

# Homechoice Choice Based Lettings





## What is Homechoice?

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The Homechoice lettings scheme is how Erimus Housing allocates its vacant properties. The scheme means you can search for a home of your own choice in Middlesbrough and you do not have to wait for an offer of accommodation that somebody else thinks might be suitable for you.

## How do I register an application?

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To express your interest in vacant properties advertised, you need to register an application on the scheme. You can apply online at [www.homechoicemiddlesbrough.co.uk](http://www.homechoicemiddlesbrough.co.uk) or complete an application form, which is available from Homechoice, Corporation Road, Middlesbrough or any local Erimus Housing office. You can also register an application over the telephone and in exceptional circumstances, a home visit can be arranged.

## **Do you take my personal circumstances into consideration?**

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It is important that you complete all the questions asked on the application form that reflect your personal circumstances to help us assess your housing need. Every case will be assessed on an individual basis.

## **Who can join the scheme?**

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Anyone who is over the age of 16, regardless of sex, race or tenure, providing they are not subject to certain conditions imposed by immigration control and have not been guilty of any unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant. Young people under the age of 18 who are moving into their first independent home will have their support needs assessed.

## **What if I live outside Middlesbrough?**

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You can still apply to join the scheme but you will be given less preference than people living in Middlesbrough. All our applications are assessed to take into account individual circumstances. If you are assessed as having a particular housing need, you may be given preference within the scheme.

## **What if I own my home?**

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If you are an owner occupier, you can join the scheme as long as you do not have sufficient equity to meet your current housing need. If you have either a complex health or special need, your case will be referred to one of our specialist teams for assessment, to determine what level of preference you should be given.

## **Will you undertake any checks?**

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Verification and reference checks to determine eligibility are carried out before a firm offer of a property is made e.g. proof of identity or proof of immigration status.

## How do you allocate your properties?

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When the bidding cycle has closed, a shortlist of qualifying applicants is produced. This places applicants in the order of their banding, the date of their banding and the date they registered on the scheme. Applicants in band 1 will be ranked first, followed by applicants in bands 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

If two or more applicants with a similar level of need from the same priority band bid for the same property, the applicant with the earliest priority band date will be ranked first. If that date is the same, the registration date will be used to determine who receives the offer of accommodation. We have a legal duty to give reasonable preference to households with particular housing needs. The following bands reflect the prioritisation of applicants within the Homechoice lettings scheme.

## What if I am already an Erimus Housing tenant but would like to move?

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You will still be able to register on the Homechoice scheme and you will be placed into a band taking your individual circumstances into account. For example, if you have outgrown your home and it is assessed as being overcrowded, then you may be awarded band 2b, as explained on the following pages.

If you have no housing need but would like to move, you will normally be placed in band 3, unless you qualify for excellent tenant status. Please see band 2c for further details.

### Band 1a

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You will be placed in this band if you have been officially notified that you are due to lose your home as part of a recognised demolition and regeneration scheme and have other urgent housing needs such as an urgent medical need.

This only applies to applicants who are included in a current decant programme and not to applicants

who will be decanted in the future. This priority has no time limitation and will take precedence over any other applicant registered on the scheme.

### **Band 1b**

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You will be placed in this band if you are due to lose your home as part of a recognised demolition and regeneration scheme without any other urgent housing needs. This only applies to applicants who are included in a current decant programme and not to applicants who will be decanted in the future.



### **Band 2a**

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You will be placed in this band if you are assessed as having multiple housing needs as defined in band 2b e.g. you are assessed as statutory homeless and in need of urgent rehousing on medical grounds.

### **Band 2b**

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You will be placed in this band if you are assessed as statutory homeless, a child leaving care, ready to leave supported housing, living in unsatisfactory



or unsanitary housing conditions due to serious overcrowding or disrepair or have an urgent medical need for rehousing.

### **Band 2c**

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You will be placed in this band if you are awarded 'excellent tenant' status. To qualify for this status you must be an Erimus tenant and must not have breached any of your tenancy conditions. Your property and gardens must be maintained to a high standard and you must comply with the terms of the neighbourhood agreement, if there is an agreement in your area.

## **Band 3a**

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You will be placed in this band if you have experienced a relationship breakdown, have been assessed as non-priority homeless or intentionally homeless.

## **Band 3b**

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You will be placed in this band if you are a Middlesbrough resident and have no urgent need for housing.

## **Band 4**

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You will be placed in this band if you live outside the Middlesbrough area and you do not have any urgent housing needs. Owner occupiers that do not have sufficient equity to meet their current housing need will be placed in this band.

## **How will I know what properties are available?**

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Vacant properties are advertised on a weekly bidding cycle. Properties will be advertised in the Homechoice property shop window, on our website and at the local Erimus Housing offices.

## **How long will it take me to be housed?**

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This can depend on a number of things, such as the level of demand and availability of the type and location of the property you are interested in, together with the date you entered a particular band or the date you registered on the scheme.

## **How many bids can I make?**

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All applicants can make four bids per advertising cycle.

## **How will I know if my bid has been successful?**

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A member of the choice based lettings team will contact you as soon as they have completed all the relevant checks. This is usually within three working

days of the bidding cycle closing. We would ask you to contact us within two days of receiving an offer of accommodation to arrange a viewing. Results of all lettings are available on our website and at our Homechoice office.

## **Are all empty properties available for bidding?**

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No, sometimes we need to use vacant properties for our own management purposes and to make the best use of housing stock, such as for emergency rehousing following a fire or flood.

## **What if I am homeless?**

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If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness you will need to make an appointment to discuss this in further detail with a homeless prevention officer. If you meet the criteria of the Homelessness Act 2002 you will be awarded Band 2b. If you are assessed as being homeless, but not in a priority group, or homeless but intentionally homeless, then you will be awarded Band 3a. Please contact a homeless prevention officer for further advice and information.

## **What if I do not agree with a decision you have made about my application?**

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You can request a review of a decision within 21 days from the date of the decision. You can put your request in writing or alternatively, if this causes you difficulty, our officers will be happy to take the details of your request from you in person, or over the telephone.

If you are making a request for a review in writing, you will need to do this within 21 days, explaining the full reasons why you think the decision is wrong. You should also supply any additional information that you feel may help your case. If you need any help in requesting a review, please contact us for further advice and support.

## Can I phone Homechoice to request a review?

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Yes, you can phone the office to speak to the Homechoice team and your request will be recorded; however you will still need to do this within 21 days from the date of the original decision. You will also be asked to sign a written declaration for the basis of your appeal.

## My request for a review is outside of the timescale of 21 days. Will I still be able to request a review?

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This depends on the reason for the delay and how long it is before we receive the request. You will need to tell us why the delay occurred and a senior officer at Homechoice will then decide whether a review should take place.





## **What will happen after you have received my request for a review?**

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A member of staff from the Homechoice team will gather all the relevant facts and an appointment will be made for you to see a senior officer to discuss the reasons for your request. This will usually take place within seven working days of us receiving your request for a review.

## **What will be discussed during the appointment with the senior officer?**

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The officer will want to discuss why you disagree with the decision and will try to establish if there are any other facts that were not taken into account when the original decision was made. Any new information you provide will be taken into account, once it is investigated and verified.

## How long will I have to wait before you notify me of your decision?

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You will receive the review decision in writing within four weeks, after your interview at Homechoice.

## What if I am still not happy with the decision?

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If you are still not happy you can get in touch with us and your case will be dealt with through our complaints procedure.

## Contacts

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For more information, please contact us on 01642 773633 or log on to [www.irimushousing.co.uk](http://www.irimushousing.co.uk)

## Statement of choice






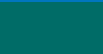
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Homechoice is a one stop shop providing a range of housing options and services to assist applicants into suitable housing. The Homechoice lettings scheme advertises properties on behalf of a number of registered social landlords and private sector landlords who have properties in the Middlesbrough area. This is to maximise availability to applicants on the scheme due to current high demand for all properties within the housing market.

Vulnerable applicants will be assisted with their housing by the Disabled Persons Housing Service or the Vulnerable Persons Officer to ensure appropriate support packages are in place prior to rehousing.

We will endeavour to reach all vulnerable groups by actively promoting the service and making it accessible to those who are hard to reach through the active marketing and monitoring of groups identified as not accessing the scheme.

Colour coded information leaflets are available for the following services:

	CUSTOMER SERVICE
	HOUSING MANAGEMENT
	SUPPORT SERVICES
	REGENERATION
	MANAGING YOUR MONEY
	REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We will make this information available in other languages, Braille, large print or other formats on request.

#### Arabic

سوف نقوم بتوفير هذه المعلومات بلغات أخرى أو بلغة بريل أو بخط كبير أو بتسقيقات أخرى عند طلب ذلك.

#### Bengali

আমরা এই তথ্য অনুরোধ করলে অন্যান্য ভাষা, ব্রেইল, বড় হরফ বা অন্য ফর্ম্মাতে পাওয়ার ব্যবস্থা করব।

#### French

Nous proposerons ces informations dans d'autres langues, en Braille, en gros caractères ou dans d'autres formats sur simple demande.

#### Hindi

आगह मिलने पर हम यह जानकारी अन्य भाषाओं, ब्रेल, बड़े अक्षरों तथा अन्य रूपों में उपलब्ध कराएंगे।

#### Kurdish Sorani

ئەگەر داوايکرت، دەتوانین ئەم زانیاریانە بە زمانەکانی تر، بە بریل (شیوازی نووسینی نابینا)، بە چابی بیتی گەورە یان بە شیوازی تر، نابین بکرت.

#### Polish

Na żądanie udostępniemy te informacje w innych językach, wydrukowane dużą czcionką, napisane pismem Braille'a lub w innym formacie.

#### Punjabi

ਬੇਨਤੀ ਮਿਲਣ 'ਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੂਜੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਦੂਜੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਕਰਵਾਂਗੇ।

#### Russian

Мы сделаем эту информацию доступной на других языках, в виде шрифта Брайля, широкоформатной распечатки или, по требованию, в других форматах.

#### Simplified Chinese

本資訊能按要求以其他語言、盲文、大印刷體或者其他格式提供。

#### Traditional Chinese

本資訊能夠按要求以其他語言、盲文、大印刷體或者其他格式提供。

#### Urdu

درخواست کرنے پر ہم یہ معلومات دیگر زبانوں، بریل، بڑی چھپائی یا دیگر بناؤتوں میں فراہم کر دیں گے۔



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Ref No: HM2V2

