



The Tunbridge Wells Housing Register and Housing Allocation Policy

This booklet contains a short summary of the Council's Housing Allocation Policy 2013. A copy of the full Housing Allocation Policy is available on request.

Introduction

The Council does not own any council housing but does have access to many social rented and affordable homes in the borough through its partnerships with housing associations. The Council holds the register for 'Homeseekers' and 'Transfer tenants' that would like to apply for available homes.

This booklet tells you how you can apply for social and affordable rent homes in the Tunbridge Wells borough and how these properties will be allocated.

Choice Based Lettings

Rather than the Council allocating available homes, we will continue to give more choice about where people live. Through Kent Homechoice the Council works in partnership with other Kent councils and a number of housing associations to allow applicants to apply or 'bid' for available homes they are interested in. In order to do this you must first apply to join the Housing Register.

Available properties will be advertised on the website **www.kenthomechoice.org.uk**. Free access to the internet is available from libraries across the borough, and at the Gateway in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Who is able to apply to the Housing Register?

Anyone can approach the Council for housing advice and assistance. However, as social housing in the borough is limited, the Council will no longer hold an open housing register. To apply for housing, an applicant must be eligible, meet the qualification rules, have a local connection to the borough and have a housing need. The rules for all of these are explained in this booklet.

Both Homeseekers and Transfer tenants are only able to include family members, dependants, spouses or people they are in a relationship with on their application. Friends and other acquaintances are not able to apply together unless there is evidence that there is a need for 24 hour live-in care, and the other person provides this care.

Eligibility

We cannot accept applications from people who are subject to immigration control and who do not have access to public funds in the UK. An applicant must also be habitually resident in the United Kingdom. Any family members who are not currently living in the United Kingdom will not be included on an application.

Local Connection

Applicants must have a local connection to the borough in order to be able to apply for housing. A local connection is gained through either the main or joint applicant meeting one of the following:

- Have been living in settled accommodation in the borough for the last three years (definition of settled accommodation is detailed in the full policy)
- Have previously lived in settled accommodation in the borough for five out of the last 10 years.
- Have immediate family (Mother, Father, Brother, Sister, children aged over 18) who have lived in the borough continuously for the last five years.
- Be employed in the borough, with a permanent contract of paid employment that has been continuous for the last six months, or self employed for the last six months where there is evidence that the main area of work is in the borough.
- Serving or former members of the armed forces (honourably discharged within the past five years), injured members of the Reserved Forces or bereaved spouses/civil partners of the armed forces who lost their partner due to military service and have to leave Ministry of Defence family accommodation.

Housing Need

Only applicants who have a housing need will be able to apply for housing. To be considered to be in housing need, the applicant must meet at least one of the housing need criteria detailed in the 4 bands. Should more than one of the housing need criteria be met, then the applicant will be placed into whichever band has the highest priority.

Qualification rules

As social housing is very limited, the following qualification rules have been set to make sure that the households in the highest need are prioritised.

- Household income, savings, capital or investments must not exceed the financial limits set in the policy. These limits will be reviewed annually and may change, so check the full policy or contact the Council for more information if required.
- In most circumstances, applicants who own their own property will not be able to apply.
- Applicants who have or have had significant housing related debt with a private/social landlord or Borough Council will not normally qualify to apply unless there is robust evidence of a regular payment plan in place. Such a payment plan will be monitored.
- Applicants who have been involved in committing on-going anti-social behaviour (including any member of their household) will not qualify to apply.
- Applicants who do not have a local connection to the borough will not qualify to apply
- Applicants not living in the UK, except certain members of the armed forces, will not qualify.
- Applicants who are under 16 years of age will not qualify.

How to apply to join the Housing Register

You will need to complete an application form and provide identification and proof of residence for each person on the application form.

Application forms are completed online at **kenthomechoice.org.uk** by clicking 'Register'. Once you have submitted a form online, we will not be able to proceed with the application until you provide copies of the relevant identification and supporting information listed at the end of the application form.

In exceptional circumstances a paper version of the application may be requested from the Housing Needs Team at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council by telephoning 01892 526121 and asking to speak to the Housing Needs team or dropping into the Tunbridge Wells Gateway or Weald Information Centre in Cranbrook. You can drop copies of your identification and supporting information for your online application into the Tunbridge Wells Gateway, Weald Information Centre in Cranbrook or by post to:

**The Housing Register Team, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council,
Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS**



Homechoice
Date of birth:

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- HOME
- SCHEME GUIDE
- REGISTER
- CONTACT US

Bidding Cycle

Bidding on:
Issue 172
opens Friday:
13 March

Social Media

 follow us on Facebook

Tweets

**Kent Homechoice**
@KentHomechoice
2h
From 20 March, all homes in Kent will be advertised daily apart from homes in Canterbury which will be advertised weekly

Help

More about **Kent Homechoice** and the **Scheme Guide**.
[Click here](#) to see a list of frequently asked questions.

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Welcome to Kent Homechoice

Kent Homechoice is the service for Kent housing applicants. If you are registered for housing in Kent, please log in at the top right of the screen.

We provide the information you need so you can make the right housing choices. If you're looking for help on finding a home to rent from councils and housing associations in Kent, you've come to the right place.

LATEST ARTICLES



Daily bidding to start from Friday 20 March 2015

You may have heard we are moving from advertising homes fortnightly to advertising homes daily. This means there will no longer be a fortnightly bidding cycle. The last fortnightly bidding cycle will be on Friday 13 March. Then daily bidding will start from Friday 20 March. You can find out more about how daily bidding works by [clicking here](#).

All homes in Kent will be advertised daily apart from homes in Canterbury, which will be advertised weekly on Wednesdays. Please contact Canterbury City Council if you would like more information on their weekly bidding cycle. [Click here](#) for their contact details.



Bidding for homes is changing

We want to advertise homes as quickly as possible, so we can house people quicker. We will be changing the frequency we advertise homes from a fortnightly cycle to advertising homes daily from Spring 2015.

Over the next few weeks you can look out for more information on when this will become available here on the website. You can also find out more about how daily bidding works by [clicking here](#).



New Kent Homechoice App

Now there's an even quicker and easier way to bid for homes using the new Kent Homechoice app.

Available for free to download on [iTunes](#) and [Google Play](#), this app not only lets you bid for homes, you can also view results of previous bids and update your personal details while you're on the move. [Read more](#)



Fed up filling in paper forms?

You can now apply for housing online in most areas. Click on Register in the main menu to get started, or [click here](#).

Councils will generally only accept applications from local people in housing need, and you will need to provide proof. There are exceptions, so please check with your [local council](#).

Thanet Council and East Kent Housing have produced a [short video](#) that explains how to apply online.

Digital TV

Bid for homes using your TV or mobile

Housing Options

The route to finding a home that suits you.

Mutual Exchange

Search here for tenants wanting to swap homes.

Home Ownership

Find out more about Help to Buy.

Downsizing

Move to a home that is the right size for you.

Private Renting

Find out more about renting in the private sector.

Opportunities

Advice and help on training and work.

Advice Gateway

Free unbiased advice from independent specialists

How your application will be assessed

We will assess your application using the information you give us on the application form. It is important that you complete it as accurately as possible. Once the relevant identification and supporting information has been provided we will aim to assess the application within 15 working days and confirm the assessment in writing, along with your reference number, band details, priority date and size of accommodation you are registered for.

If you do not qualify to join the housing register, you will be advised in writing and will still be able to receive advice on alternative housing options, such as privately renting and mutual exchange by contacting the Housing Needs Team or dropping into the Tunbridge Wells Gateway.

To make sure that tenancies are as secure and affordable as possible, it is important that households are not allocated a property larger than they need.

The Council has used the criteria from the Welfare Reform Act 2012 to assess the size of property a household needs.

One bedroom will be allocated to the following:

- Main applicant who is aged 16 and over or a married / cohabiting couple who are both aged 16 and over.
- Two children aged less than 16 years of the same gender.
- Two children aged less than 10 years regardless of their gender.
- Additional family members aged over 16 who it is appropriate to apply to be housed with the main or joint applicant.
- For disabled tenants who require a non-resident carer to stay overnight, the tenant will be allowed one extra room (medical evidence of this will be needed).
- An additional bedroom will be allowed for those who have been approved as foster carers or prospective adopters (evidence of this will be required).

Tenants that are over the state pension age will not be subject to the size criteria. It should be noted that the state pension age is subject to increase.

The table below shows what size of accommodation a household would normally be eligible for:

Household Size	Property size
Single person or couple	Bedsits / 1 beds
Pregnant women with or without partner and no other children.	2 bed
Parent/s with one child / one non dependant.	
Parent/s with two children under 10 years.	
Parent/s with two children of same gender where the eldest is aged less than 16 years.	
Parent/s with two children of different genders where the eldest is aged 10 years or over.	3 bed
Parent/s with two non dependants / children where at least one is aged 16 years or over.	
Parent/s with three children up to 16 years.	
Parent/s with four children of any gender under 10 years.	
Parent/s with four children of the same gender up to 16 years.	
Parent/s with four children of different genders up to age of 16 years.	3 / 4 bed
Parent/s with five children up to the age of 16 years.	4 bed
Parent/s with three or more non dependants / children over 16 years.	

There is a limited supply of four bedroom properties, and larger families would be expected to occupy these in the best way they can. Where 3 or 4 bedroom properties have 2 living rooms, these will be advertised as having an additional bedroom, as the second living room would be expected to be used as a bedroom. Children will be expected to share rooms with other children in the household regardless of whether they are siblings.

The Banding system

When you apply to join the register, you will be assessed as either a Homeseeker or a Transfer tenant.

‘Homeseekers’ include applicants who are not currently a housing association tenant in the borough, or are Council or housing association tenants outside of the borough.

A ‘Transfer tenant’ is an applicant who is a housing association tenant in this borough.

You will be placed into one of the following four bands according to your housing situation:

Band A

Homeseekers	Transfer tenants
1. Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces, leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner where the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service	1. Overcrowding of a Housing Association property, according to Welfare Reform Act bedroom criteria (detailed on page 7 of this booklet)
2. Serving or former members of the Armed Forces/Reserve Forces personnel who need to move urgently and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service	
3. Category 1 Hazards which landlord is unable to address within 6 months including people living in insanitary or unsatisfactory conditions	
4. Move-on from short term supported accommodation (definition of this accommodation detailed in the full policy)	
5. High medical or welfare need to move (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)	

6. Those who are threatened with homelessness (through no fault of their own) or have no fixed abode	
7. Overcrowded households according to Welfare Reform Act bedroom criteria (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)	
8. Tenants in private rented accommodation where it has been evidenced that the property is unaffordable to them	

Band B

Homeseekers	Transfer tenants
1. Those who have been accepted as homeless, have a local connection through the Housing Register Allocation policy and have been owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for a period of more than six months	1. High medical or welfare need (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)
	2. Transfer applicants occupying an adapted property which is no longer needed
	3. Transfer applicants who require adaptations to be carried out to their property, where their current home has been deemed unsuitable for adaptations
	4. Under-occupation of a housing association property in the borough according to Welfare Reform bedroom criteria (as detailed on page 7 of this booklet)
	5. Category 1 Hazards which landlord is unable to address within six months including people living in insanitary or unsatisfactory conditions

Band C

Homeseekers	Transfer tenants
1. Serving or former members of the Armed Forces/ Reserve Forces personnel who urgently need a suitable adapted property due to a serious injury/ medical condition sustained in service	1. Urgent management transfers
2. Urgent medical and welfare grounds (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)	2. Urgent medical or welfare grounds (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)
3. Fleeing domestic abuse, extreme violence or harassment. Evidence needed to show urgent risk and that it is safe to live in the borough	3. Fleeing domestic abuse, extreme violence or harassment. Evidence needed to show urgent risk and that it is safe to live in the borough
4. Made homeless due to disaster, fire, flood	4. Need for rehousing as home due to be demolished as part of regeneration programme
5. Housing Association tenants outside of the borough that need to move to the borough to take up an offer of employment or training.	

Band D

Homeseekers	Transfer tenants
1. Low medical or welfare issues (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)	1. Low medical or welfare issues (as detailed on page 12 of this booklet)
2. Those who have approached the Local Authority as homeless, whilst the homeless application is pending	
3. Those who have been accepted as homeless and in priority need but have been found to be intentionally homeless	
4. Those who have been accepted as homeless, are owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, have been owed that duty for six months or less and for whom a placement into the private rented sector is being sought	
5. Those who have been accepted as homeless, are owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, have no local connection under the Housing Register Allocation Policy and for whom a placement into the private rented sector is being sought	
6. Those who have been accepted as homeless, are owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and have been successfully placed in private rented accommodation by the Council	
7. Those owed a main homelessness duty by any other Local Authority	
8. Applicants who have been living in the private rented sector for over five years and have had to move a number of times due to no fault of their own	

Medical Grounds

- **Urgent medical grounds**

A member of the household has been assessed as having a critical need to move as they are unable to remain in or return to their current accommodation on medical grounds. Details are available in the full policy, but an example could be an applicant who is unable to be discharged from hospital until more suitable housing is found, as living in or returning to their property would be seriously harmful or life threatening.

- **High medical grounds**

There is evidence that a move to more suitable accommodation will improve a significant or serious health condition substantially. Details are available in the full policy, but an example could be a person that is not housebound and their life is not at risk due to their current housing situation, but their housing conditions are directly contributing to causing serious ill health.

- **Low medical grounds**

This is where a member of the household has a moderate need to move. Details are in the full policy, but an example could be the need to move closer to family on medical grounds.

Welfare Grounds

- **Urgent welfare grounds**

This is where the household has been assessed as being unable to remain in their current accommodation and has a critical need to move on welfare grounds for example. Details are available in the full policy, but an example could be an exceptional need to move which is supported by the Police or housing association.

- **High welfare grounds**

This is where the household can remain in their property but where there is evidence that a move to more suitable accommodation will improve the household's situation substantially. Details are in the full policy, but an example is severe bullying of children in the family by local children that is supported by the Police or the school.

- **Low welfare grounds**

This is where the household can remain in their property but where there is evidence of a moderate need to move. Details are in the full policy, but an example could be a family with children under 10 years old living in properties without a garden where there is no open play space or park in the local area.

Overcrowding & Under-occupation

In deciding whether a household is overcrowded or are under-occupying a property, we use the criteria set by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance bedroom allowances. Under these rules, one bedroom will be allocated as detailed on page 5 of this booklet.

A household will only be recognised as being overcrowded at the point the household bedroom need as calculated by the bedroom criteria exceeds the number of bedrooms available in their property by one or more. For example, a family with two children of the same gender who live in a 2-bedroom property would only be considered to be overcrowded once one of the children turns 16 years old.

All applicants who are deemed to be living in overcrowded conditions will be placed in the band appropriate to them, according to whether they are a Transfer tenant or Homeseeker.

Under-occupation is only assessed for Transfer tenants. A household will be recognised as under-occupying a property if they have one bedroom or more than they need as calculated by the bedroom criteria.

Property types

The Council will aim to ensure that any housing with particular features is allocated to those who are most suited to the property as follows:

- **Houses and gardens**

Priority for houses and/or family sized properties with gardens will normally be given to applicants with dependent children aged less than 12 years old.

- **Ground floor flats**

Priority for ground floor flats will normally be given to applicants who are considered to be in need of this type of accommodation on medical grounds.

- **Bungalows**

Priority for bungalows will normally be given to applicants with a physical disability or who are considered to be in need of this type of accommodation for medical reasons.

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■ **Sheltered Housing**

Applicants for sheltered housing will normally need to be of pensionable age, unless the scheme has a different age restriction.

■ **Mobility assessment**

If a member of the household has a substantial and permanent physical disability which restricts their mobility accessing or moving around the home, details of this will need to be provided on the application form and the Council will assess their level of mobility based on the three categories below:

Category 1

Wheelchair users indoors and outdoors

Category 2

People who cannot manage steps or stairs and may occasionally use a wheelchair

Category 3

Independent but can only manage a few steps

This assessment will then be used to match the household to properties that are suitable for them.

If an applicant has been assessed as having a mobility level as detailed above and are in need of certain types of adaptation (such as stairlifts, level access showers, ramps or hoists), they will be given preference for any properties which already include these features.

Properties which include these adaptations will be advertised showing their suitability for the mobility levels listed above. This type of accommodation will normally be prioritised for those people who are in need of it.

Choice of areas

As part of the application process, you will be asked to choose your top 3 choices of the areas where you would like to live. The Council collects data on the housing need within the borough and this information is used for the future planning of social housing in the district. The borough is broken down into 30 smaller areas for you to choose from. You can bid for properties anywhere in the borough regardless of the areas you choose on your application, it is purely for our information.

1	Royal Tunbridge Wells Town	16	Horsmonden
2	Sherwood, Tunbridge Wells	17	Cranbrook
3	Showfields, Tunbridge Wells	18	Sissinghurst
4	Ramslye, Tunbridge Wells	19	Frittenden
5	Hawkenbury, Tunbridge Wells	20	Goudhurst
6	Rusthall	21	Kilndown
7	Langton Green	22	Lamberhurst
8	Speldhurst	23	Hawkhurst
9	Ashurst	24	Sandhurst
10	Bidborough	25	Benenden
11	Southborough	26	Iden Green
12	Barnetts Wood, Southborough	27	Paddock Wood
13	High Brooms	28	Capel
14	Brenchley	29	Five Oak Green
15	Matfield	30	Pembury

Rural Housing Schemes

Some housing association homes have legal restrictions due to the planning agreement made before the property was built. These homes can only be let to homeseekers or transfer tenants who have a proven local connection to the specific parish where the property is based or in some circumstances the immediately neighbouring parishes as a back up.

These homes will be clearly advertised to invite bids from homeseekers or transfer tenants that meet the local connection criteria. Only bidders who meet the parish or back up parish connection will be considered for those properties. All others will be bypassed.

The local connection rules for parishes can vary, but generally the household must meet one or more of the following:

- Have lived in the Parish continuously for the last three years or have previously lived in the Parish for a total of five years out of the last 10 years.
- Have immediate family (Mother, Father, Brother, Sister or children over 18 years old) who currently live in the Parish and have continuously done so for the last five years
- Be in or about to take up full time employment in the Parish
- Provide an important service that requires residence in the Parish

Only a certain number of areas in the borough are considered to be parishes, and in many cases have their own parish council. The areas where a local connection would apply are:

Benenden	Speldhurst/Langton Green
Brenchley/Matfield	Bidborough
Cranbrook	Capel / Tudeley / Five Oak Green
Frittenden	Goudhurst
Hawkhurst	Horsmonden
Lamberhurst	Paddock Wood
Pembury	Rusthall
Sandhurst	

Community Contribution Scheme

The Council wants to support those who take responsibility for themselves and their community, and feel that it is important to contribute to creating balanced communities which include a diverse range of people. This includes those who are working or trying to get back into work as well as those who are in receipt of benefits.

The community contribution scheme will give applicants who meet the community contribution criteria in bands A and D only increased priority for housing.

The scheme will operate by advertising approximately one quarter of properties that are prioritised for applicants in bands A and D to those who are working, volunteering or contributing to their communities. The property advert will state which properties are prioritised for these applicants, and any households who do not meet the criteria may be bypassed for these particular properties.

Community contribution criteria can be granted to the following applicants:

- Working households
- Those who are actively looking for work
- Those who are volunteering
- Those who have been approved for fostering or adoption
- Armed forces personnel

All of the details of who is included in those categories can be found in the full policy.

We recognise that certain applicants may not be able to meet the community contribution criteria for personal reasons. As such community contribution criteria will be automatically given for the following applicants:

- Single parent households with a child under the age of five years of age
- Applicants who are disabled

Each case will be looked at on an individual basis. Community Contribution Criteria will not be awarded to applicants in bands B or C.

Targeted Allocations Plan

The Council needs to make sure that in general, applicants with the highest needs are housed the quickest, whilst also giving applicants with differing housing needs across all bands a chance at gaining accommodation.

The Council will direct approximately 60% of all vacancies towards Homeseekers, with the remaining 40% of vacancies going to Transfer tenants.

We also want to ensure that applicants within each of the four bands are allocated a certain number of vacancies per year. The Targeted Allocation Plan sets out how many properties on average will be directed towards each band as follows:

Homeseekers (60% of all vacancies)		Transfer tenants (40% of all properties)	
Band	Percentage of properties	Band	Percentage of properties
A (eg - No fixed abode, high medical or welfare needs, overcrowded etc)	85% (approx one quarter will go to those meeting the Community Criteria)	A (Overcrowded Housing Association property in the borough)	40% (approx one quarter will go to those meeting the Community Criteria)
B (Households accepted with a homelessness duty for more than six months)	10%	B (eg – Under-occupation of housing association properties, high medical or welfare needs etc)	30%
C (Urgent housing need – fleeing violence, urgent medical need etc)	3%	C Urgent housing need - fleeing violence, urgent medical need etc)	20%
D (low medical or welfare need etc)	2% (approx. one quarter will go to those meeting the Community Criteria)	D (low medical or welfare need etc)	10% (approx. one quarter will go to those meeting the Community Criteria)

The following is an example to show property numbers rather than percentages. This is based on an approximate of 400 properties becoming available in a year.

Homeseekers (60% of all properties) = 240 properties		Transfer tenants (40% of all properties) = 160 properties	
Band	Percentage of properties	Band	Percentage of properties
A	85% = 204 properties	A	40% = 64 properties
B	10% = 24 properties	B	30% = 48 properties
C	3% = 7 properties	C	20% = 32 properties
D	2% = 5 properties	D	10% = 16 properties

Local Lettings Policies

Some properties advertised may be subject to a Local Lettings Policy. This may mean that the property or some of the properties in particular developments are targeted to applicants of a certain age range, families with children of a certain age or specifically to working households.

These policies assist in helping the housing association to achieve a balanced sustainable community on a development and to prevent there being higher than usual concentrations of vulnerable households with high support needs. It can also help them to deal with any issues in an existing development or road where there are currently management problems.

Properties subject to a Local Lettings Policy will be advertised as such, and applicants will be able to click on a link in the advert to access the full details of the policy in place, or request a copy from the Tunbridge Wells Gateway or the Housing Needs Team.

How to make bids

If you are interested in one of the properties advertised and meet all of the criteria listed in the advert, you will need to place a bid on the property.

You will only be able to bid for properties that are an appropriate size for your household. You can have up to three open bids at any one time. Once one of the properties closes for bidding, you will be able to bid on another property.

Please think carefully before placing a bid as you are only allowed up to three reasonable refusals of accommodation. Any more than this and you will go to the bottom of your current band and will face a longer wait for housing.

The following rules tend to apply for certain types of property:

- Properties with disabled adaptations will be reserved for bidders who need the specific adaptations available
- Ground floor or level access homes will be prioritised for bidders who have medical or mobility needs for this type of home
- Sheltered homes are only available to bidders who meet the minimum age requirement, which is normally either 55 or 60+

You can make bids:

- **Online at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk**
On the top right of the page, choose TUNW in the first box and enter the number part of your reference in the following box. Choose your date of birth in the boxes below and click on 'login'. Once logged in, go to 'Make a bid'.
- **By text at 07781 472 726**
Type your full reference followed by# then the property reference.
Example - TUNW12345#351
- **Digital TV**
You can bid through your TV if you subscribe to SKY, Virgin Media or have a Freeview box. You can also bid through your games console if it can connect to the internet. Your telephone line must be connected.
- **SKY**
Go to channel 539 and press the red button
- **Virgin Media**
Press the home button, and interactive. Select News & info, then Looking Local. Alternatively go to channel 233 and press the red button.
- **Wii, Xbox or other games consoles that connect to the internet**
Type <http://lookinglocal.gov.uk/KentHomechoice/> into your internet browser.
- **Mobile Phone app.**
Go to the iTunes store or Android Market and download the free app 'Kent Homechoice'. You will be able to bid and access Exchange Locata for Mutual exchange from here.

If you are unable to use any of these methods to bid, you can either drop into the Gateway office where the Customer Service Advisors will be able to assist you, or contact the Housing Needs Team.

If you want a family member, friend or support agency to make bids on your behalf, this can be done by providing them with your Kent Homechoice details and date of birth.

How will you know if your bid is successful?

There is a feedback section on your Kent Homechoice homepage when you have logged in that will show you a list of all of the bids you have made with the most recent at the top. You will also see the total number of bids made on the property, and the status of the property which will be one of the following:

- **Open for bids**

The property is still being advertised

- **Bidding closed, property not yet offered**

The bidding cycle has ended and the housing association have not yet shortlisted any bidders for the property. This may be because it is not yet ready and they will do so closer to that time.

- **Property under offer**

This means that the property has been offered to either the highest or the most appropriate bidder for the property type or restrictions. The band and priority date of the successful bidder will be shown, and you will be able to compare this to your own.

If the band is higher than yours or the priority date is earlier, they have either been waiting for longer or have a higher housing need.

If the band is lower than yours or the priority date later, you may have been bypassed for the property. This could be because you do not meet the particular requirements as stated in the advert, such as priority being given to a particular band, or mobility needs.

If the band and priority date match yours, it could be that you have been successful. If this is the case, the housing association will contact you directly when they are ready to do so either by post or by phone. You do not need to do anything, but it is recommended that you check the 'My details' tab on your Kent Homechoice page and make sure that your contact details are up to date so that you are easily contactable.

- **Property let**

The property has been accepted by the successful bidder and a tenancy has started. The band and priority date of the successful tenant will be shown.

- **Property withdrawn**

The property has had to be withdrawn by the housing association. This could be for a number of reasons including the outgoing tenants deciding or being allowed to remain in the property, or it may be required by the landlord for an urgent management move.

If you have not been successful this time, you can check in the 'My details' tab of your Kent Homechoice member page. At the bottom of the page, you can click on a link to see some information on waiting times for rehousing based on the number of properties let within the last year. You will be able to see the average waiting time by band and property size. Keep in mind that this time is based on the length of time you have been in your current band and not the whole time you have been registered.

Refusing an offer of accommodation

If you choose to refuse an offer of accommodation, you will need to let the housing association know, and then send in written reasons for the refusal to the Council, either by post or at the Tunbridge Wells Gateway. Once you have turned it down, the property would then normally be offered to the next suitable bidder.

You will only be allowed up to three refusals, after which, your application will go to the bottom of your current band and their priority date will change to match. This will mean that you will have much longer to wait for another offer.

If you turn down a property, and based on the reasons you give, the Council feel that you have reasonable reasons for doing so, such as the property being unsuitable on medical grounds, this would not be counted as a refusal.

The exceptions to this would be for applicants assessed as having an urgent housing need and also those to whom the Council owe a main homelessness duty. In this case, these applicants would be expected to accept the first suitable and reasonable offer of accommodation.

Rejoining the housing register

Once you have been rehoused by a housing association, there will be a 12 month restriction on re-joining the register.

There will be exceptions to this in certain cases if there is evidence that the property or the immediate location is putting the family at risk.

Right to request a review

You may request a review for the following reasons:

- Your application to join the housing register has been refused, which includes the decision that you do not meet the housing need criteria.
- You feel that the band that you have been placed in is incorrect or your banding is changed.
- An offer of accommodation was felt to be reasonable and will count as one of your refusals.
- It has been decided that you are not eligible for an offer of a particular property.
- You have been removed from the housing register.
- The Council have discharged their homelessness duty to an applicant who has refused a reasonable offer of accommodation.

To request a review, you must contact us in writing or by email within 21 days of the Council informing you of its decision. It is important that you tell us of any new information that you wish to be considered, the reasons why you disagree with the decision and provide any relevant supporting evidence to back up your case. You may ask somebody else to do this for you.

The review will be carried out by a different officer to the one who made the original decision, normally the Housing Register & Development Manager or their equivalent.

To request a review please write to:

Housing Register & Development Manager
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Town Hall
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN1 1RS

Alternatively, you can email allocations@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Responsibilities of housing register applicants

When you have been accepted to join the housing register, there will be a number of things that you will be expected to do. These are:

- **Active bidding**

To make sure that all who are on the register are actually in need of housing, you will be expected to regularly bid on properties. Anyone who does not bid for 24 months or more will be contacted and may be removed from the register.

- **Changes to your application**

We expect you to inform us of any changes in your circumstances, and to complete a change of address form if you move address.

- **Annual review**

We expect you to respond to our yearly register review letter to confirm that nothing has changed and that you still want to remain on the register. If you do not respond, we will close your application and write to you to let you know that we have done so.

- **Accurate information**

It is an offence under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 for a person to make a statement which is false, or knowingly withhold information from the Council which may be relevant to their application. The Council may remove the application and not allow rejoining, or in some cases prosecute applicants that are found to have made a false statement. This could be either on their application form, in response to requests for further information or during the proceedings of a review.

Additionally, a housing association may seek possession of any tenancy that has been granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's request.

Alternative housing options

Many applicants may not be able to join the housing register at all, but it is also important for those who are able to join to consider alternative options that could help them to find housing more quickly. The housing register is not a quick option for finding accommodation, and applicants may face a very long wait for a suitable property, or may not be successful in achieving an offer at all.

- **Private rentals**

The borough has an active private rented sector, and renting through a private landlord or letting agent is a good option to consider. The Council operates various schemes to assist people to access the private rented market, and further information on these are available from the Council or the Tunbridge Wells Gateway.

There will be an expectation on applicants to whom we have accepted a full homelessness duty and are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, to work with our Tenancy Officers to find accommodation through the private rented sector.

- **Buying a property**

For those who are working and on a low income, and applicants who do not qualify to join the register as they exceed the financial assessment limits, there are a number of affordable home ownership scheme options available. For more information applicants should contact the Help to Buy agents through www.helptobuyese.org.uk.

- **Mutual Exchange**

For Transfer tenants, mutual exchange where tenants 'swap' their properties could be a much quicker option to being rehoused through the housing register.

Tenants do not have to be living in the same borough or have the same landlord to do a swap. However they will need to get permission from their landlord before doing the swap.

There may be situations where this is not possible, such as certain planning conditions attached to the property or because of the tenants' circumstances (if they are in arrears for example).

For transfer tenants interested in mutual exchange, you can register your accommodation details on www.exchangelocata.org.uk and also look at other properties that are available for mutual exchange.

Information on the policy

You have the right to request the following information from the Council:

- Information to show you how your application will be assessed and the details of the banding structure.
- Information about whether it is likely that suitable accommodation will be found for you through the housing register, and if so, an estimate of how long it will be until that accommodation is available.

By clicking on the declaration at the end of the online application form, or signing the paper version, you give consent for us to make relevant enquiries with regard to your housing need and potential ability to maintain a tenancy. It also gives consent for us to share your information with partner housing associations or other social housing providers when nominating you to be a tenant in one of their properties.

Personal information is only disclosed to other parties with your consent or in exceptional circumstances, such as the information being required by the Police as part of a criminal investigation.

Circumstances may arise where changes or updates need to be made to the Allocation Policy. The Head of Communities and Wellbeing or equivalent is authorised to make minor changes. A brief summary of any changes along with the updated policy will be made available on the Council's website.

More significant changes that would affect a large number of applicants would be made in consultation with the housing providers in the borough. We would take all reasonable steps to ensure that applicants are made aware of the changes, and anyone directly affected would be contacted in writing to advise them of the impact to their application.

If you need help translating this information, please contact us on 01892 526 121.

यदि आप को इस जानकारी के अनुवाद के लिए सहायता चाहिए तो कृपया हम से 01892 526 121 पर संपर्क करें। - Hindi

اگر آپ کو اس معلومات کے ترجمہ کیلئے مدد چاہیے تو براہ کرم ہم سے 01892 526 121 پر رابطہ کریں۔ Urdu

Si vous avez besoin d'aide pour traduire ces informations, veuillez nous contacter au 01892 526 121. - French

Jeśli potrzebują Państwo pomocy w przetłumaczeniu tej informacji, prosimy o kontakt na numer telefonu 01892 526 121. – Polish

如果你需要将这一信息翻译成你的母语，请致电 01892 526 121 联络我们。 - Mandarin

Kung kinakailangan po ninyo ng tulong na maisalin sa ibang wika ang impormasyong ito, paki-tawagan lamang po kami sa numerong 01892 526 121. - Tagalog

এই তথ্য অনুবাদ করার জন্যে যদি আপনার সহায়তার প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে আমাদেরকে 01892 526 121 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।



If you require this information in large print, on
Audiotape or in any other format, please contact the
Housing Needs Team by telephoning 01892 526121