

How can I apply for housing in South Staffordshire?

To apply for housing with Homes Plus in South Staffordshire you need to register with My Homefinder www.myhomefinder.org.uk

How can I apply for housing in Shropshire?

In the Shropshire area Homes Plus work in partnership with Shropshire HomePoint which is a Choice Based Lettings scheme which manages the Shropshire Housing Register - www.shropshirehomepoint.co.uk

Shropshire Homepoint advertises the majority of affordable homes in the county and aims to provide a one-stop solution for those looking to move or in housing need.

Can I apply for housing across Shropshire/South Staffordshire?

Of course, but currently you will need to apply to the different housing registers across the different geographical areas.

Are there any restrictions on who can apply for housing?

Yes there are some restrictions on who can apply. These include (but not limited to)

- ♦ Existing Homes Plus tenants who have lived in their home for less than 2 years
- ♦ Homes Owners when proceeds of a sale of a house would enable them to buy another suitable property
- ♦ Certain Criminal convictions and risk rating.
- ♦ Applicants whose members of their household or visitors to their household who are known perpetrators of Anti-Social Behaviour or linked to neighbourhood issues.
- ♦ Anyone in the household who has Housing Related Debt
- ♦ 16 to 17 year olds unless an application is received from the Local Authority.
- ♦ Applicant has no recourse to public funds

If you are excluded from applying to the Housing Register there is an appeals process you can access if you disagree with the decision or if you feel that all the information provided hasn't been considered properly.

How long will it take for my Housing Application to be assessed?

Your application will be assessed and awarded a priority banding usually within 5 days if we have all the information required. If further supporting information is required from yourself then your application will be fully assessed when you have provided all the information requested.

How do you assess applications and decide what banding I will receive?

When your application is submitted to the Choice Based Lettings team, they will review your current housing circumstances and make an assessment, against the Lettings Policy. By considering the information you have provided alongside the Lettings Policy they will allocate you a banding which determines your housing need. In South Staffordshire your banding will be Gold Priority, Gold, Silver or Bronze.

What happens if my banding is for a specific property type or area, am I able to express interest on other properties that don't meet this criteria?

You can apply for other areas or properties, but your priority which was awarded for a specific property type or area will no longer apply and your banding will revert to the most appropriate to your current circumstances.

What type of property can I apply for?

We would like you to have as much choice as possible, however Homes Plus has a clear eligibility criteria and we would not normally allow you to overcrowd or under-occupy a property.

We will contact you and advise you of your bedroom entitlement once your application has been assessed. It is important that you read the property advert criteria carefully as these will give you a good idea to whether you should apply or not.

What happens if I have medical needs?

You can complete our medical assessment form which you can request from us and let us have any other evidence to support your medical conditions.

We will use this information to assess how your medical need is directly affected by your present accommodation and a move is the only way to have a positive effect on your everyday wellbeing.

If a property has been adapted or is suitable for someone with specific medical needs, we will usually advertise the property giving preference to someone with these needs.

What if a household member requires their own bedroom?

If an extra bedroom is required for a carer we will require evidence that the applicant requires overnight care and that there is also carers allowance in payment.

If an extra bedroom is required due to medical needs for an adult or child we will require evidence, such as medical supporting evidence, occupational health report, evidence of Medium or High Rate PIP in payment.

We will look at each case based on individual circumstances.

What is the difference between Overcrowding and Statutory Overcrowding?

The Choice Based Lettings team can determine if someone is overcrowded by considering the household size and makeup and also the type of property that you are currently living in.

The local Authorities Environmental Health Department are responsible for checking if someone is Statutory Overcrowded. To make this decision they also consider sizes of the rooms and living areas.

What is retirement living?

The term 'Retirement Living' covers a wide range of housing for older and vulnerable people. The properties advertised by Homes Plus are generally for older people aged 55 or over. However, some will be allocated to younger people who require level access or a specially adapted home.

Most properties in Retirement Living will contain an alarm system and have communal facilities such as a lounge, laundry, garden and guest rooms for visiting family and friends.

Property adverts will clearly show where there is a minimum age restriction.

What does Choice Based Lettings mean and how does it work?

Choice Based Lettings is a simple way for Homes Plus to allocate homes, we advertise the available properties weekly and allow you to choose for yourself the homes you would like to apply for.

What is a council nomination?

On a weekly basis, we will provide South Staffordshire District Council with 25% of properties to be re-let. Stafford Borough Council provide Homes Plus with a Bandin Increase Request. This is part of their nomination agreements to support them to discharge their homeless duty and rehouse customers on their own waiting list.

How can I express interest in properties?

In South Staffordshire you are able to express interest (also known as bidding) in up to 3 eligible properties online during each weekly cycle.

If you are unable to bid online you are able to place a bid by calling us on **0800 048 9855**.

At the end of the weekly cycle a shortlist will be created and applicants will be placed in order of their application banding and then date of application.

What type of properties are advertised and how often?

All of our available general needs and Retirement Living properties on a weekly basis.

What does Local Connection mean?

Some of the properties we advertise can only be allocated to people who have a local connection to the town or parish where the property is located.

To establish an official local connection you would need to:

- ◆ Currently live in the area where the property are located for a set period of time
- ◆ Have permanent employment in the area
- ◆ Have close family connections living in the area for a set period of time

Applicants who don't meet all aspects of a local connection can still bid on properties that require a local connection however your application may be overlooked if someone else can demonstrate a stronger connection to the area.

When will I know if I have been successful for a property?

Once the weekly property advert cycle has ended, a shortlist of everyone interested in each property is automatically formed and ranked according to their banding and registration date. We will then contact the top three eligible applicants and arrange a multiple viewing.

Once the property has been viewed and accepted, we then undertake a verification process to check the eligibility of the applicant and confirm the application details are correct and up-to-date.

If the first applicant refuses the property, it would then be offered to the second applicant and so on. Normally if we have not contacted you within 10 working days of the end of the property advert, it would usually mean the property has been offered to someone else.

Homes Plus do not personally notify unsuccessful applicants of the outcomes.

How long will it take for me to be rehoused? Is there any way I can improve my chances of being rehoused sooner?

Unfortunately we are unable to provide you with a timescale for rehousing. It will depend on your own personal circumstances, your banding, the property you require and your area of housing preference. However to increase your chances of being rehoused in a more timely manner we would recommend that you consider a wider geographical area of preference rather than limiting your options.

You should also consider other options of finding a home such as:

- ♦ Renting privately
- ♦ House share
- ♦ Adapting or improving the property you are in
- ♦ Swapping your existing social housing home on the Mutual Exchange Register
- ♦ Additional support to stay in your home

What happens if I decide to decline an offer of accommodation?

If you have been awarded a Gold Priority banding for three months and you have turned down properties you are eligible for, we will seek to understand if the reasons for refusal are reasonable. If they are found to not be reasonable, then we may withdraw the Gold Priority banding and your housing application will be reassessed.

If you are homeless, the Housing Options Team at your Local Authority may withdraw your priority status if you continue to refuse offers for suitable properties. We would advise you to double check with your Housing Options Team before you refuse a property offered to you.

What checks will be carried out?

Depending on your housing application, we may request general information to assist with assessing housing need and ensure proper understanding of your housing circumstances.

We will also check your application thoroughly to make sure it is completely up-to-date before offering you a property. This forms part of the verification checks we complete and these include contacting previous landlords to confirm there are no rent arrears and the number of household members to be rehoused with you, as well as obtaining ID.

What happens if my circumstances change?

You should contact us immediately if your circumstances change. We will then reassess your housing situation to see if you are still in the correct band for your circumstances.

It is important to remember that we will check your application and documents thoroughly before offering you a property to ensure your application is up-to-date and correct. If it's not, we may take the decision to withdraw the property offered to you.

My friend and I have similar circumstances yet they have a higher banding?

From outward appearances it may seem as if your housing problems are the same but in reality they could be very different. All housing assessments are carried out strictly according to our Lettings Policy. This can be found on our website www.homesplus.co.uk.

For a full explanation of your banding assessments, please contact us and an advisor will talk this through with you. Please note that we will not discuss someone else's application with you.

What is a Mutual Exchange and how can I apply?

Homes Plus customers can register with Homeswapper for mutual exchange. Once registered, you can view a list of tenants who would like to swap their home with other tenants living across the country. Once you have found someone to swap with, you both need to get permission from your landlord. You can register for a mutual exchange once you have passed your probationary Tenancy at www.homeswapper.uk

I'm Homeless or threatened with Homelessness, what do I need to do?

If you have received a Notice Seeking Possession (NOSP) or think you are in danger of losing your present accommodation, you will need to contact your Local Authority in the area you live as soon as possible to seek help and advice.

This is because your Local Authority has the legal obligation under the Homeless Persons Act. Contact details of Local Authorities are listed below;

South Staffordshire District Council - 01902 696000

Stafford Borough Council - 01785 619000

Shropshire Council – 0345 678 9005

Cannock Chase Council - 01543 462621

Telford and Wrekin Council - 01952 381925

How can I appeal a decision?

You can appeal the decisions;

- ♦ Not to allow you to register with us
- ♦ Not to offer you a home if you feel that all the information you have provided has not been taken into consideration
- ♦ On the banding priority you have been given
- ♦ If you feel they have been unfairly treated.

You must let us know the reasons why you are appealing, within ten working days from the date of notification of the decision not to accept an application or decision not to make an offer of a home.

You can make an appeal either in writing, by calling our customer service centre on **0800 048 8955** or emailing **housingappeals@homesplus.co.uk**

All appeals and will respond in writing within ten working days. We will not hold homes empty when an appeal is taking place. If the appeal is successful, we will work with the applicant to find an alternative property.

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