



APPLYING FOR SOCIAL HOUSING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Housing Selection Scheme



**Housing
Executive**



Introduction

The Selection Scheme was approved by the then Department of Social Development and has been effective from 1st November 2000. It applies to accommodation owned by the participating landlords except where it is accommodation which is let on a temporary basis. A list of the participating landlords is provided with this booklet.

This booklet summarises the rules used to assess the needs of applicants and to allocate such accommodation. A full copy of the rules may be obtained by contacting any Housing Executive or housing association office.

Aims of the Scheme

The scheme has been devised to be fair and open and to give applicants freedom of choice in where they wish to live. Anyone applying under this scheme will be:-

- if eligible, assessed under the rules of the scheme
- registered on a Common Waiting List
- allocated property according to the rules of the scheme

The Housing Executive and housing associations strive to ensure complete fairness in the treatment of all households and individuals in the provision of housing for those in need regardless of political affiliation, religious belief or racial group. If a person is eligible their religion, ethnicity, race or nationality will play no part in any points awarded or on their place on the waiting list.

Applying for Accommodation

If you are a Housing Executive tenant requesting a transfer or an applicant currently living in Northern Ireland applying for accommodation for the first time please phone 03448 920900.

Your basic details will be recorded and a suitable appointment will be arranged for a housing officer to contact you to carry out a housing needs assessment.

If you are unable to apply by telephone please complete a Housing/Transfer Application Form which is available in all local offices or housing association offices, it can also be downloaded from the NIHE website www.nihe.gov.uk. The form includes notes explaining the process. Please follow them carefully, and do not hesitate to contact the Housing Executive or a housing association office if you have any enquiries.



Housing Association Tenants

If you are a housing association tenant requesting a transfer a telephone service may not be available to you. Please contact your own landlord to enquire if you can apply by phone or whether you need to complete a Housing/Transfer application form.

Is Proof of Identity Required?

If you are not currently a Housing Executive or housing association tenant, you will be asked during the housing needs assessment for proof of identity if you have not provided it already.

This may consist of the following primary documents which should be current and valid and contain your photograph:

- ✓ Passport
- ✓ UK Driving Licence
- ✓ Translink Senior Smartpass
- ✓ National Identity Card
- ✓ Electoral Identity Card

If none of above is available, two primary documents may be used, they include:

- ✓ Benefit Payment Book(s)
- ✓ Birth Certificate
- ✓ Credit Cards
- ✓ Utility Bill(s) (previous quarter)
- ✓ Medical Cards
- ✓ Recent Bank Statements
- ✓ Wage Slip
- ✓ Marriage/Civil Partnership Certificate etc.

NB. If you are successful with your housing application you will have to supply identification to your landlord when you are signing up for your new tenancy. The Housing Executive will also take and store a photograph of you. If it is a joint tenancy a photograph will be required for all those named in the tenancy.

Homeless Persons

If you consider yourself to be homeless you should contact the Housing Executive directly. When you first make contact we will adopt a Housing Solutions and Support approach to help us understand your current circumstances and future housing aspirations. We will consider your living arrangements, financial situation, available social networks and any support needs, in order to help you sustain your current accommodation and help prevent you from becoming homeless.

We will provide you with suitable options to meet both your immediate housing needs and to allow you to make informed choices regarding your permanent housing options. These may include social housing, home ownership, private rented accommodation.

In line with our statutory duties under the Housing and Homelessness Legislation we will need to establish your eligibility for housing/homelessness assistance in Northern Ireland. If you meet the homelessness criteria we will assess your application and provide any duties owed in line with legislation i.e. a decision on your application, temporary accommodation, furniture storage and advice/assistance. Advice and assistance provided will be based on your individual circumstances and specific to your needs.



Transfers

If you are already a tenant of the Housing Executive or a housing association and you wish to move, you can apply for a transfer.

A request for a transfer will not normally be considered where:

1. The existing tenancy is less than two years old;
2. There are arrears of four weeks or more;
3. The tenant's existing property is not in a good state of repair or the tenant owes recoverable charges for repairs;
4. The tenant is guilty of any other serious breach of the tenancy conditions; or
5. The tenant or a member of his/her household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour.

Direct Exchanges

If you are a secure social housing tenant you may be able to exchange or 'swap' homes with someone who has another secure tenancy.

If so, you should request permission in writing from your landlord, there are some circumstances where we may not agree to an exchange.

You can also register to find a swap online at Homeswapper.co.uk The Housing Executive provides free access to this service for its tenants and most housing association tenants in Northern Ireland. If you have a secure tenancy and are interested in using this service, your landlord can support you to register for HomeSwapper and assist you with the online application.

Areas of Choice

When you apply for housing or request a transfer, you should indicate at least one location where you are prepared to live, however you can choose as many as you wish. There may be a number of landlords with accommodation in your areas of choice and you can also choose which of these you wish to be considered by.

You can obtain more information by contacting the Housing Executive or your existing landlord.

Applying from Outside Northern Ireland

Your eligibility for housing in Northern Ireland and your housing needs will be assessed in the same way as any other applicant under the rules of the Housing Selection Scheme.

However as the Housing Executive is unable to carry out a visit you will be asked to complete a combined application and self assessment form.

Your housing needs will be assessed by the Housing Executive office responsible for the area in which you want to live, and if you are eligible you will be placed on the Waiting List for your areas and landlords of choice.

You can obtain the Housing/Transfer Application and Self Assessment Form by contacting the Housing Executive district office in the area you would like to live in or download the form from the Housing Executive website under “Apply for a Home”.



How the Scheme Works

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply you must:-

- Comply with the application requirements and
- be a Full Duty Applicant (FDA) under homelessness legislation, (see Page 16 (NI))
- or
- meet both the age and the connection with Northern Ireland requirements (see below).

Generally you must have attained the age of 18 years at the date of application. In certain specific circumstances you may be eligible at 16 years of age. You must also have a substantial connection with Northern Ireland. If you are in any doubt as to whether you are eligible to be considered for housing in Northern Ireland, please contact any of the participating landlords.

The Housing Executive will then investigate your eligibility for housing assistance. This will involve determining if:-

- a) You are a person from abroad who is not entitled to housing assistance: or
- b) You or a member of your household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour.

Staff will complete a Housing Solutions interview with you to look at all your housing options and choices, offer advice and assistance on any immediate housing issues and assess your housing need.

Providing you are not deemed to be ineligible for housing assistance, you will be registered on the waiting list as quickly as possible.

NB The Housing Executive will continue to review your eligibility to remain on the waiting list once you have been placed on it.

Assessment

When you apply you will be assessed and awarded points according to your housing need. The level of points awarded will determine your position on the waiting list. You may qualify for the award of points under three categories - these are:-

1. Insecurity of Tenure

This refers to situations where applicants are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The level of points applicable may vary depending on the duty owed under legislation.

2. Housing Conditions

Points awarded under this category reflect adverse housing circumstances both in terms of physical conditions and the degree of sharing/overcrowding being experienced.

3. Health/Social Well-being Assessment

A comprehensive range of health and social well-being circumstances are acknowledged under this category. These include an applicant's ability to function within their existing home as well as any social, support and care needs they may have.

Points awarded under any of these categories will be added together to determine your total points level and your subsequent position on the waiting list. You will be informed of your points total in writing. The points schedule is in Appendix 1.



Complex Needs

Some applicants may have special circumstances which mean they require intensive care and support.

This need may be met in a specialist housing scheme, where additional support or care services are provided or in general housing where a tailored support and care package has been arranged.

Where a specialist scheme is considered appropriate, applicants will be placed on a separate, non-pointed waiting list.

Where support and care can be provided within general housing, applicants may be awarded additional points under the Health and Social Well-Being category.

Allocations

As a general rule each dwelling will be offered to the applicant with the highest points. In some areas, available properties may be advertised and then offered to the interested applicant with the highest points who has applied for that property.

Where points are equal, the date on which the application is received will decide the order in which applicants are offered accommodation.

Within your areas of choice there may be specific blocks of flats that have been designated under the rules of the Selection Scheme by a participating landlord not to be allocated to a person under the age of 35 years of age, (the age criteria also applies to members of the household) unless there are exceptional personal circumstances prevailing. Further information can be obtained by contacting your local district office or housing association in relation to flats which have met the appropriate criteria and have been designated accordingly.

Landlords may disqualify certain applicants from being housed. This can apply, for example, in cases where the applicant has:-

- rent arrears
- abandoned a previous tenancy
- illegally occupied a dwelling
- been involved in serious Anti-Social Behaviour

You will be entitled to a maximum of two reasonable offers. If you refuse two reasonable offers you may not receive any further offers for a period of one year.

What is a reasonable offer of accommodation?

Under the rules of the Housing Selection Scheme an offer of accommodation is said to be reasonable if the property being offered is:

- a suitable size for the applicant and their household (as outlined in the Rules of the Selection Scheme);
- within the applicant's chosen areas of choice;
- in a reasonable condition of repair, and;
- suitable to meet the needs of the applicant and their household.

If you refuse an offer of accommodation, or do not reply to the offer, it will count as one of your two reasonable offers under the Rules of the Housing Selection Scheme. We will ask you for your reasons for refusal. In certain circumstances we may consider the refusal reasonable, and where appropriate, we will review your areas of choice and update your housing application with further details about your household, housing needs and areas of choice for re-housing. If we think your refusal is reasonable, the offer will not count towards one of your two offers under the Rules of the Scheme.



If you are a person who is owed the full housing duty then you have a right to request a review if you disagree that an offer of accommodation is suitable. You will need to contact the relevant Housing Executive Regional Review Officer, contact details for which will be provided in your offer letter. You will have 40 days from the date of your offer letter to request a review.

If you are a person who is not owed the full duty you can make a complaint if you consider that the offer is not reasonable. You will need to contact the social landlord who made you the offer. You will have 40 days from the date of your offer letter to make a complaint.

Upon a second unreasonable refusal, your application will be deferred and you will not be considered for housing for 12 months.

You are responsible for the accuracy of all information given on your application form throughout the course of your assessment. You must also inform the landlord dealing with your application of every change of circumstances which may affect your application.

Multiple Offer

Where the Housing Executive has decided that the property or the area is difficult to let, a number of applicants may be asked if they would be interested in becoming the tenant.

This is called a 'Multiple Offer'.

If you receive a 'Multiple Offer' invite [and think you would like the property], you need to contact your local office to express an interest.

If more than one applicant expresses an interest in the property, the person who is the highest pointed will be offered the tenancy.

Withdrawal of an offer

In exceptional circumstances a Social landlord may decide to withdraw an offer of accommodation. This may be done at any stage before the tenancy agreement is signed. If this happens the landlord will write to you explaining the reasons why the offer was withdrawn. You will have the right to appeal this decision. The withdrawal of the offer will not be counted as an offer of accommodation.

Renewing and managing your ongoing application

You will be asked in writing each year whether you still need accommodation. Failure to reply may result in your removal from the waiting list.

If you deliberately worsen your circumstances in order to gain a higher ranking on the waiting list you may have the advantage of any additional points entitlement withheld for a period of two years.

Where accommodation has been allocated on the basis of false or incorrect information your tenancy may be terminated.



Tenancy Agreement

There are two kinds of tenancy

- Introductory
- Secure

Non Social Housing tenants will start as introductory tenants. This means you will not have all the rights of a secure tenant, and could be evicted more quickly if you break the tenancy agreement.

An Introductory Tenancy will last for 12 months and providing there have been no problems at the end of the Introductory Tenancy you automatically become a secure tenant.

Advice and Information

If you wish to seek advice on, or assistance with the completion of your application form, or if you need any information on the types of accommodation or landlords in your areas of choice or indeed any other matter relating to your housing application, you should contact any of the participating landlords listed on page 15.

Points Schedule

Points

SECTION 1: INSECURITY OF TENURE

Homeless/Threatened with Homelessness - Full Duty Applicant (FDA)	70
Other Homeless	50
Interim Accommodation	20

SECTION 2: HOUSING CONDITIONS

Sharing

1) An Applicant with dependent children	
Sharing Kitchen	10
Sharing Living Room	10
Sharing Toilet	10
Sharing Bath/Shower	10
2) An Applicant aged 18 years and over without dependent children	
Sharing Kitchen	5
Sharing Living Room	5
Sharing Toilet	5
Sharing Bath/Shower	5
3) An Applicant aged 16 -18 years without dependent children	
Sharing Kitchen	5

Sharing Living Room	5
Sharing Toilet	5
Sharing Bath/Shower	5
Overcrowding	
Each bedroom short of criteria	10
Lack of Amenities and Disrepair	
1) The Applicant's current accommodation is not free from serious disrepair.	10
2) The Applicant's current accommodation is not free from dampness which is prejudicial to the health of the occupants.	10
3) The Applicant's current accommodation does not have adequate provision for lighting, heating and ventilation.	10
4) The Applicant's current accommodation does not have an adequate supply of wholesome water.	10
5) The Applicant's current accommodation does not have satisfactory facilities for the preparation and cooking of food, including a sink with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water.	10
6) The Applicant's current accommodation does not have a suitably located water closet (w.c.) for the exclusive use of the occupants.	10
7) The Applicant's current accommodation does not have, for the exclusive use of the occupants a suitably located fixed bath or shower, each of which is provided with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water.	10
8) The Applicant's current accommodation does not have an electricity supply.	10

Time in Housing Need

(Only awarded to Applicants with points on the Waiting List. 2 points per year (for a maximum of five years) after two years on the Waiting List)

Max **10**

SECTION 3: HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELL BEING

Functional Matrix

Max **32**

Unsuitable Accommodation

10

Support/Care Needs Matrix
(only applicable to those applying for Sheltered/Supported Housing)

- Home Management
- Self Care

Max **16**

Max **14**

Each Primary Social Needs Factor
(capped at 2 factors i.e. 2x 20 points)

20

Each Other Social Needs Factor
(capped at 4 factors i.e. 4x10 points)

10

Complex Needs
(General Needs Housing)

20

Underoccupation (Transfer Applications only)
10 points per room in excess

Max **30**

Notes: 1. Points will be awarded on a cumulative basis unless otherwise stated

List of Participating Landlords

Abbeyfield & Wesley (NI) Ltd

21 Glassillan Grove, Greenisland, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim BT38 8TE

Email: enquiries@abbeyfield.com

Alpha Housing (NI) Ltd

Alpha House, 6 Edgewater Road, Belfast BT3 9JQ

Tel: 028 9078 7750

Email: info@alphahousingni.org

Apex HA Ltd

10 Butcher Street, Derry City, Co. Londonderry BT48 6HL

Tel: 028 7130 4800

Email: info@apexhousing.org

Arbour Housing

18-22 Carelton Street, Portadown, Co. Armagh BT62 3EN

Tel: 028 3833 9795

Email: hello@arbourhousing.org

Ark HA Ltd

Units 17&18, North City Business Centre, Duncairn Gardens,
Belfast BT15 2GG

Tel: 028 9075 2310

Email: info@arkhousing.co.uk

Choice

Leslie Morrell House, 37-41 May Street, Belfast BT1 4DN

Tel: 0300 111 2211

Email: enquiries@choice-housing.org

Clanmil HA Ltd

Northern Whig House, 3 Waring Street, Belfast BT1 2DX

Tel: 028 9087 6000

Email: housing@clanmil.org.uk

Co Ownership

Moneda House, 25-27 Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6GD

Tel: 028 9032 7276

Email: www.co-ownership.org

Covenanter Residential Association Ltd

Room 204, City East Business Centre, 68-72 Newtownards Road,
Belfast BT4 1GW

Tel: 028 9094 1672

Email: Cra11@btconnect.com

Craigowen Housing Association Ltd

First Floor, 1 Strand Studios, 150 Holywood Road, Belfast BT4 1NY Tel: 028 9065
7040

Email: office@craigowenha.org.uk

Grove HA Ltd

171 York Road, Belfast BT15 3HB

Tel: 028 9077 3330

Email: info@groveha.org.uk

NB HA

Gatelodge, 8 Flax Street, Belfast BT14 7EQ

Tel: 028 90 592 110

Newington Housing Association

300-302 Limestone Road, Belfast BT15 3AR

Tel: 028 9074 4055

Email: admin@newingtonha.co.uk

Radius HA

38-52 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 6AA

Tel: 028 9032 0485

Email: info@radiushousing.org

Rural HA Ltd

Tollgate House, 2 Killyclogher Road, Omagh, Co Tyrone BT79 0AX

Tel: 028 8224 6118

Email: info@ruralhousing.co.uk

St Matthews HA Ltd

58 Harper Street, Belfast BT5 4EN

Tel: 028 9045 1070

Email: office@smha.co.uk

Triangle HA Ltd

60 Eastermeade Gardens, Ballymoney BT53 6BD

Tel: 028 2766 6880

Email: info@trianglehousing.org.uk

Woodvale & Shankill Community HA Ltd

93 Woodvale Road, Belfast BT13 3BP

Tel: 028 9074 1618

Email: info@wscha.org.uk

Woven

44 Newforge Lane, Laganwood House, Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5NW

Tel: 028 9042 7211

Email: housing@woven.org.uk

Glossary of Terms

Full Duty Applicant

A Full Duty Applicant is a person to whom the Housing Executive owes a duty under the Homelessness legislation, Article 10(2) of the Housing (NI) Order, 1988 to “secure that accommodation becomes available for his /her occupation”.

Functionality

An applicant’s ability to manage within their existing accommodation, taking account of their level of independence or dependency on others.

Latent Demand

To establish the demand for housing in areas where accommodation may be limited at present.

Participating Landlord

In this scheme “Participating Landlord” means the Housing Executive or any registered housing association which is participating in the Common Selection Scheme.

Article 22 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) order 1981 requires that the Housing Executive shall submit to the Department a scheme making provision for determining the order in which prospective tenants or occupiers of the Housing Executive's houses are to be granted tenancies or licences of those houses.

To request an alternative format of this document,
please contact:

Housing Executive
2 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8PB

 03448 920 900



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