

CHAPTER

3

Choice Based Lettings

ADUR
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Choice Based Lettings

Adur District Council introduced a choice based lettings scheme in July 2007 in partnership with:

Arun District Council
Brighton & Hove City Council
Chichester District Council
Hastings Borough Council
Lewes District Council from October 2008
Martlet Homes
Rother District Council
Rother Homes
Wealden District Council
1066 Housing Association

and aims to give housing register applicants and transfer applicants more choice about where they want to live. Instead of the local authority deciding where and when an applicant moves, applicants now have the chance to choose.

Housing register and transfer applicants can use the Homemove freesheet to find a new home. The scheme advertises all the available council and housing association vacancies, both general needs and sheltered housing.

To bid on a vacant property applicants must be a member of Homemove, which means that they must have registered on the Housing Register and have been sent a welcome pack and a Homemove number. To get further information on how to do this interested parties can call or e-mail the Lettings Section at the Civic Centre 01273 263316/7 or choicebasedlettings@adur.gov.uk or see the details on the Homemove website at www.homemove.org.uk

There are four steps to follow in choosing a new home:

Step 1 Membership

Once registered as a homeseeker or a transfer applicant at any of the participating councils or housing associations applicants will be sent a welcome pack and given a Homemove number/s. This means they are now a member of Homemove, and can use their Homemove number/s to make bids for properties advertised in the section of the Homemove freesheet magazine for the area in which they are registered. Please note that applicants will be given a different number for every area in which they are registered.

Step 2 Advertising

The welcome pack will include a Scheme User Guide which explains the different ways in which a member can bid on available properties and will also tell members which band (A, B, C or D) they have been placed in and their priority date. Members must keep the Housing Needs Section informed of any changes to their household, medical condition or housing situation. If members don't inform the Housing Needs Section of these changes then this could result in an offer of accommodation being withdrawn. This is also important as it could result in a change to a higher or in some cases a lower band.

When available properties are advertised on the website and in the Homemove freesheet, they are divided up into sections for each council's area. Members are only eligible to bid for properties in areas where they are registered.

Members can look at the adverts and decide whether they want

to be considered for any of the properties, this is done by making a bid. Members can make bids over the internet, by phone, by special coupon, or by text message but will need their application number/s in order to do so.

All bids for properties must be made by 2.00pm on the closing date shown on the front of each edition of the Homemove magazine. Bids received after this time will not be considered eligible.

Step 3 Shortlisting

Please note that if you have any housing related debts ie: rent/former tenant rent arrears you will not normally be considered for rehousing. This also applies to other housing related debts where an arrangement to pay has not been made and adhered to over a period of time. However, every case is considered on its own merits and on a case by case basis.

Homemove puts the bids received for each property advertised in priority order to produce a list of eligible applicants for each property. The member's council or housing association's lettings team will allocate from the list after doing further eligibility checks. The three members at the top of the priority list i.e. in the highest band with the longest waiting priority date, will normally be invited to view the property. If the first priority member refuses the property, the second person on the 'priority list' will be offered and so on. A member's priority may be reviewed if they refuse several properties and are in a high priority band and need to move urgently. Some categories of applicant – homeless applicants, for example – may have a

limited time to bid; they will be informed of this when they register. By inviting more than one member to view the properties at the same time, this helps to speed up the lettings process, although the property is always offered to the applicant with the highest priority who attends the viewing.

Step 4 Feedback

In each edition of the Homemove magazine there is a feedback report. This shows you how the properties advertised in previous editions of Homemove were let. It shows what level of priority the successful bidder had and how long they waited for a new home. At the back of each magazine there is a Cross Boundary section with properties available in other parts of Sussex. Tenants and homeseekers registered with any Homemove partner can bid for these properties.

It is not possible to notify members individually when their bids have been unsuccessful. People who have come top of a shortlist are usually contacted within a week of the bid closing. However, a lot of properties are advertised some time before they are ready for occupation. If a member is made an offer, they will not be shortlisted for other homes until they have made a decision either to accept or refuse the offer. If any member has questions about how the scheme applies to them or about bidding for properties, there are fully trained staff at the local council or housing association offices to help you.

Any member of the public can pick up a free copy of Homemove from various places, including council offices and public libraries. Homemove is also available on the website at www.homemove.org.uk

Priority Bands

When a member registers for a transfer or for housing as a homeseeker, their application will be assessed by the Lettings Section. Members will be placed in one of four bands which are outlined in the Scheme User Guide.

If a member disagrees with their priority band, they can ask the council or housing association, which holds their registration details, to review the banding decision. To do this, members must put their reasons for a band review in writing to their council or housing association.

When bids are considered for advertised properties, priority will be given to eligible bids from members in the highest priority band. If members from the same priority band bid for the same property, the landlord will consider first those with a local connection and the earliest priority date.

If your priority band is increased at any stage, your priority date will be the date you went into the higher priority band. If you move back to a lower band, your priority date will usually revert to your original registration date in that lower band.

What properties can I bid for?

Homeseekers and transfer applicants can bid on all properties that are advertised subject to eligibility, they must read the property advert carefully before bidding. A member's bid won't count if they bid for a property advertised for homeseekers only and they are a transferring tenant. Homeseekers can only bid for properties that are advertised with an H or with both H & T icons. Council tenants and tenants of any one of the partner housing

Choice Based Lettings

associations listed can bid for properties that are advertised with a T or both T & H icons

If a partner council decides to open up a certain property to bids from people registered in other areas, they will advertise it as a 'Cross Boundary' property. In the magazine, these properties will appear in a separate Cross Boundary section at the back, and members can bid on these properties in the normal way, if they match their assessed need. On the website, they will appear in the list of properties that members are eligible for, and members can bid on them as they would for any other property.

Pets

Some landlords will not allow tenants to keep a cat or a dog unless the property has its own garden. If you have a pet, please check with the landlord.

Circumstances where members may not be invited to view a property:

- they are in rent arrears
- they have been involved in anti-social behaviour
- in exceptional circumstances eg: where the offer would conflict with the council's objectives to ensure offers are sensitively made and that properties are let quickly.

Transfer Incentive Scheme

This scheme is designed to encourage tenants who are currently under-occupying family sized accommodation, to

move to smaller accommodation, you can contact the lettings section on 01273 263316/7 to find out further information.

Need help bidding?

Members can contact the Lettings Section who will be able to help and advise them on how to make their bids and talk members through the bidding process. You can contact the Lettings Section at Adur District Council on 01273 263316/7 or by e-mailing choicebasedlettings@adur.gov.uk

Mutual Exchanges (for those who wish to remain in the Adur District)

One of the quickest ways to obtain a move from your current accommodation can be to find another council or housing association tenant to exchange/swap with. All secure council tenants and assured housing association tenants have the Right to Exchange in accordance with the Housing Act 1985. You can apply to exchange properties with either a council or housing association tenant. The Mutual Exchange Register is available to view at the Civic Centre, Ham Road, Shoreham, BN43 6PR, the Southwick Housing Office, 21 Southwick Street, Southwick, BN42 4AD and the Lancing Housing Office, 101 North Road, Lancing, BN15 9BB.

Mutual Exchanges (for those who wish to relocate outside of the Adur District)

This again applies to existing council or housing association tenants and to register your interest in an exchange outside of the Adur District you can register your interest at homeswapper.co.uk.

Alternatives to Council/Housing Association Rented Housing

If you are interested in low cost home ownership, Key Worker housing or other affordable housing schemes you need to register with Moat Housing Association, who are responsible for marketing these schemes in Sussex. You can do this by ringing on 07002 662846 or by applying on-line at www.moat.co.uk.

HomeBuy

HomeBuy is a government-led initiative offering a range of schemes to help people onto the home ownership ladder when they would otherwise not be able to afford to purchase a home. HomeBuy can also assist public sector key workers who wish to rent but cannot afford to pay market rents. For further information visit www.homebuy.co.uk.

Sheltered Housing Extra Care Scheme

Designed for frail elderly people who require extra care than ordinary sheltered housing can offer. Properties are let in partnership with West Sussex Social Services and Adur District Council to applicants who meet the agreed criteria.

Adur Homes Service

Adur & Worthing Councils
Portland House
44 Richmond Road
Worthing
West Sussex
BN11 1HS

The information in these leaflets is available in alternative formats (e.g. large print). If you should require these please contact us.