

# Going on the council waiting list

**This factsheet explains how you can apply to go on a council's housing waiting list and what priority you may get.**

To get a council or housing association home you usually have to be on the council's waiting list. All councils have to follow certain rules, but each council's waiting list operates differently. Sometimes the waiting list is referred to as the 'housing register' or the 'allocation scheme'. Check your council's website for information.

## How to apply

To put your name on the waiting list, you must fill in an application form which you can get from the council's housing department or website. The council must help you if you have difficulty filling in the form.

The council uses the information you provide to decide whether you can go on the waiting list and, if so, what size and type of property you can be considered for. Make sure the information is accurate. The council will check it is correct if you are offered a property. In some areas, not much housing becomes available and many applicants never get an offer.

Applicants who live in the council's area are usually given some priority. Some councils will refuse applications from most people who don't already live in the area.

## Who can go on the list?

Some people from abroad are not eligible to go on the council waiting list. This is a complex issue. Get further advice if the council decides you are not eligible.

If you are eligible, the council will then decide if you 'qualify' to go on their waiting list. The reasons councils decide that you do not qualify vary, but could include if you have a history of rent arrears or antisocial behaviour or you have no local connection in the area. Each council decides for itself who qualifies for its list. You could qualify to go on the waiting list with one council but not with another.

You can ask the council to review its decision if it decides you are not eligible or don't qualify to go on its waiting list. You usually have 21 days to request a review.

## Who gets housed first?

Waiting lists do not work on a 'first come, first served' basis. Certain people will be given priority. You should get some priority if you:

- have applied to the council as a homeless person
- live in very poor housing conditions
- have a health condition that is made worse by where you live
- need to be close to a special school or to someone you are caring for.

The council may also give you priority for other reasons, such as the length of time you have been waiting, how long you have been living in its area, or because you are contributing to the local community (for example through voluntary work).

The council may give you less priority if you have a history of antisocial behaviour or rent arrears, if you own a property anywhere else in the world, or if you have no local connection with its area.

## Will I get a choice?

Some councils will offer homes to applicants who come to the top of the list for the particular type and size of property that has become vacant.

Other councils allow you to 'bid' for properties. A property is offered to the bidder with the highest priority. This system is known as 'choice-based letting'.

If your council has a choice-based letting system you are more likely to get an offer if you place bids on a wide range of properties, and if you are willing to consider a wide range of areas in the council.

## Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free\* housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting [england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice](https://www.england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice)

\*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



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