



A guide to Doncaster Council's Allocation Policy



Doncaster
Metropolitan Borough Council

2010

Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 3 Doncaster HomeChoice
- 4 Who can apply?
- 4 Support available
- 4 Bands
 - 5 - Platinum
 - 6 - Gold
 - 7 - Silver
 - 7 - Bronze
 - 7 - General
- 8 What type of property can I be considered for?
 - 9 - Property type guide
- 8 Shortlisting and offers
- 10 Refusal of an offer
- 10 Feedback
- 10 Direct Match
 - 11 - Adapted properties
 - 11 - Housing Assessment Panel
 - 11 - Housing Management Lets
- 11 Suspensions and exclusions
- 12 Reviews
 - 13 - The review process
- 13 Regeneration schemes
- 14 Other housing options
 - 14 - Mutual exchange
 - 14 - Housing associations
 - 15 - Affordable housing
 - 15 - Housing options

This booklet is a guide to Doncaster Council's Housing Allocation Policy. It gives an overview of the policy and the lettings process. The full policy can be viewed at www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk

Doncaster HomeChoice

From November 2007 all available council properties for rent in Doncaster will be advertised under the Doncaster HomeChoice scheme.

Each week you will be able to express an interest in any properties that you like and you are eligible for. This is known as bidding although **no money is involved**. This allows you to choose which type of property and area of Doncaster you would like to live in.

To join Doncaster HomeChoice you can:

- Visit our website www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk and complete an on line application form
- Call us on 01302 862628 and request an application form
- Visit any local St. Leger Homes office

You will need to have completed a registration form and the date we receive it will be your registration date. We will assess your circumstances and place you in one of five bands depending on your housing need. You will receive confirmation in writing with your date, band and registration number. Information on how to bid will also be included.

Who can apply?

Anyone who is over the age of 16 regardless of tenure or financial circumstances can register an interest in accessing housing in Doncaster. However, certain restrictions apply.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible for re-housing, please contact us on 01302 862628.

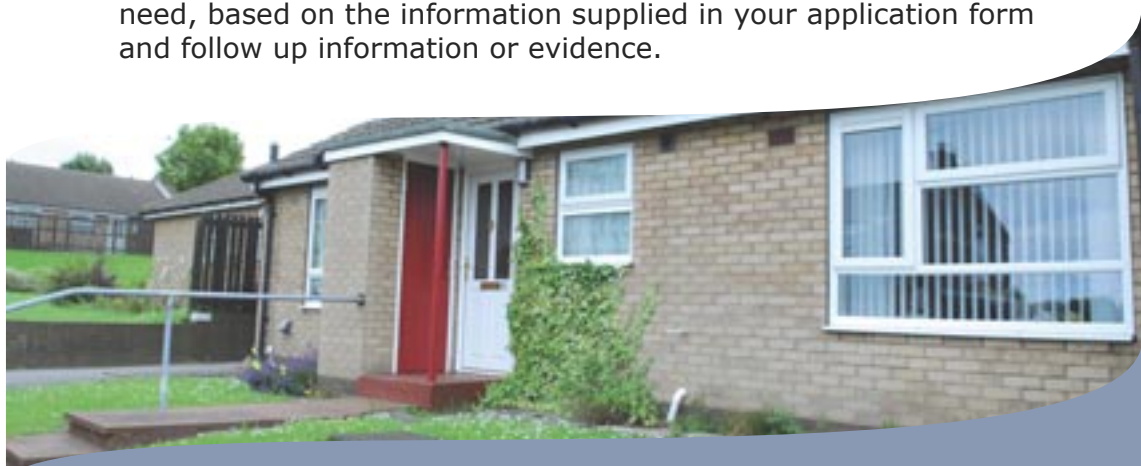
Support available

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.

Bands

What are the bands?

There are three priority bands (Platinum, Gold and Silver), a Bronze band for those in low housing need and a General band for applicants able to resolve their own situation. You will be placed in the most appropriate band that reflects your housing need, based on the information supplied in your application form and follow up information or evidence.



Doncaster HomeChoice will recognise cumulative need, where an applicant qualifies for a priority on a number of grounds, they may qualify for an additional preference. Doncaster HomeChoice will conduct an additional assessment of the needs of these applicants to determine whether the household should be given any additional preference to that already given.

All applicants who require re-housing as a result of violence, threats of violence or harassment will be assessed by a multi agency assessment panel using the evidence provided to assess the urgency of the re-housing need. In these circumstances alternatives to re-housing will also be considered e.g. close circuit television, injunctions, mediation or sanctuary but the primary consideration is for the ongoing safety and wellbeing of the applicant.

The bands are as follows:

Platinum Band

Applicants who the law considers to be homeless and who Doncaster Council owes a full duty to rehouse.

Applicants whose property is in the Doncaster Borough and has been approved for demolition or clearance via a Council cabinet decision.

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.

Also, applicants will be placed in this band where major works are required to their property making it uninhabitable and an assessment has been carried out as to whether they can resolve their own housing need.

Gold Band

Applicants whose current home is statutorily overcrowded according to the housing legislation and those who are sexually overcrowded.

Applicants 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.

Applicants in critical need for re-housing due to medical/health or welfare reasons.

Applicants unable to return home from hospital, as their current property does not meet their medical needs or where temporary accommodation would be inappropriate or they require immediate re housing preventing an admission to hospital or institution.

Applicants that need to move to a particular location as not to do so would suffer hardship to themselves or others.

Applicants retiring from tied tenancies.

Any young person under the age of 21 that the Council has assessed and owes a duty to house under the Children Act.

Applicants leaving Supported People funded schemes who have been assessed as no longer requiring the level of support provided by the service and the move to independent accommodation is appropriate and an appropriate package of re-settlement/long-term support is ready to be put in place.

Applicants who have been assessed by Doncaster Council's Homeless and Advisory section as at risk of homelessness who have a local connection who are not statutory homeless and have a priority need under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.

Silver Band

Social Housing tenants who give up a high demand family property that they are under occupying to achieve best use of stock.

Tenants vacating adapted properties.

Applicants taking up a particular employment, education or training opportunity.

Applicants in substantial need for rehousing due to medical/health or welfare reasons.

Applicants who have been assessed by Doncaster Council's Homeless and Advisory team as homeless without having a priority need under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.

Applicants who have been assessed by Doncaster Council's Homeless and Advisory team as intentionally homeless and having a priority need in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.

Bronze Band

All other Applicants whose need does not fall into the priority bands but still wish to move and those whose priority award has expired or removed after they have refused a reasonable offer will be placed in this band.

General Band

All new applicants and all existing applicants on review or prior to an allocation being made will be required to have a financial assessment. Applicants will be placed in the General band if through financial and medical considerations, they are assessed as being able to resolve their own housing need.

What type of property can I be considered for?

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

These are some examples:

- Bungalows will initially be given to customers over 60 years old and to disabled customers with appropriate occupational therapist recommendations
- Adapted properties will be allocated to applicants assessed as requiring the adaptations already carried out to the property
- Sheltered accommodation will be allocated to people who have been assessed as requiring sheltered accommodation and are over 60 years old or younger applicants who have health and/or disability needs. Extra care housing will be assessed separately by an officer within Neighbourhoods, Communities and Children's Services

All age restrictions must be decided in line with guidance on local lettings policies. If there is no interest in a property with a minimum age limit, a decision will be made jointly with Doncaster Council whether to lower the age limit and this will be regularly reviewed.

The table on the next page gives examples of type of property you would qualify for please check property adverts for details.

Shortlisting and offers

When you bid, you will be placed in a shortlist. Once the advertising cycle has finished the relevant checks will be carried out and the customer at the top of the list will be offered the property. If the first customer refuses the offer, the property will then be offered to the next eligible customer.

Property type guide

Description	Type					Rooms	
	Bed - Sit	Flat	Bungalow	Maisonette	House	Minimum	Maximum
Single Person	✓	✓	✓			1	1 [#]
Single Person + overnight access to 1 child		✓	✓	✓		1	2
Single Person + overnight access to 2 or more children		✓	✓	✓		1	3
Two 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

Single applicants can also be considered for two bed flats due to limited stock of one bed flats.

* Includes confirmed pregnancy of 21 weeks and over.

† Three bed accommodation will only be allocated if it does not result in a household being overcrowded.

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

Shortlisting and offers (continued)

If you have been successful we will contact you to further assess your application and make arrangements to view the property. You will have to make a decision about this property before you are considered for any other properties. You will not be contacted if you are unsuccessful.

Refusal of an offer

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

Feedback

Feedback on homes that have been let will be published giving the successful customer's band and date. Results will be published in various ways for example on the website and in local St. Leger offices.

Direct Match

There will be certain circumstances when a property will not be advertised in the normal way. This is known as a Direct Match. The qualifying person will normally receive one reasonable offer of accommodation.

The majority of Direct Match are adapted properties to ensure best use of adapted housing stock and to meet the needs of vulnerable applicants.

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

Adapted properties

If you are assessed as requiring a property with adaptations, you will be placed on Doncaster Council's Accessible Housing Register and be allocated a property through nomination from the accessible housing co-ordinator. You will also be informed of which general stock properties will meet your needs.

Housing Assessment Panel

There may be times when certain circumstances are not covered fully by the allocations policy or may need further assessment. These cases will be referred 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. You will be informed in writing of the decision made and will have the right to appeal.

Housing Management Lets

There are some situations where Doncaster HomeChoice may need to use vacant properties for specific management purposes and the qualifying person will normally receive one reasonable offer of accommodation. This is called a Housing Management Let. Housing Management Lets will be assessed by the Housing Assessment Panel before a decision is made.

Suspensions and exclusions

There will be certain circumstances when you may be suspended from bidding. This includes but is not limited to:

- current or previous rent arrears
- being involved in anti-social behaviour
- malicious damage to property/rechargeable repairs
- not keeping a previous property in satisfactory condition

Suspensions and exclusions (continued)

- anyone who has been violent to or threatened staff or agents of St. Leger Homes of Doncaster, Doncaster Council, previous landlords or the police.

If we deem you to be ineligible for an allocation you are still able to join the housing register but your application is then suspended until we are satisfied that the reason for the ineligibility no longer applies. We do this by operating a suspension policy. This gives us the right to stop people from being allocated a tenancy or transferring homes. Everyone who is suspended has the right of appeal against this decision.

Applicants will, in the first instance be suspended for a period of 12 months. Following this period the applicant may apply to have their case reviewed in order to have their suspension lifted. At this point the applicant must be able to provide evidence to demonstrate a period of acceptable behaviour and that they will be able to conduct a tenancy in a satisfactory manner. If a risk assessment identifies the need for a support package to minimise the risk of a future tenancy failure, this may be a condition of the suspension being lifted.

Reviews

You are entitled to a review in the following circumstances:

- If it is decided that you are ineligible to join the register due to immigration status or unacceptable behaviour. In this case, you must be notified of the decision and the grounds for it.
- 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

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- Where you disagree with your registration or effective date.
 - Where you disagree with the removal of your priority.

The review process

In all review 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 housing assessment panel will review the decision and will then write to you with the outcome. The letter will explain what action will be taken and the reasons for doing so.

The officer(s) involved in the original decision will not be involved in the review. Homelessness reviews will be carried out by Doncaster Council. You can request a hearing and may bring someone with you in support or to help you present your case.

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. In this instance, the decision to ring fence will be made by a panel chaired by the Council's Director of Housing. The following factors will be taken into account when making a decision to ring fence properties:

- Timescale of demolition
- Availability of suitable properties in the area
- Impact of other priorities

Other housing options

If you are looking to rent a home in Doncaster, you may want to consider alternative housing options to a council property. Please see the information below for some other housing options.

Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange is where a tenant can find their own exchange. You may be eligible to do a mutual exchange if you are a secure council or housing association tenant. You can look for an exchange through:

- the list of mutual exchange adverts on the Doncaster HomeChoice website: www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk
- local St. Leger Homes offices with internet access
- private adverts

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. You will be notified in writing from your landlord with the outcome.

Housing associations

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 in our HomeChoice advert to give you a wider choice. You can bid on these properties in the normal way and you will be contacted by the housing association if you are successful.

For more information about housing associations, please visit our website - www.doncasterhomechoice.co.uk - or contact the

HomeChoice team on 01302 862628 who can send out more information.

Affordable housing

A HomeBuy Agent is a one stop shop, allowing you to apply for a whole host of schemes and developments regardless of the supplier by completing just one application form. Plumlife specialise in shared and low cost home ownership, as well as affordable homes to rent now and buy later, and are the designated HomeBuy Agent for Yorkshire. If you are interested in affordable housing, contact Plumlife:

Address: Plumlife, Plumlife Sales, Southern Gate, 729 Princess Road, Manchester M20 2LT
Phone: 0161 447 5050
Website: www.plumlife.co.uk
Email: enquiries@plumlife.co.uk

Housing options

If you need advice on your housing options, Doncaster Council's Housing Options Service may be able to find accommodation for you to offer advice and assistance to help you retain your current accommodation.

Address: Housing Options Service, King Mews, 64-66 East Laith Gate, Doncaster DN1 1JD
Phone: 01302 862043
Fax: 01302 862006
Email: housingoptionsteam@doncaster.gov.uk
In person: The Kings Mews office is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm

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