

# HOME CHOICE PLUS:

## HOW SOCIAL HOUSING IS ALLOCATED AND LET IN BROMSGROVE AND STRATFORD ON AVON



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**HOME CHOICE PLUS** is the system used to advertise, allocate, and let social rented homes in Bromsgrove and Stratford on Avon. It's how we manage our local housing registers, and how you manage your housing application, including submitting documents and evidence, and bidding on advertised properties.



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## WHO IS ELIGIBLE

You must be over 16, have a local connection to one of the partner local authorities, unless you have a Reasonable Preference for housing as set out in law\*, and have a housing need (unless exempt) and valid immigration status to be eligible to join the Home Choice Plus housing register.

You may be exempt from the requirement to have a local connection if you are a member of the armed forces, a care leaver, or have fled domestic abuse.

A local connection is one or more of the following:

- Current residence in the Home Choice Plus Partnership area by choice for at least two years at the date of application
- Current permanent paid employment of at least 6 months in the partnership area
- Have a close family member who has lived in the partnership area for a minimum of 5 years
- Previous residence in the partnership area for at least three out of the last five years
- Local connection due to special circumstances.

Otherwise, unless very special circumstances apply you will be unable to join the Home Choice Plus housing register.

## HOW TO APPLY

You must be registered with Home Choice Plus to apply. Here is the process once you register.

### Complete a new Housing Register application form

Complete the application form on Home Choice Plus, including submitting relevant evidence and documents when prompted to do so. We will contact you if we need any further information. Applications will not be processed until all required information is received.

### Receive confirmation

If your application is eligible and the information you have supplied is verified, then you will receive confirmation that you have been registered and your band (see below).

### Tell us of any change in circumstances

If your circumstances change, update your application on Home Choice Plus. If you do not, you may no longer be eligible for homes you have bid on, and you may even be removed from the register. Changes in your circumstances may affect your banding and waiting time.

### Bid on homes

All available homes are advertised weekly on Home Choice Plus from Tuesday to Monday. You can bid on up to three suitable homes a week.

### Receive offer

Homes are usually offered to applicants in order of highest priority band then longest waiting time in that band. The landlord will verify your application details to ensure they are correct and you are eligible for the home.

### Decide on offer

A viewing may be arranged. You will need to be ready to decide and move home quickly, to start your new tenancy at your new home. If the leading applicant refuses a home, it is offered to the applicant with the next highest priority or whoever next satisfies the local lettings plan or Section 106 legal agreement.

To access Home Choice Plus, visit  
[www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk)

*\*The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) sets out your legal rights to housing, including 'Reasonable Preference' and 'Priority Need'. Depending on your circumstances the partner local authorities may also have various legal duties to you. If you want to know more about your rights please contact the appropriate Council's Housing team or refer to Shelter, the housing and homelessness charity.*

## THE ORDER OF PREFERENCE FOR HOMES

Priority to receive social housing depends on your circumstances, in accordance with the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy.

Your application is assessed against criteria set out in eight bands. It is placed into the highest band in which you have met one or more of the listed criteria, unless your banding has been reduced.

You are able to bid for suitable homes that become available, and homes are offered to bidders in order of highest band and then longest waiting time in that band.

### **PRIORITY BAND: 3 MONTH TIME LIMIT**

*Applicants who are statutorily homeless with a duty to re-house under s193 of Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need, not intentionally homeless and with a local connection).*

*Applicants owed the relief duty who are likely to be accepted as statutorily homeless with a duty to rehouse under the above Act (except in Stratford on Avon District)*

***This band is initially awarded for three months***

- Applicants will be expected to bid for all properties for which they are eligible
- Applicants will be expected to have made a bid within the first two weeks of being awarded this banding. If they have not made a bid within this time then bids will be made on their behalf, by Home Choice Plus on properties for which they are eligible
- If a suitable offer is refused the homeless duties may be discharged and the applicant may cease to have a priority band

### **GOLD PLUS: HIGH HOUSING NEED**

***Awarded for six months to applicants who have a local connection (unless homeless) and one or more of the following criteria applies.***

- Accepted as statutorily homeless but duty to re-house does not apply (excluding those who are intentionally homeless)
- Accepted as statutorily homeless but no priority need
- Homeless and the relief duty applies
- Likely to be homeless within 56 days and prevention duty applies
- Households who are accepted as homeless and in priority band with the decision making authority area that also have

- a local connection to another Home Choice Plus district
- Occupying private rented property where an Improvement Notice has been served for a Category 1 hazard (except for overcrowding or space)
- Experiencing serious unintentional overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)
- Under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the partnership area (have too many bedrooms)
- Occupying a social housing property in the partnership area with major adaptations they do not need
- Households with a high medical need/disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving
- Requiring move-on from supported accommodation
- Two or more criteria in Gold Band

### **GOLD BAND: MEDIUM HOUSING NEED**

***Awarded for 12 months to applicants who have a local connection and one of the following criteria apply***

- Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally
- Experiencing unintentional overcrowding and lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms
- Households suffering harassment (excludes priority band cases)
- Those living in exceptional circumstances
- Households with children under 10 years old and living in a flat with no access to a garden
- Households suffering with some disrepair in their property

### **SILVER PLUS: HIGH HOUSING NEED**

***Awarded for six months to applicants who have no local connection and one or more of the following criteria applies.***

- Accepted as statutorily homeless but duty to re-house does not apply (excluding those who are intentionally homeless)
- Accepted as statutorily homeless but no priority need and relief duty applies
- Likely to be homeless within 56 days and prevention duty applies
- Households who are accepted as homeless and in priority band with the decision making authority area that also have a local connection to another Home Choice Plus district
- Occupying private rented property where an Improvement Notice has been served for a Category 1 hazard (except for overcrowding or space)
- Experiencing serious unintentional overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)
- Under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the partnership area (have too many bedrooms)
- Occupying a social housing property in the partnership area with major

adaptations they do not need households with a high medical need/disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving | Requiring move-on from supported accommodation | Two or more criteria in Silver Band

### **SILVER: MEDIUM HOUSING NEED**

**Awarded for 12 months to applicants who have no local connection and one of the following criteria apply**

- | Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally
- | Experiencing unintentional overcrowding and lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms
- | Households suffering harassment (excludes priority band cases) | Those living in exceptional circumstances | Households with children under 10 years old and living in a flat with no access to a garden | Households suffering with some disrepair in their property.

### **REDUCED BANDING**

**Applicant can bid with reduced priority. Banding reviewed after 6 months.**

Would be in Priority, Gold Plus, Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Band and 1 or more of the following criteria applies:

- | Deliberately worsened circumstances
- | Households with Housing Related Debts
- | Breached tenancy conditions relating to anti-social or abusive behaviour | Failed to bid on suitable properties | Refused suitable property after successful bid

### **BRONZE PLUS: LOW HOUSING NEED**

**Awarded for 12 months. Applications will be closed if no bids are placed within a 12 month period.**

Has a local connection and 1 or more of the following criteria applies:

- | Existing social tenants in the Home Choice Plus area seeking a transfer | Experiencing low level medical or welfare issues | Experiencing financial hardship | Sharing facilities with other non-related households | Residing in an institution or supported housing scheme
- | Tenure is insecure (tied accommodation or lodging with family) | Households that are newly forming | Eligible for and interested in older persons' accommodation | Eligible for and interested in Shared Ownership

### **BRONZE : LOW HOUSING NEED**

**Awarded for 12 months. Applications will be closed if no bids are placed within a 12 month period. This banding is awarded where there is no connection to a district.**

- | Existing social tenants in the Home Choice Plus area seeking a transfer | Experiencing low level medical or welfare issues | Experiencing financial hardship | Sharing facilities with other non-related households | Residing in an institution or supported housing scheme
- | Tenure is insecure (tied accommodation or lodging with family) | Households that are newly forming | Eligible for and interested in older persons' accommodation | Eligible for and interested in Shared Ownership

## **ADDITIONAL PREFERENCE FOR THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR COMMUNITY**

Those who are working, volunteering, or caring can receive 6 months extra waiting time in their band in recognition of their service to the community. People with disabilities that would exclude them from these roles can also receive this additional time. Community contribution can be awarded as follows:

- | To applicants who are in employment or who have been employed for six out of the last 9 months for 16 hours or more a week
- | Volunteering for at least 20 hours a month for at least 6 continuous months at the point of application, or
- | Caring full time for someone and in receipt of Carers Allowance due to disability or frailty for at least 6 months, or
- | To applicants who are in education or training and have been for at least six months at the point of application
- | Excluded from the above by a disability and is receiving the support element of Employment Support Allowance or the higher rate of Disability Living Allowance or the Personal Independence Payment.

## UPDATING YOUR DETAILS ONCE YOU ARE ON THE REGISTER

You must update your application if your circumstances change, for example if you have a child, or someone moves in or out of your household, or you have a change in your income, contact details, or relevant medical conditions.

If you do not tell us about changes to your circumstances you might not be eligible for a home you have bid on, and you may even be removed from the register.

Changes in your circumstances may affect your banding and waiting time in your band.

## REMOVAL FROM THE REGISTER

You may be removed from Home Choice Plus if you:

- Change your address and do not update your application
- Do not contact us when we ask you to
- Do not make a bid within 1 year

You can also ask to be removed from the register.

## FALSE STATEMENTS AND WITHHOLDING INFORMATION

It is a criminal offence to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to an application (s.171 Housing Act 1996). This includes but is not limited to:

- Information requested on the housing registration form or in response to correspondence at the review of the application
- Any information relating to any other reassessment of the application
- Information provided by third parties.

## FURTHER INFORMATION INCLUDING FULL ALLOCATIONS POLICY

This document is a simplified guide to the Home Choice Plus full and formal 'Allocations Policy', which is available at [www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk).