Online at
www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk

You do not have to make any bids if there aren't any properties you are interested in.

However if you have a priority (Platinum, Gold or Silver band) you must bid on suitable properties or you may lose your status. If you are having difficulties making bids contact the Doncaster HomeChoice Team on 01302 862628.

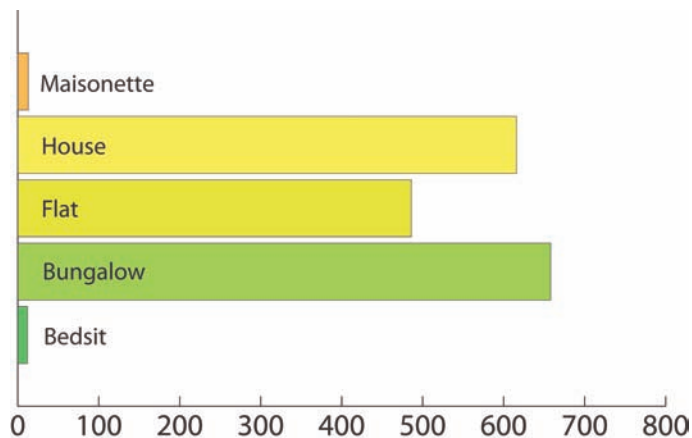
Please ensure if you have a change in your circumstances including contact telephone number that you inform Doncaster HomeChoice Team as if we are unable to make contact with you it may result in you missing out on a property. To advise of a change in circumstances by letter please write to: HomeChoice, St. Leger Homes of Doncaster, St. Leger Court, White Rose Way, Doncaster, DN4 5ND

The main changes are:

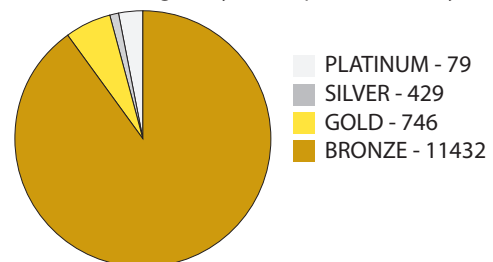
- Couples with one child will qualify for two and three bedroomed properties and households containing 2 adults only qualify for flats and maisonettes rather than houses.

Facts & Figures

Property types allocated November 1 2007 to February 28 2009



Active on the waiting list by band up to 28 February 2009



Housed by band 1 November to 28 February 2009

