

A guide to Doncaster Council's Housing Allocations Policy



www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk



Doncaster
Council

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

Introduction

This booklet is a guide to Doncaster HomeChoice and includes information on Doncaster Council's Housing Allocations Policy and how to use the service. It gives an overview of the policy and the lettings process.

How to use Doncaster HomeChoice

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

You can register:

- Online at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk

You need to fully complete the housing register application 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
- Validation of information supplied 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.

Some applicants may not be eligible or do not qualify to join the housing register. It will be based on an assessment of individual circumstances. Some examples are:

- Have outstanding housing related debt over eight weeks 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 – conditions apply
- Do not have a local connection with Doncaster
- Are an owner of a property with equity in excess of £120,000

Full details are available on our website at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk 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.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk

We advertise available properties weekly each Thursday at 00:01 to Monday at 23:59. This is known as 'the bidding cycle'.

You can place up to three bids per cycle and revise your bids at any time over the five days, as the time you bid does not affect your final position in the bidding short list.

Bids are not on a first come first serve basis, so you can bid at anytime during the bidding cycle as your final position is sorted when the cycle closes.

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

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

You can bid in various ways during the bidding cycle:

- Online at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk
- By calling the free-phone automated number 0800 0276235
- At your local St Leger Homes Office
- By SMS text to 07781 484771. It must have your 6 digit login reference, a space, then your memorable date, then your first advert reference, then a space, then your second advert reference, then a space, and your third advert reference. If you only want to bid on one property.

Example: 00000 10/01/1980 12345 23456 34567

- By calling the Doncaster HomeChoice team on 01302 862628

If you need help and support with the registration or bidding process please contact us on 01302 862628 (option 3) and we can offer help, advice and support.

We can explain how to access and use the service including offering advice on options available to you.

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

If you have a change in circumstances you need to inform Doncaster HomeChoice 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 please let us know 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 applicants 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.

If you don't qualify to join the Housing Register you may be able to join our Open Market list. We advertise a small number of lower demand properties to applicants on Open Market, we will give you further information if this applies to you.

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.

The bands are described on the following pages.

Platinum Band - effective date applies

- If you have been assessed as Full Duty Homeless under the relevant legislation. We will award Platinum priority if alternative suitable accommodation is not available.
- 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 and bereaved spouses or civil 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.
- 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.

We will back date your effective date to the date you entered the pathway.

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
- 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

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
- 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
- Tenants vacating adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer needed

Bronze Band - registration date applies

- You do not fall into the priority bands but still want to move
- Your priority has been removed if you have refused three reasonable offers
- You were a statutory homeless applicant in the platinum band and refused one reasonable offer

General Band - registration date applies

Applicants who own, or have a financial interest in, a property and have equity of less than £120,000.

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.

What type of property can I be considered for?

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 occupational therapist recommendations where adapted
- Some adapted properties will be advertised with priority to applicants assessed by an Occupational Therapist 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 reverse age order starting with the oldest applicant
- 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				House	Rooms	
	Bedsit	Flat	Bungalow	Maisonette		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 overcrowded.

Bedroom allocations for applicants with children are dependant on their age.

Shortlisting and offers

When you bid, once the advertising cycle has finished your final queue position will be shown on your Doncaster HomeChoice 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 person.

If we reach your turn we will contact you to ensure you are still interested in the property and check your details. If you are still eligible then we will inform you of the property details and 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.

If we cannot contact you or you do not make yourself available we will move onto the next applicant.

You will not be considered for any other offers until you make a decision about your current offer. We will not contact you if you are not successful or if we do not reach your turn.

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

Refusal of an offer

If you are in the Platinum, Gold or Silver band and you are made three reasonable offers which you refuse, your priority may be removed, including adapted accommodation.

This is with the exception of platinum band statutory homeless applicants who will be made one offer only before their priority is removed. If you are in the Bronze, General or Transfer list and refuse three reasonable offers your application may be suspended

for six 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.

Information on recent lets

Feedback on recent lets within the last three months will be published at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk on the recent lets page. You can search recent lets using area, street name, property type, bedrooms and the advert type for example a Local Authority or Housing Association.

This will show you the band, effective and registration date of the successful applicant and total bids on the property. Use this information to make more informed decisions about your chances of being rehoused.

Adapted properties

If you are assessed by an Occupational Therapist as requiring a property with adaptations, you may be placed onto Doncaster Council's Accessible Housing Register (AHR) and be informed of suitable property types and adaptations that meet your needs.

You may also 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 do bid and the adaptations aren't suitable then you will not be offered the property.

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 on its own merits and will involve the appropriate agencies before a decision is reached, including multi agency meetings.

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

Suspensions

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

- Applicants in the Bronze and General band who have bid and then refused three offers will have their application suspended for six months. This includes refusals of adapted accommodation which would have been suitable.
- 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 on 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.

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 through:

- www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk and viewing the Mutual Exchange adverts
- Contacting Doncaster Home Exchange team on 01302 862628 (option 2)

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 the 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.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk under the Partners and other Housing Options link.

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

Bidding

You can make up to three bids per week:

- Online at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk
- By calling the free-phone automated number 0800 0276235
- By calling the Doncaster HomeChoice team on 01302 862628 (option 1)
- By SMS text to 07781 484771. It must have your 6 digit login reference, a space, then your memorable date, then your first advert reference, then a space, then your second advert reference, then a space, and your third advert reference. If you only want to bid on one property.

Please cut me out and keep me

My HomeChoice details					
My Login Reference	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
My Memorable Date	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
My Band					
Platinum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gold	<input type="checkbox"/>	Silver	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bronze	<input type="checkbox"/>	General	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer List	<input type="checkbox"/>

For more information contact

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