



Frequently asked questions

If your question is not listed, please contact the Doncaster HomeChoice team on 01302 862 628 or email: info@doncasterhomechoice.co.uk

1. What is Doncaster HomeChoice?

Doncaster HomeChoice is a banded Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme which gives the customer the opportunity to decide if they want to express an interest in a council home. All available properties are advertised each week.

2. Why has Doncaster HomeChoice been put in place?

Choice Based Lettings schemes put in place by other authorities have been well received by customers. In surveys these customers have stated that they feel the system is easier to understand, more transparent and fairer. Central Government has a target that all authorities have to have CBL in place by 2010.

3. How can I apply to Doncaster HomeChoice?

You can complete a paper application form; they are available at all St. Leger Homes offices and some Doncaster Council offices. You can apply direct on-

line at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk or download and print an application form and complete it in full and return it to Doncaster HomeChoice, St. Leger Homes of Doncaster, White Rose Way, Doncaster DN4 5ND or hand it in at your local St. Leger Homes office. Alternatively you can contact the HomeChoice team and we can arrange to send you one out.

4. Will I need to provide any additional information with my application?

Yes. All new applications will require proof of identity. This will include, proof of your current address, your National Insurance number and something with your signature on it. Until this is received your application will remain inactive and you will not be able to place any bids. If you have children we will also require proof of child benefit or child tax credits that shows the names of all of the children that are resident with you, this is usually your benefit award letter.



www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk



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5. Do you require landlord references?

Yes. If you have had a previous tenancy with a landlord then we will write to your previous landlord to ask for a reference. Until this is received your application will remain inactive and you will not be able to place any bids.

6. I am under 18, can I still apply for re-housing?

Yes, you can still complete an application form to be considered for re-housing. We will require proof that you have a guarantor and the person who will be acting as your guarantor must complete a form to confirm they are willing to be responsible for the tenancy on your behalf should you not adhere to the terms of the tenancy agreement. Until this is received your application will remain inactive and you will not be able to place any bids.

7. What are the bands?

The bands are Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze and General.

8. How will I know what band I have been put into?

This will depend on your living circumstances and if you have a priority under Doncaster Council's allocation policy. When you register with Doncaster HomeChoice, you will receive a letter confirming your band and an information pack including a summary of the policy in booklet form. You can also view the policy on our website www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk

9. What if I don't agree with the band I have been awarded?

If you do not agree with the band you have been awarded you should ensure we are aware of all your circumstances and that you have provided us with all the supporting documentation. You can contact us to discuss your application and we will advise you if you need to provide any more evidence.

10. What if I am still unhappy with my band?

You have the right to appeal. In all review cases you must make a request within 28 days of the date of the letter we send to you informing you of a decision. You should give the reasons why you disagree with the decision. Where you request a review of the decision, we may write to you and ask you to submit further information that may help us to carry out the review. Once the decision has been reviewed, we will write to you with the outcome. The letter will explain what action will be taken as a result and the reasons for doing so.

11. What if I have a change in circumstances?

If you have a change in your circumstances you may need to complete an amendment form. This will allow us to keep your application up to

date. Contact us and we will let you know what information we need.

12. What are registration and effective dates?

If you have been placed in the Bronze band you will bid using your registration date. If you have been placed into the Platinum, Gold or Silver bands, you will receive an effective date and this will be the date you became entitled to a priority band. If you move back to the Bronze and General band you will then be given back your original registration date.

13. Why are registration and effective dates important?

Registration and effective dates are important as they give you priority within your band. If you are a Platinum, Gold or Silver band customer your effective date will be used. If you are a Bronze or General band customer your registration date will be used. Customers with earlier registration and effective dates will be offered properties before customers with later dates. For Bronze band customers this means that if you have been on the register for a long time you will be offered a property before someone who has just joined.

14. How do I know when properties are available?

Properties are advertised each week starting on a Thursday and ending on a Monday. They are advertised in various ways, for example in local offices, libraries, on our website and in the Doncaster Free Press property guide.

15. Will adapted properties be advertised?

Adapted properties will be allocated through the Accessible Housing Register by direct match to the customer's individual requirements. These applicants will have had an assessment by an Occupational Therapist and be on the Accessible Housing Register with all the details of their housing requirements. This is to make best use of adapted housing. If there is no one on the Accessible Housing Register who needs the property, it will then be advertised.

16. What is a bidding cycle?

The bidding cycle is the length of time properties are advertised as being available. Each bidding cycle starts on a Thursday at 00:01 and ends on a Monday at 23:59. Bids cannot be accepted outside these times.

17. What is a bid?

Placing a bid is the way that you let us know you want to be considered for a property. **No money is involved.** A bid is simply an expression of interest placed against a property. You can bid either on our website, by phone, text, or in person at any St. Leger office. You can place up to three bids a week on properties

you are eligible for.

18. When can I start to bid for properties?

You can bid as soon as we have made your application active. If you submit a paper application or an online application form, we have to check all the details and approve the application before you can start bidding for properties. Once the application has been approved and all the required documents are received, we will activate your application and send out a Doncaster HomeChoice pack with advice on how to place a bid.

19. How do I bid for a property?

You can bid in various ways; automated telephone line, website, text message, in person at any St. Leger office or by contacting the HomeChoice team who can place bids on your behalf. You will have to give certain details to be able to make your bid; your registration number, your pin number and the property reference number.

20. I need help with bidding, how can you help me?

If you require help and support with bidding please contact a member of the Doncaster HomeChoice team on 01302 862628 who can offer help, advice and support in bidding for properties, explaining how to access our service and giving advice to help you consider what options are available. Remember - you can also nominate someone else that we can contact on your behalf.

21. Does it matter when I bid?

No, you can bid anytime Thursday to Monday during the bidding cycle. The order in which we offer properties depends on your band and effective or registration date. It does not matter what day or time you make your bid as we will allocate the property to the customer who bids with the earliest registration or effective date. For example, if you are a Bronze band customer and your registration date puts you at the top of a shortlist, then you will be at the top of the shortlist regardless of when you placed your bid.

22. Do I need to bid?

Yes, if you are ready to move and you see a property that you are interested in you will need to place a bid to be considered for that property. You will not be allocated a property if you do not bid. There is no need to bid if you are not ready to move.

23. How long do I have to decide which of the advertised properties I want to bid for?

You will have five days to bid for an advertised property. The bidding cycle will be open on a Thursday at 00:01 and close on Monday at 23:59.

24. How many bids will I be able to make each week?

Currently each customer has up to three bids per week.

25. If I put my bid in first will I be offered the property first?

No, when you place a bid you will be given a queue position which will be correct at that time, but this can change if other customers place bids on the property within the bidding cycle who have an earlier effective or registration date than you.

26. Can I change the bids I have made?

Yes, you can withdraw bids within the bidding cycle and use them on other properties you are eligible for. You have a maximum of three active bids per week.

27. Why has my shortlist position changed?

Your position can change if other customers with an earlier effective or registration date bid on the same property as you, or if customers above you in the shortlist withdraw their bid within the bidding cycle.

28. Can I check where I am in a shortlist for a particular property?

If you want to find out if your shortlist position has changed you can do this within the bidding cycle online or by using the automated telephone line. However, your final position will only be known once the bidding cycle has been closed.

29. Can I bid for properties that are not in my band?

Yes. All properties are advertised to all bands, with priority to a specific band. This means you can bid for all the property types you are eligible for, but we will give priority to the band indicated on the advert first. If there are no successful bids from the indicated band we will look at all other bids in priority order.

30. How will available properties be assigned to the bands?

This is worked out using a ratio agreed by Doncaster Council. Properties are automatically banded as they become available.

31. Will those in higher bands get all the available properties?

No. Properties are allocated with priority to a specific band and bids from customers within that band will be given priority. If we do not get any bids or exhaust bids from the indicated band, we will then look at bids from other bands in priority order.

32. How will I be allocated a property?

We look at the list of customers who have placed bids once the bidding cycle has closed

and offer the property to the first eligible person with the earliest registration or effective date.

33. How will I know if I have been successful?

We will contact you once the bidding cycle has closed to check your details are correct and then offer you the property. You will not be considered for any other properties until you have made a decision on the offer. It is important that you keep your telephone contact details up to date and inform the HomeChoice team if you have any changes. If you do not respond to us we will move on with the property.

34. How long will I have to decide whether to accept an offer of accommodation?

If you need it, you will be given 48 hours to make a decision on an offer of accommodation following an accompanied viewing.

35. What will happen if I have been unsuccessful?

You will not be contacted if you are unsuccessful but there will be feedback published giving the details of each property; address, successful customer's band, effective date or registration date and how many bids have been made on the property. The results will be published in various ways, on our website and in the Doncaster Free Press. We also have a property availability booklet which tells you how many properties have become vacant in the areas of your choice to help you make informed decisions about your chances of being re-housed.

36. What happens if I refuse a property?

If you are in the Platinum, Gold or Silver band and make a successful bid and then refuse the property, your priority may be removed and you may be moved to the Bronze band. Each case will be looked at individually and assessed as to the reason for the refusal. You will be informed in writing and be given the right of appeal. If you are in the Bronze band and refuse an offer following a successful bid, you will remain in the Bronze band.

37. What happens if my application is cancelled?

Your application could be cancelled for a number of reasons. We will write to you if we cancel your application and tell you why. If your application is cancelled because you have not returned your review form, you can contact us within six months of the cancellation and we will reinstate your application from the original registration date on receipt of an amendment form. If your application is cancelled for any other reason you will need to contact us so we can advise you further.

38. Are there any other housing options available to me?

Yes. You can apply to be on housing associations waiting lists direct, you can find their contact details on our website www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk under the Partners and Other Housing Options page. This page also gives details about affordable housing and gives a link to the Plumlife website which gives information about a range of other housing options including the HomeBuy Scheme. For more about all the available schemes go to www.plumlife.co.uk

39. I am a council or housing association tenant, how can I advertise my property for a mutual exchange?

You can advertise your property for a mutual exchange on the Doncaster HomeChoice website by completing an on-line mutual exchange advert if you are registered for re-housing with Doncaster HomeChoice. If you are not already registered with Doncaster HomeChoice you can complete a paper application form giving details of your property and information of where you would like to exchange to and your contact details. Other customers will then be able to contact you direct to arrange to view each other's properties and ensure you would like to exchange with each other. If you are interested in doing an exchange after viewing then you need to contact your landlord to get the paperwork to apply for a mutual exchange. If you are a St. Leger Homes tenant the mutual exchange will be dealt with by your local St. Leger Homes office.

40. How can I bid for a housing association property?

Some housing associations are advertising some of their properties in the HomeChoice bidding cycle. This means if you want to be considered for these properties you must be active on the Doncaster HomeChoice waiting list and place a bid in the same way as you would for a St. Leger Homes property. Once the bidding cycle has closed the list of bids is sent over to the relevant housing association and they will make contact with the successful bidder and verify their circumstances before offering a viewing of the property. This means you will not be contacted by the HomeChoice team about a bid on a housing association property.

41. I am worried I might become homeless, what can I do?

If you are worried you might become homeless you can seek advice from Doncaster Council's Housing Options Service, they can give advice about your current housing situation and other housing options. They can be contacted on 01302 862043.