

▶ Housing Association Tenants in North Norfolk: How will the changes affect you?

All tenants wanting to move to another Housing Association property will need to register with the 'Your Choice Your Home' scheme. Up to now Housing Associations in North Norfolk have had different systems for transferring tenants. Some tenants are already on the North Norfolk Housing Register, they will be asked to re-register along with all other applicants. Tenants who have applied to their own landlord for a transfer will be asked to register with the new scheme. Their registration date will be the date they applied to their own landlord for a move. We will be able to get this date from the Housing Association.

Tenants already in Housing Association properties have a low level of housing need due to the security they have and the generally good condition of the property they live in. Some tenants will have medium or high levels of housing need due to medical and social issues for example overcrowding or harassment. Tenants will be assessed and placed in one of the 5 bands in the same way as other applicants.

We want to try to make the best use of the housing in the area and therefore have placed Housing Association tenants who live in North Norfolk, who are in larger properties than they need and who want to move to a smaller property in Band 1. This will give them more chance of being successful in bidding for properties that meet their needs.

Up to 20% of properties will be advertised for which only existing tenants of Housing Associations in North Norfolk can apply. This will provide opportunities for tenants who may not have a level of need to be given the opportunity to be shortlisted. These adverts will be clearly marked.

▶ Frequently asked questions, let us know the questions you want answers to

You may remember receiving a list of 'frequently asked questions' and the responses to these questions. Please let us know if you have any questions that you would like the answer to. If you want to know then it is likely that other applicants will too. We can add this to the 'frequently asked questions' list and provide a response and may include these new questions and the answers in future editions of the newsletter.

▶ What will be in the next edition?

- How the properties will be advertised
- Where the adverts will be placed
- How to bid for properties
- Details of the first bidding cycle
- Details of the roadshow events to promote the Your Choice Your Home scheme

▶ and Finally...

We would be interested to know what you think about the scheme so that we can include this in future editions of the newsletter. We would also like to have your views on the newsletter and what you would like to see in it. Please send your comments, views or stories to:

The Editor
'Your Choice Your Home'
North Norfolk, Housing Options Team
North Norfolk District Council
Council Offices
Holt Road
Cromer
NR27 9EN
or to housing@north-norfolk.gov.uk
or telephone 01263 516375



Your Choice Your Home

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of 'Your Choice Your Home', the newsletter for the new 'Your Choice Your Home' Choice Based Lettings scheme for North Norfolk.

As you are on the North Norfolk Housing Register you will already know that the Council has been working on the development of the 'Your Choice Your Home' scheme with housing associations in the North Norfolk area for some time.

We have developed this newsletter to keep applicants on the Housing Register informed of progress on the scheme. We expect that the second edition of the newsletter will be sent out just before we go live with the scheme, we will then send applicants further newsletters 2 or 3 times a year. The newsletter will include news on how the scheme is working and tell you about any improvements that we are making.

▶ What is in this edition?

- What is Choice Based Lettings?
- Changes to how we give priority for housing
- Re-registration
- Housing Association Tenants: How will the changes affect you?
- Tell us what you think, let us know the questions you want answers to
- What will be in the next edition?

FIRST EDITION

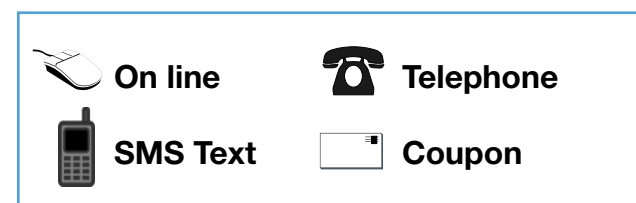


▶ What is Choice Based Lettings?

You may remember that we sent you a letter in January and another letter in June 2009 to let you know about the changes we were making to the way in which properties are allocated and let in North Norfolk.

In brief the changes are:

- ❑ From September 2009 most properties which are available to be let will be advertised including shared ownership properties every two weeks.
- ❑ You will need to bid for a property if you want to be considered for it.
- ❑ You can only bid for properties for which you are eligible.
- ❑ Although the word bid is used, this does not involve any payment
- ❑ There will be a number of ways in which you will be able to bid for a property you are interested in.



- ❑ There will be a set timescale within which your bids will have to be made.
- ❑ Once the bidding has closed, the person who has the most priority for the property will be contacted and may then be offered the property.
- ❑ We will provide feedback on the properties that have been let from previous adverts.
- ❑ You can use this feedback to make choices about the types of property that you want to bid for if you want to increase your chances of being housed. You may choose to look at other housing options if you think that your chances of being housed in the type of property you want in the area you want are low.

▶ Changes to how we give priority for housing

You may remember that in our letters sent to you in January and June 2009 that we told you of the changes that we were making to how we give priority for housing. We told you that we were moving from the award of points for housing need to a banding system.

The new banding scheme has 5 bands (Band 1 to Band 5) and an Emergency Card. The Emergency Card will only be issued occasionally to applicants who have an urgent need to move (either immediately or within a period of six weeks). Those given an Emergency Card will have their situation reviewed after 6 weeks and a further 6 weeks use of the card may be given if appropriate. Applicants with the next highest level of need will be placed in Band 1 and applicants with the lowest level of need will be placed in Band 5.

For further information on the banding scheme please see the North Norfolk Choice Based Lettings Policy.

We will be asking all applicants to re-register in order that we can re-assess their housing need using the new banding system.

▶ Re-registration:

Why do I need to re-register?

We are asking you to re-register in order that we can re-assess your housing need under the new banding system. We have created a new application form which asks some questions that we have not asked before. It is important that **ALL** applicants re-register so that they can be properly re-assessed.

How do I re-register?

You will be able to apply in the following ways:



Online

This is by far the easiest way to apply; you will only be asked questions that are relevant to your circumstances. The benefits of applying on line is that officers do not need to input information from the paper form which gives the officers more time to assess applications.

You do not necessarily need to have a computer and internet access at home to apply online you might be able to use a friend or family member's computer or a support worker might be able to help you. Internet facilities are available at libraries, the Tourist Information office in Cromer, the Council's Cromer office. If you are a Housing Association tenant your landlord may also allow you to use the internet at their office.

Paper

If you are applying using the paper form, you will find that the form is longer as it has to include all of the questions we might need an answer too. The form will need to be returned to the main Council office in Cromer for inputting before assessment.

Will my registration date change when I re-register?

No, you will keep your original application date when you re-register. If you do not re-register before 'Your Choice Your Home goes live your application will be **cancelled** and when you then re-apply to go on the housing register your old application will not be re-instated and your registration date will not be backdated.

What happens if I do not re-apply?

You will be sent a reminder and you will be given an opportunity to re-apply before your application is cancelled.

▶ What support will I get?

If you are unsure and require support then there are a number of ways in which support is available.

- ❑ You could talk to your family, relatives or even friends to see if they are able to help you.
- ❑ The Housing Options Team at Cromer will be able to assist and advise you through the process. Please call them on 01263 516375.
- ❑ If you currently receive support then your support worker will be able to assist and advise you through the process as well.
- ❑ If you should need anything in large print, Braille or translated please let us know and we can arrange for this to be done.

▶ What happens now?

We will send an email in mid July to all applicants who have told us that they want to apply online to advise them that the online system is available to complete their application. If you want to apply online and you have not already advised us please email us on housing@north-norfolk.gov.uk and include your email address, contact name and current address.

We will send all other applicants a new paper application form in mid July.

Please make sure that you re-register at the earliest opportunity. We have a 6 week time frame to get all current applications re-registered and assessed before the first properties will be advertised so that applicants can bid for available properties. We may need to contact you for more information or to clarify what you have told us and in some circumstances we will need to have evidence of your support needs. Once your application has been accepted we will advise you which band you have been placed in, and the properties you will be eligible to bid for. If you delay in re-registering we will not be able to guarantee that your application will be accepted in time for the first bidding cycle.