

Housing Allocation Scheme

Summary of the Scheme

What is the Housing Allocation Scheme?

The Council must have a published scheme which sets out how it will allocate the homes owned by Central Bedfordshire Council and the homes offered to the Council by Registered Providers (Housing Associations) through nomination agreements. The Council keeps a register of applicants so that it can determine priorities based on the criteria in its Allocation Scheme. This leaflet summarises the detailed [Housing Allocation Scheme](#) which is available to view or download free of charge from the Council's website.

Who can join the Housing Register?

To join the Housing Register you must be eligible; over 16 years old, and meet the qualifying criteria. If you do not meet the qualifying criteria you will not be accepted on to the Housing Register. You will not be eligible if you are a person subject to the laws governing immigration control.

You will not qualify if you;

- are guilty of unacceptable behaviour
- owe debt to the Council or to a Registered Provider
- have a poor tenancy history i.e non-compliance with a previous tenancy agreement
- have savings or assets above £30,000 or a household income of more than £45,000 - £80,000 per annum (dependent upon household size)
- are a home owner
- have insufficient income to afford rent and bills. Applicants will be subject to an affordability assessment

How do I join the Housing Register?

You must complete an online application which is available on the Council's website. Once completed, the online form will tell you whether you appear to be eligible and qualify for the Housing Register.

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How will my application be prioritised?

Once you have provided proof of everything you told us about in your application and you have been accepted onto the Housing Register you will be given a priority band and a registration date. These two factors will be used to determine which applicant is the highest priority for properties that are available. If you meet the Employment criteria you will have priority in your band over those who do not. If your circumstances change and you are given a higher band the registration date used will always be the date you moved into that band. If you move down a band the date used will normally be the date that you were previously in that band or a higher band.

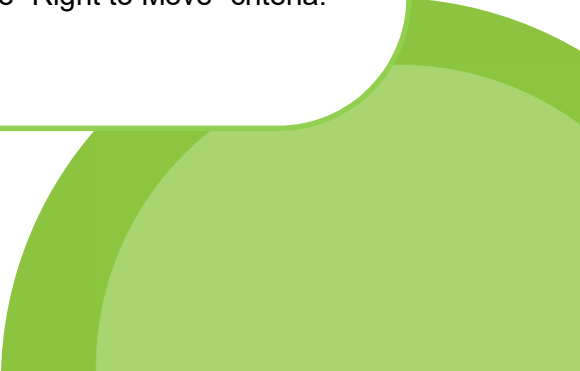
Do I have to live in Central Bedfordshire to be on the Housing Register?

To qualify for Band 1 or Band 2, you must have lived continuously in the Central Bedfordshire area for 3 years; or be in permanent, contracted employment in the area for a period of at least 6 months; or meet one of the exceptions to the residency criteria. If you do not meet the residency criteria but you are eligible and qualify for reasonable preference, your application will be placed in Band 3.

What if I don't meet the residency criteria?

In some circumstances you may not be required to meet the residency criteria.

You may not be required to meet the residency criteria if you;

- are serving, or have served, in the Regular Armed Forces.
 - cannot be considered to have a connection to another local authority area because you may be at risk in that area.
 - are a 'looked after child' placed in another area by Children's Services.
 - are giving or receiving care to a family member and not being on the Housing Register would be detrimental to this.
 - are receiving a care package assessed and provided by social services in the Central Bedfordshire area.
 - are covered by formally agreed reciprocal rehousing arrangements
 - would otherwise satisfy the residency criteria but you have been placed outside the area in an institution; care; or supported living scheme.
 - are a tenant in social housing in Central Bedfordshire.
 - are a social housing tenant who would qualify under the "Right to Move" criteria.
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What do you mean by “reasonable preference”?

The law requires Council’s to ensure that people in certain situations are given priority within their Allocation Schemes. People who are homeless; overcrowded or living in insanitary conditions; or need to move for health, welfare and hardship reasons must be given reasonable preference within the scheme priorities. Certain people who have served in the armed forces must be given additional preference.

Priority Bands

Band 1	Meets residency criteria, has an urgent need to move and qualifies for additional preference
Band 2	Meets residency criteria and qualifies for reasonable preference.
Band 3	Does not meet residency criteria and qualifies for reasonable preference
Band OP	Does not qualify for reasonable preference; qualifies for older persons accommodation only

Do I qualify for Band 1?

If you have been placed in Band 1 it’s because you have an urgent need to move and you must bid for the first suitable property that becomes available. You may lose your right to bid and be made a direct offer if you do not bid for suitable properties. If a suitable direct offer is made and refused, you will be placed in Band 2.

Band 1 applicants include those who:

- are Armed Forces Service Personnel (or their family) with an urgent need to move.
 - need to move due to an extremely urgent medical need.
 - are overcrowded as defined by the Housing Act 1985.
 - are social housing tenants who no longer need the adapted property they live in.
 - are social housing tenants affected by the Bedroom subsidy needing to downsize.
 - are council tenants who need move as their property is due to be demolished.
 - are tenants whose home poses a considerable risk to their health or safety.
 - have an urgent need to move due to violence or other extreme circumstances
 - have been nominated under quota arrangements agreed in the Council’s Annual Lettings Plan.
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Do I qualify for Band 2?

If you are placed in Band 2 your application will be reviewed every year to ensure you still need to move.

Band 2 applicants include those who:

- are Armed Forces Service Personnel (or their family) and have a need to move.
- are social housing tenants wishing to downsize and not affected by bedroom subsidy
- are homeless and owed a rehousing duty under S.193 of the Housing Act 1996
- are homeless and owed a prevention duty under S.195; owed a relief duty under S.189B or are homeless and not in priority need under the Housing Act 1996
- are living in overcrowded accommodation
- are living in accommodation that is unsuitable on medical grounds
- live in accommodation lacking basic facilities, including a bathroom, kitchen, hot or cold water, electricity, gas or adequate heating.
- need to move due to hardship or on welfare grounds
- meet the criteria for being a low paid worker
- need to move to enable them to adopt on a permanent basis, or to provide foster care to looked after children
- are social housing tenants who need to move into Central Bedfordshire to take up a job or live closer to employment or training

Do I qualify for Band 3?

Band 3 applicants include those who do not meet the residency criteria and who;

- are homeless and owed a rehousing duty under S.193 of the Housing Act 1996
- are homeless and owed a prevention duty under S.195; or owed a relief duty under S.189B or are homeless and not in priority need under the Housing Act 1996
- are living in overcrowded accommodation
- are living in accommodation that is unsuitable on medical grounds
- need to move due to hardship or on welfare grounds
- are tenants whose home poses a considerable risk to their health or safety
- need to move due to hardship or on welfare grounds

Band 3 applicants also include those who do meet the residency criteria but have been determined as having become homeless intentionally because of something they did or failed to do.

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Do I qualify for Band OP – Older Persons Register?

OP Band applicants include those who;

- are over 50 years of age.
- do not qualify for reasonable preference
- can demonstrate a link to the area through residency, employment or because they have immediate family living in the area.
- will only be able to bid on properties advertised for older people.
- are not disqualified from the housing register due to debt or unacceptable behaviour

Will I get priority in my band if I am employed?

If you are working you will be prioritised in your band above applicants in the same band who are not working. This does not apply if you are in the OP band. Working households are defined as applicants in permanent paid employment for more 6 months and working more than 16 hours a week; applicants on an apprenticeship scheme; applicants who are self-employed; and applicants in long term stable volunteering positions.

If you receive the support element of the Employment Support Allowance, or you or your partner are in receipt of full carers allowance, you will be also get the employment priority.

How will I know which properties are available?

After you have sent us all the information that we have requested from you and we have verified that you are eligible and qualify for the housing register, you will be given a login and a pin number for the Bedfordshire Homefinder website. All the properties that are available to let can be viewed on the website from Thursday to Tuesday each week.

You can express a preference for up to 3 properties each week. When you express a preference, this is called 'bidding'. You will be able to see your bid position relative to the number of people who have placed a bid for that property. More information about bidding is available on our website.

What size property can I bid for?

You will be able to bid for a property size that meets the needs of your household. Normally one bedroom is allocated for:

- Adult (single or couple)
- Children of different sexes where one child is over the age of 10
- Children of the same sex where one has reached the age of 16



What happens if my circumstances change?

You must tell the Council immediately if there are any changes in your circumstances so that your application can be reassessed.

How long will it take for me to be re-housed?

The length of time it will take for you to be rehoused will depend on how willing you are to consider properties and areas that are less popular. Information about properties that have previously been advertised and the rehousing times of the successful applicants is available on the Council's website to give you an idea of how long people have waited.

Only you can decide whether it is more important that you are housed quickly in a property which may not meet all your preferences but which will resolve your housing problem, or whether you can wait longer for a property you really want.

I am going to be homeless – what do I do?

Homeless households qualify for reasonable preference under Band 2 or 3 and no additional priority is awarded. If you are threatened with homelessness you should contact the Housing Options Team on 0300 300 4370 so that they can discuss other rehousing options with you. The Council's Website also has information about other [Housing Options](#).

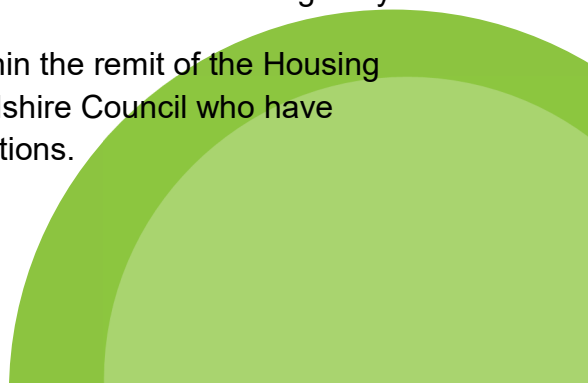
Hard to let Properties

All properties will be advertised on Bedfordshire Homefinder unless the property is being used for a direct let. Very rarely a property may attract no suitable bids from registered applicants. The property will be offered firstly as a direct let in accordance with priorities set out in the Annual Lettings Plan and exceptionally it may be re-advertised and made available for expressions of interest from people who have applied to the Housing Register within the 12 months but do not qualify for reasonable preference.

Exceptional Circumstances

The Allocation Scheme recognises that individual applicants may have extreme or exceptional circumstances where it becomes necessary to reconsider how the Allocation Scheme is applied to an individual who may not normally be accepted on to the Housing Register. The Council retains the ability, in exceptional circumstances, to exercise its discretion when making decisions about including persons on the Housing Register. Decisions on cases that are particularly complicated and/or urgent, and not fully covered by the Allocation Scheme are taken by The Housing Needs Panel which meets regularly.

Decisions under the Allocation Scheme which do not fall within the remit of the Housing Needs Panel will be exercised by Officers of Central Bedfordshire Council who have been given delegated authority by the Head of Housing Solutions.



I don't agree with your assessment of my application. What can I do?

You can request a review of any decision about your housing application. Your request must be made within 21 days of you being notified of the decision and you will need to set out why you think the Allocation Scheme has not been applied in your case. The [Housing Allocation Scheme](#) is available on the Council's website. Reviews will be determined within 28 days of the request being received and you will receive a written notice setting out the reasons for the decision.

Equality and diversity

The Allocations Scheme recognises and supports diversity to ensure that no sections of society are excluded and that the service meets the needs of those who may require additional care and support. The Allocation Scheme seeks to meet the needs of all applicants regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation; to comply with all relevant legislation and ensure no sections of the community are excluded or disadvantaged.

How do I find out more?

For more information visit the Council's website:

[Apply for Housing](#)

Or contact the Housing Register Team:

Email: housingregister@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 300 5080