



Purbeck District Council

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# Access to Housing Allocations Policy Summary





Woolley

AGE

DORSET LETTINGS



# What is Affordable Housing?

Affordable Housing is rented or shared ownership housing provided to people in Housing Need by Registered Social Landlords (sometimes called Housing Associations) who work in partnership with the Council.

## High Demand, Low Supply

There are many households in Dorset who have a housing need. The supply of affordable rented accommodation (also known as social housing) does not meet this demand. We have to let the available housing as fairly as possible, taking account of those households in the most need.

## The Housing Register

By applying for social housing, you are applying to join the Housing Register. This is a list of people who need to move to other accommodation.

## Allocations Policy

The Allocations Policy sets out how we let the properties becoming available. Copies of the full policy are available from the Council (although there may be a small fee for a paper copy), but this summary should give you all the general information you need.

## Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants must be 16 years of age, although you must usually be over 18 (or be able to provide a "guarantor" – someone who agrees to make sure you keep to the terms of your tenancy, including paying the rent) in order to be considered for a property.

Applications are accepted from people living anywhere in the country, although people with a local connection will be considered first if there is the same level of housing need.

## Who is not eligible to apply?

The law says that there are two categories of people who cannot be accepted on to the Housing Register. These are:

- people subject to immigration control or people from abroad, unless they are classed as a "Qualifying Person"
- people whose behaviour is considered to be unacceptable. There are strict rules about what sort of behaviour could be considered unacceptable.

## Your Housing Register Application

We rely on you to supply us with accurate information. The information (and any supporting evidence) you give us will be used to assess your application, so it is a good idea to give us this information as soon as possible. If you do not give us information, we will not be able to assess your application, and if we do not hear from you within 28 days of asking you for more information, your application may be cancelled.

If at any time your circumstances change, you must tell us by filling in a Change of Circumstances form and giving it back to us, together with proof of the changes.

### How are properties let?

Applications are recorded in date order and placed in a band (see below). The successful bid will normally be the application in the highest band, with a local connection, and the longest registration date.

### What are Bands?

The Housing Register is split into 4 Bands:

#### Green Band

- applicants who have more than one element of housing need (see below)
- applicants who have one element of housing need where this could cause serious or significant issues

#### Amber Band

- applicants who have one element of housing need as detailed below:
  - applicants with a need to move on medical grounds
  - applicants with a need to move on welfare grounds
  - applicants who are Homeless within the definition of the Act

- applicants who are owed a duty by any Housing Authority under sections 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under S.65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any Housing Authority under S.192(3)
  - applicants who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded accommodation or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
  - applicants who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship
- (Note – these are the “Reasonable Preference” categories defined by legislation)

## Red Band

- applicants who do not have an identified housing need as described above

## Priority Band

If an applicant has been assessed as being in one or more of the “Reasonable Preference” categories, AND can demonstrate that as a result of this, there may be serious or significant consequences to their household if they continue to live in their current accommodation, they can apply to be placed in the Priority Band.

The decision about whether or not a household is placed in the Priority Band is made by a Panel of people from a number of different organisations.

If an application is placed in the Priority Band, this will be for a limited amount of time, according to the availability of the accommodation needed.

For further information about Reasonable Preference and the Priority Band, please see the separate leaflet – Reasonable and Additional Preference for applicants.

## HomeChoice

HomeChoice is the method of letting properties used by a number of local authorities in Dorset. It requires you to “bid” for properties you see advertised – this does NOT involve paying money; it is another way of saying “express an interest”.

This system allows you to make choices about where you want to live – but please remember that there is no certainty that your bid will be successful. There are still many more people looking for affordable housing than there are available properties.

We will try to make sure that as much information as possible is available in the property advertisements, so that you can make informed choices about the properties for which you would like to bid.

### How do I find out about available properties?

Properties will be advertised on the internet at [www.dorsethomechoice.org](http://www.dorsethomechoice.org), [www.purbeck-dc.gov.uk](http://www.purbeck-dc.gov.uk) and [www.purbeckhousing.co.uk](http://www.purbeckhousing.co.uk), at Purbeck District Council, Purbeck Housing Trust’s offices and on a recorded telephone message (you can hear this on **01929 558410**). Copies of the advert may also be displayed in your local library, on your Parish noticeboard, at GP’s surgeries and in local shops. For a full list of places where you can see a copy of the advert, please contact Purbeck District Council or Purbeck Housing Trust.

### The adverts will be available by 12.00 noon every Tuesday.

When you have selected a property that you can bid for (for instance, one which is the right size for your household, without age restrictions that you do not meet etc.), you should bid for the property (see the next page for how to bid). The deadline for bidding will be stated in the advertisement – any bids received after this time will not be considered.

Unfortunately it is impossible for us to contact everyone who bids for a property, and so if you have not heard anything from the landlord within two weeks of the bidding deadline, you should assume that you have not been successful on this occasion.

We ask that you only bid for properties that you are serious about considering.

## How do I bid for a Property?

There are a number of ways in which you can bid for a property:

- you can telephone us on **01929 558411** and tell us your name, registration number, and the reference number of the property or properties you would like to bid for
- you can send us an email to **homechoice@purbeckhousing.co.uk** and tell us your name, address, contact telephone number, registration number, and the reference number of the property or properties you would like to bid for. The Housing Needs Team will take bids during office hours (8.30am - 5.00pm) and the Careline Team will take bids out of office hours. Out of office hours there may be a slight delay answering the phone if Careline staff are dealing with an emergency
- by post using the pre-printed coupons provided – remember to allow enough time for the coupon to reach us before bidding closes
- in person at Purbeck District Council or Purbeck Housing Trust's offices using the pre-printed coupons provided.

## What if I am offered a property and decide to refuse it?

If you refuse two offers of accommodation, without a good reason, you will be contacted by a member of staff to discuss your bidding.

## What if I am not in a position to be offered a property and need to move to other accommodation?

We can give you advice about other housing options that may be suitable for you.

If you **disagree** with a decision regarding your Housing Register application:

You have the right to ask for a review of the decision. You must supply, in writing, and within 21 days of the decision being made, your reasons for requesting the review.

A detailed outline of our review procedure can be found in the full Allocations Policy, which is available from Purbeck District Council or Purbeck Housing Trust's offices.

