

Warwick District Council

HomeChoice Allocation Scheme



www.warwickdc.gov.uk

What is HomeChoice?

Homechoice is a scheme which Warwick District Council operates in partnership with several housing associations to provide social rented homes to people in need.

All new and existing council and housing association properties are advertised on the Warwick District Council Homechoice website (warwickdc.gov.uk/homechoice). This means that you only need to apply once, and everyone is assessed equally, regardless of the landlord.

There are many more people applying for social housing each year than there are empty properties to let. HomeChoice helps us to decide which applicants are eligible to register, and who will be given priority for housing.

This booklet gives you the information you need to know about HomeChoice and how to apply for vacant properties. The HomeChoice allocations policy is available to download or view on the Warwick District Council website at: [Housing Allocations Scheme document](#).

Who can apply for housing through HomeChoice

To be eligible for Warwick District Council's housing register (HomeChoice) you must:

- ✓ Be a British Citizen, or have the right to live, work and access public funds in the UK
- ✓ Be habitually resident in the Common Travel Area
- ✓ Be aged 18 or over (in exceptional circumstances a 16- or 17-year-old may qualify if they are statutorily homeless or subject to a Special Agency Referral. They may require an adult or organisation to act as a guarantor for rent payments).
- ✓ Have a local connection to Warwick District or be in an exempt category. You can find more information and guidance about the local-connection rules in the full [policy](#) available to view on our website.

It is unlikely you will qualify for the housing register if you:

- Have savings/assets in excess of £16,000 (excludes members or former members of the Armed Forces)
- Have a household income exceeding £50,000 per year (excludes disability benefits and not applicable to members or former members of the Armed Forces)
- Are a homeowner
- Are incapable in law of holding a legal tenancy
- Some exceptions may apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you think this might be you, you can refer to the full Housing Allocations Scheme document on our website for more information.

You will not qualify for the housing register if you:

- Are guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a Council or Housing Association tenant
- Have been housed through HomeChoice within the last 12 months and do not fall into a reasonable preference category

For full details, refer to the [Housing Allocations Scheme document](#).

How can I register?

You can apply for HomeChoice online by following the links on our website. You will need to supply the following information for all adults who will be living in your household before starting your application:

- Full names and dates of birth of everyone to be included in your registration for housing
- National insurance numbers
- 5-year address history
- Immigration status
- Details of any unspent criminal convictions
- Details of any Armed Forces service including dates of service

Please complete all questions in full where possible. If you do not have the information available to complete your application in one go, you can log out and your answers for each section will be saved. However, you need to make sure you complete the questions for a section and save it before you log out.

You will be required to provide evidence by uploading supporting documents. We will be unable to process your application unless to requested supporting documents have been provided.

It is a criminal offence to knowingly give false information or to withhold information relevant to your application. A court could fine you up to £5,000 if you are found guilty.

How we assess your application

Once you have submitted your housing application form and provided the necessary documentation the following steps will be take place:

Verification

A member of the allocations team will review the application and ensure all the required information and documents have been submitted.

Assessment

Once we have all the information needed, we will assess your application against the allocation scheme criteria and determine whether you qualify to join the housing register, and if so, the priority of your application.

We assess applications in order of the date that we receive them. We will write to you to update you on the outcome of your housing application. If you are not successful, you will have the right to request a review of the decision.

We will usually process your application within 21 working days. We will write to you to confirm the decision on your application. If you do not agree with the decision you can ask us to review your application. You must do this in writing within 21 days of the date on the decision letter. We will review your case and tell you the outcome in writing.

Decisions are primarily made by the Housing Advice & Allocations Team, with exceptions for special circumstances. Decisions on reviews are handled by officers senior to the original decision-makers. The Council reserves the right to delegate decisions to higher-level officers if necessary.

Once you have received this decision, there is no further right of appeal to this Council.

Banding

We place applicants into bands based on their housing need. There are four bands in total and we will place you in the band which reflects your current circumstances. The following tables give you an indication of which band you may be placed in. However, you should refer to the [Housing Allocations Scheme document](#) on our website for more detailed information.

Applicants in Band 1 will be prioritised for every property of the correct size that is advertised through HomeChoice. This reflects the urgency of the housing need, unless a property has specific restrictions applied to it such as an age limit. These restrictions would be clearly set out in the property advert.

A property will be advertised with a preferred band, decided randomly by the computer system according to the following quotas:

- 60% for Band 2
- 40% for Band 3

Band 1

1	Homeless applicants where we have accepted a full duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.
2	People with medical priority in exceptional circumstances.
3	Those living in properties that have been Council approved for clearance and demolition, lease expiry (6 months).
4	Households living in properties where there is acute overcrowding (lacking 3 bedrooms).
5	Cases where significantly adapted social housing is being released.
6	Those living in private rented sector properties identified as having insanitary or unfit conditions by Council's Private Sector Housing Team.
7	Special-agency referral from organisations, such as Warwickshire County Council Adult Health and Community Services; Children, Young People and Families Services; and Probation. We will assess these referrals on a case-by case-basis.
8	Care-Leaver referred by Warwickshire County Council as placement will end at age 18. Band 1 preference will only apply to applicants with an established local connection to Warwick district through employment, residency or family associations.
9	Those with exceptional need to move as decided by Housing Head of Service where the only way to resolve the housing need is using discretion.
10	Foster Carers and adopters following a referral from Warwickshire County Council.
11	Cases where there is an under-occupation of a 4-bed property of larger.
12	Cases where there is a serious threat to a child under the age of 18. Additional preference will be awarded in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council's assessment.
13	Armed-forces cases promoted from Band 2, due to additional preference being awarded.

Band 2

1	Persons moved-on from Warwick District Council accredited supported accommodation for those who are assessed as vulnerable.
2	People with severe medical conditions or disabilities whose current housing is unsuitable, and the issues cannot be resolved.
3	To provide care and support for those who need to move to give or receive ongoing substantial support as assessed by Warwickshire County Council.
4	Persons in financial or economic hardship.
5	Applicants who need to move due to threat of domestic abuse, violence or harassment but who are not in immediate danger, as determined by an appropriate approved risk assessment by the referral agency.
6	Those living in properties that have been Council approved for clearance and demolition, lease expiry (12 months).
7	Households in properties which are overcrowded by two bedrooms in line with the bedroom requirement (see page 8).
8	Persons moved on from care referred by Warwickshire County Council. Band 2 preference will only apply to applicants aged between 18 and 21 with an established local connection to Warwick district through employment, residency or family associations.
9	Those living in private rented sector properties where a Prohibition Order has been served.
10	Two-for-One Moves where two social housing tenants want to move in together which will free up two properties.
11	Inheriting a tenancy you cannot stay in because it would lead to under-occupation or overcrowding.
12	Homelessness - where applicants are owed the Prevention or Relief Duty or are found to not be in priority need of accommodation or intentionally homeless.

Band 2 continued

13	Under-occupation where tenants of social housing are occupying a house and are willing to move to a smaller property.
14	'Child in need' where rehousing is recommended for the welfare of the child.
15	Armed-forces cases promoted from Band 3, due to additional preference being awarded.

Band 3

1	Homeless households who have been classed as 'homeless intentionally' in line with homelessness law when the relief duty has been ended or where no housing duties are owed.
2	People who are neither an owner nor a tenant.
3	Families with one or more children younger than 10 living above the ground floor.
4	Applicants permanently sharing more than one facility, for example a bath, toilet or kitchen, with another household.
5	Applicants under-occupying a flat, maisonette or bungalow who are willing to move to a smaller sized property.
6	Households who are overcrowded by 1 bedroom in line with the bedroom requirement.

Band 4

1	All applicants without a housing need, with a local connection.
2	Existing social housing tenants who are adequately housed.
3	Applicants without a local connection (and not exempt from the local- connection criteria as set out on page 3) but who are in a reasonable preference category.

What type and size property am I able to bid for?

We consider that each of the following will need one bedroom.

- An adult couple (an adult couple in a bedsit is classed as lacking a bedroom)
- Any other person aged 16 or over (including a live-in carer where the need for a bedroom would be accepted under Housing Benefit regulations)
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16
- Two children under the age of 10, no matter what their sex
- Any other child (we only take account of children if they live with you permanently and it is their main home). We take account of unborn children from 25 weeks into the pregnancy. We will assume their sex is the one that will minimise the number of bedrooms needed.

As a rule, you cannot bid for properties with more bedrooms than you need. There are two exceptions to this which are:

- you need to be a certain age (normally 55 or more) to live in the property; or
- you would be considered as needing an extra bedroom under the rules used for assessing claims for Housing Benefit.

Due to the shortage of four- and five-bedroom properties in the district, if you have this need, we will allow you to bid for three-bedroom properties, but we may not offer you a three-bedroom property if it means your household will be overcrowded.

As well as the number of bedrooms that you need there are rules about the type of property that you can bid for:

- Bedsits will only be offered to single people;
- Some, but not all, bungalows and flats, are only available to people in a certain age range, for example aged 60 or more (where this applies it will be shown on the advert for the property);
- Houses with two or more bedrooms are generally only available to people with children younger than 16. Exceptions will be considered to those with medical needs that cannot be catered for in other housing stock available and for those downsizing from 4 and 5 bedroom houses.

Assisted Bidding

The Council reserves the right to place a bid on behalf of the applicant (assisted bidding) or to allocate a property through a 'direct offer'. A direct offer means that an applicant will not bid on properties but will receive one offer of suitable accommodation. Direct offers are made by the housing service outside of HomeChoice. Applicants can receive up to two suitable offers of accommodation except for certain households awarded a priority due to homelessness.

Number of offers

Applicants can receive up to two suitable offers of accommodation except for certain households awarded a priority due to homelessness. Applicants who are homeless will receive one suitable offer.

Special rules applying to preference bands;

- If you are in Band 1 for homelessness, you will have 4 weeks in which to place a bid. After this time your allocated Housing Options officer will place bids on your behalf. You will have this priority for up to 12 weeks. The 12- week period will begin from the date you are registered in Band 1. During this period, we will make only make one reasonable and suitable offer of accommodation. The Housing Advice Team will be able to make bids on behalf of applicants for any suitable properties that become available. If your bid is successful, we will not make you any further offers.

If you have not been housed, or received an offer of suitable accommodation, within the 12-week period we will review your case. In these circumstances we will either extend the time period or make one final direct offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation.

- Homeless applicants in Band 2 with a Prevention or Relief duty owed to them who do not actively bid for properties on HomeChoice will have bids placed for them by their allocated Housing Options Officer. You will be expected to bid in the first available bidding cycle.

- For all other applicants in Band 2 who have not reasonably bid for a suitable property within 6 months of their Band 2 award, the local authority reserves the right to place bids on the applicant's behalf.

The Council will not normally consider non-essential preferences concerning the location or type of re-housing requested by the applicant. Failure to bid for any properties over a period of 12 months will result in disqualification from the Housing Register for a period of 12 months unless there are extenuating circumstance.

How can I view and bid for properties?

You can view and bid for all available properties on our website at www.warwickdc.gov.uk/homechoice.

We place adverts every week starting at 00.01hrs every Thursday and closing at 23.59hrs the following Tuesday. This gives you six days to place bids. You can place up to five bids on each advert. You should place bids in your order of preference. This is because if you are at the top of the list for more than one property, we will only consider you for the one you bid for first.

If you have lost or misplaced your bidding information, please email: housing.advice@warwickdc.gov.uk.

Computers are available at all Warwickshire Libraries and you can use these to view and bid for properties. If you are not able to access a computer at your local library and do not have any family or friends who can place a bid for you, please contact Housing Advice on 01926 456129 (option 2).

How will I know if my bid has been successful?

If you are successful, you will be notified when you log into your HomeChoice account that you are 'under offer'. The landlord of the property will contact you by phone or by email. It is important that you tell us if you change your phone number, or email address otherwise you might miss out on the property. Sometimes, emails may filter to junk/spam folders. You should check these regularly if you are actively bidding.

You will be offered the opportunity to view the property and we will check your application to make sure you are entitled to the property. It is important to remember that the offer is provisional until all verification checks are completed and the landlord confirms the offer can proceed.

You will be required to pay one month's rent in advance if the provisional offer of accommodation can proceed.

We publish details of the successful applicant's band and their application date on the website. This information can help you decide where you have the best chance of being rehoused and to consider other housing options available to you.

Change in Circumstances

If your circumstances change, you will need to tell the Housing Advice Team. This includes telling us about the following changes.

- Change of address
- A confirmed pregnancy
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left your household
- A change of name
- An addition to the family (we will need proof of residence and identity)
- Any change in income or savings
- Changes in status of accommodation (e.g. you have received a notice to quit)

To tell us about any changes, you will need to fill in a change of circumstances form, which you can download from our website.

After we have received your completed change of circumstances form, we will write to you and let you know if your HomeChoice application has changed as a result.

Cancelling Your Application

The Council may cancel your application if you:

- do not place a bid within a 12 month period
- accept a tenancy with us or a housing association
- become a joint tenant with an existing tenant of WDC or a housing association
- buy a property, including through the Help to Buy Scheme
- have an introductory tenancy that has been ended or is in the process of being ended due to unsatisfactory conduct
- ask us to cancel it
- do not respond to correspondence
- move and do not tell us your new address
- have a change of immigration status that deems you ineligible for allocation for social housing
- give us false or incomplete information connected with your registration.

If we cancel your application, we will notify you in writing and give you details about your right to request a review of our decision.

Contact Information

Postal Address:

Warwick District Council
Housing Advice and Allocations
Town Hall
Leamington Spa
CV32 4AT

Customer Services (for face-to-face support)

Royal Pump Rooms
The Parade
Leamington Spa
CV32 4AA

Phone: 01926 456129 (option 2)

hadvice@warwickdc.gov.uk

www.warwickdc.gov.uk/homechoice

Where possible, information can be made available in other formats,
including large print, CD and other languages if required.

Tel. 01926 456129 option 2



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