



Cumbria Choice

Choice Based Lettings

The new Choice Based Letting Scheme for social housing in Cumbria.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the way of letting property changing?

A number of Local Authorities and Housing Associations in the country already operate choice based letting schemes. Studies have found that it is a more efficient way of letting property, that it is a more open and transparent system and that there are high levels of satisfaction from those using the system.

The government believes that people should have more choice about where they live and want all Local Authorities to have a choice based letting scheme in place by 2010.

2. In what way is it different to the current system?

Currently those on a housing waiting list have to wait until they are contacted by a housing officer with an offer of a property. They cannot choose which property they are offered, they do not know what other properties may be available and they have no notice that they are about to be offered a property.

Under the new system, landlords advertise nearly all their vacancies. This means that those who are registered for housing know what properties are available and can decide if they want to apply for any of the properties being advertised.

3. When is it going to happen?

One scheme is being developed for all of Cumbria by the District Authorities and 8 Housing Organisations. The plan is for the new scheme to be ready in December 2010.

You will hear a lot more about the scheme nearer the time it is ready to start. There will be more information available, articles in the press and letters to those already on housing waiting lists.

4. What does one scheme for Cumbria mean?

The following Housing Organisations are in the scheme: Accent Housing; Derwent & Solway; Eden Housing; Home; Impact Housing; Riverside; Two Castles Housing; South Lakes Housing Arms Length Management Organisation.

All the Local Authorities are in the scheme: Allerdale Borough Council; Barrow Borough Council; Carlisle City Council; Copeland Borough Council; Eden District Council; South Lakeland District Council.

This means that you only need to complete one application form to go on the Cumbria Choice Housing Register for housing with any of the housing organisations listed.

5. How do I apply to go on the register and do I need to if I am already on a waiting list/register?

If you are already registered with a landlord who is part of the scheme it may be that your details can be automatically transferred to the new register. However you will be contacted at the time and advised about what is happening and whether you need to provide any more information. You will then receive a letter to confirm that you are on the new register and what priority for housing you have been given.

If you are not already registered then you will be able to apply on-line, in person at any housing office, or request an application form by phone. You will then be sent a letter confirming your application reference number, priority on the register and details of how the scheme works.

6. How will properties be advertised?

You will be able to see vacant properties on the Cumbria Choice website. Printed newsletters will be available for you to look at in the housing offices and council offices of those organisations in the scheme. It is also intended to send newsletters to other agencies and voluntary organisations. A list of these places will be published once the scheme is ready to start.

7. Are all properties included?

The housing organisations in the scheme will place the majority of their properties for advertising. In certain circumstances an organisation may require a property for a specific reason and in this case it will not be advertised. However the scheme will publish details of properties let in this way.

8. Can I get help to understand the new scheme?

If you do not understand any part of the new scheme then you can ring one of the Housing Organisations. One of their officers will then be able to help you and answer any questions.

9. What happens if I do not have a computer?

You do not need a computer. You can request and complete a paper version of the form to go on the register. You can look at a newsletter to see all the properties that are available for renting. You can register your interest in a property by: phoning a housing office, ringing an automated phone line; sending a text or asking someone to ring on your behalf.

10. What are Bands and how will I know what Band I am in?

There are four Bands. The policy for the scheme shows which households will be placed in each Band. For example someone with a serious medical need for ground floor accommodation will be placed in the highest Band. Someone who already has a suitable property will be placed in the lowest Band.

Once you have sent in your form and any necessary information you will receive a letter to tell you which Band you are in.

11. What if I am in the same Band as someone else, how will you decide who gets the property?

When people are in the same band then the property is offered to the person who has been waiting longest.

12. What is 'Bidding'?

Once you have a registration number you can start to bid for a property. This means that you can tell us which properties you are interested in renting. You can make a bid by going into one of the housing offices, by phone, through an automated phone number, by text, or on the website.

13. How will I know if I have been successful?

Only the person who is to be offered the property will be contacted. If you are not contacted then you have not been successful with that particular bid.

14. Will local housing go to people from all over Cumbria?

No. Priority will be given to people who have a local connection to the area. Some properties (10%) will be available for people who need to move within Cumbria for work or personal reasons. These properties will be clearly marked in the advert so everyone knows if a person from outside the area can be considered.

15. The website

Cumbria Choice is operated through a website on the internet (the scheme can be used quite well without going onto the website). However there are advantages from using the web based system:

- You can complete your form on-line
- You can tell us about changes in your circumstances on-line
- You can look at all the properties on-line
- You can ask the system to list just the properties you are able to bid for
- You can bid for vacant properties on-line
- You can see where you are on the shortlist
- You can decide to remove a bid and place a bid on another property
- It is quicker and easier on-line and there is more information available to you about other housing options.

This leaflet can be made available in large print and other languages on request.