

This document can be made available on request, in other languages and formats (large print, Braille or on audio tape) by contacting:

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LEICESTERSHIRE Choice based lettings



Your Guide to Finding a New Home in Leicestershire

Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings (CBL) is a partnership between Councils and Housing Associations covering seven council areas in Leicestershire.

Please note this scheme covers all of Leicestershire but not the City of Leicester itself. A separate lettings scheme covers the City.

As well as a choice of social housing lettings, the service offers a range of other housing options and advice for people wanting to move home.

This guide tells you:

- How to join the housing register
- How our properties are advertised
- Which applications are given priority
- Which properties you can 'bid' for
- How to make bids

How Does Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings Work?

Every two weeks the seven Councils in our scheme publish lists of available properties. As well as properties to rent from the councils and housing associations, there will be houses to buy, house exchange opportunities and in some areas properties available from private landlords.

Once you have registered with one of the Councils you will be able to use your reference number to put up to three bids on at a time for those properties which interest you.

When bidding closes the person at the top of the list will be contacted and offered the property. If they cannot take it then the next person on the list will be considered and so on until the property has been let.

The information below is for people looking for housing in the Blaby District or other areas of Leicestershire. People looking for housing are referred to as **homeseekers**.

Please note that there are long waiting lists for council and housing association properties and therefore waiting times are also long. If you have an urgent need for housing there may be other options you can consider. Ask for housing advice from your council.

Blaby District Council - Housing Options Team

Housing Nominations, Homelessness, Private Rented Advice, Tenancy Issues, Mortgage Rescue Schemes.

Tel: 0116 272 7770

Fax: 0116 272 7601

Email: housing.options@blaby.gov.uk

Blaby District Council - Housing Benefit Team

Financial assistance with rent for tenants of private landlords, housing associations and people with low incomes, unemployment, sickness, disability and pensioners.

Tel: 0116 272 7510

Fax: 0116 272 7591

Email: benefits@blaby.gov.uk

Blaby District Council - Domestic Violence Coordinator

Contact us for a copy of Blaby's Domestic Violence directory which lists all the organisations who will be able to help.

Tel: 0116 272 7637

Fax: 0116 272 7600

Email: community.safety@blaby.gov.uk

Blaby District Council - Anti Social Behaviour Team

Contact us If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour in your current accommodation

Tel: 0116 272 7734

Fax: 0116 272 7600

Email: community.safety@blaby.gov.uk

Blaby Citizens Advice Bureau

Offers independent and impartial advice on a range of issues

Blaby Service Shop, 10 Forge Corner, Blaby, Leicester, LE8 4FZ

Drop-in Session: Tues 10am – 2pm Appointment only: Thurs 5pm – 7pm

Make an appointment by either visiting in person or phone 0116 272 7793, or 0844 848 9009 and leave a message.

Shelter line: 0808 800 4444

Advice and assistance on all aspects of housing.

Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project "SHARP"

Housing and Homeless Advice

13 Welford Road, Leicester, LE2 7AD

Tel: 0116 254 6064

Time Limits for Homeseekers in Priority and High Bands

We expect homeseekers who have high priority to bid regularly for suitable properties. Homeseekers in the Priority band will have their priority reviewed every 12 weeks. If they have not been bidding for available properties, their need for housing may be changed and priority may be reduced.

For homeseekers in the High housing need band, priority will be reviewed after 24 weeks.

More Housing Options

Already a social housing tenant? Find out about how to do a **mutual exchange** by looking at the page on the Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings website. You can register your interest in an exchange via the website or with www.homeswapper.co.uk.

If your landlord is not a member of Homeswapper you will be charged for this service. Homeswapper can send you matches from anywhere in the country.

We also advertise opportunities to buy a home using the **HomeBuy** scheme. You can also look on the www.HomeBuy.co.uk website.

Shared ownership significantly reduces the cost of buying a home. Look out for the adverts in the newsletters and on the website.

There may also be adverts for **private renting** in your area. All our advertised landlords are prepared to accept tenants who need to apply for Housing Benefit.

If you do not have the money for a deposit we may be able to help.

Do you think you might become homeless?

If you are at risk of losing your home, for whatever reason, we have trained advisers on hand to help you. Ring today and ask for an appointment.

Joining the Housing Register

In order to be able to use the CBL scheme you need to be registered.

To apply to join the Housing Register you must be over the age of 16 years and eligible for social housing in the UK.

The first thing you need to do is fill in and return a Registration Form. You can get a registration form from:

- www.blaby.gov.uk
- Blaby District Council offices
- Blaby Service Shop or
- Braunstone Civic Centre
- **or** by telephoning the Housing Options Team on 0116 272 7770
- **or** you can apply on-line at www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk

Please make sure you fill in all parts of the form. Remember to provide all the proofs you are asked for as returning the form without them could delay assessment.

You need to decide which of the seven councils you want to deal with your application. This will be the one covering the area where you want to live.

The information you give us on the registration form will help us to decide on your eligibility to join the housing register, what band your application will be placed in and whether you also need extra help and advice.

If you or someone in your household has indicated that they have health problems or are now or in the future likely to become homeless, we will contact you to offer you further advice and assistance.

If you are eligible to join the register we will give you a **registration number**, an **effective date of registration** and more information about Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings and the properties you are eligible to bid for.

If you are not eligible to join the register we will tell you why. If you are not happy with the decision you can appeal. See below for more details on the banding scheme.

Each Council publishes a full statement of its Allocations Policy. All registrations and all decisions on lettings must be in accordance with this policy. You can see each Council's statement by going on to the Council website.

Advertising

Our aim is to advertise all Housing Association vacancies every two weeks. You can find the adverts on your Council's website and in Housing Options newsletters, which will be available at all Council offices and in lots of other locations across the district. For a list of where you can see the newsletters, see the website or ask us for a list. By advertising all the properties available for letting you will get to see how often the type of property you are interested in comes up for letting.

We only post out Housing Options newsletters to those who have no other way of seeing the property adverts. If you think this applies to you, then please ask.

The property adverts will tell you about the properties available and who can apply for them. There are photos of the property and details such as how much rent is payable, whether the property has a garden and whether pets are allowed. It will also show any rules on who can be housed in the property. For example, if there are age limits or if the property is for families with more than two children.

Remember your household will need to match the property details in order for you to be able to bid on the property (for example a family with one child will not be able to bid for a house with 4 bedrooms).

Bidding

'Bidding' is the word we use for selecting properties you would like to be offered. You will have three bids to use each fortnight. You will be able to bid:

- **Online via the website**
- **By telephoning 0300 011 0129**
- **By texting your bid from a mobile phone**
- **By filling in and posting a bid coupon**

If you cannot bid yourself, we encourage you to get the help of a relative or friend. If you are getting help from an advice agency then they may also be able to help you place your bids. If for genuine reasons you are unable to place your bids then the Council can arrange to make bids for you.

If you cannot easily get access to the internet, remember that all the public libraries in Leicestershire provide free internet sessions. Using the website is easy. Come into any of our offices and we will show you how.

All Councils are required to publish the full Allocations Policy. A copy of the full allocations policy can be found on the Blaby District Council website:

www.blaby.gov.uk

The allocations policy explains the bands in detail. If you have any questions about the banding scheme, contact the Housing Options Team on 0116 272 7770.

Financial Assessment

If you have enough income or savings to buy a home suitable for your needs or to put right problems with your current home, you will normally be given Low Priority. You may however, qualify for shared ownership properties

Multiple Needs

In some cases a homeseeker has more than one housing need. In these circumstances they may be moved from the Medium band up to the High band

Mobility Needs

If you have physical disabilities which mean you have problems getting around we will assess your needs. We will aim to match you with properties that are suitable for you. Look out for the mobility keys on the adverts which will guide you on which properties to bid for.

Local Connection

To qualify as having a local connection you must:

- live permanently in the district
- have lived in the district for at least 6 months in the last 12 months, or for at least 3 out of the last 5 years.
- have permanent employment in the district
- have close relatives living in the district
- have other special circumstances to take into account

There are additional rules that apply to some village housing schemes. Offers can only go to those who have a connection to the village or an adjoining parish area.

| MEDIUM HOUSING NEED | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Other Homeless households | |
| Poor housing conditions | |
| Medical need affected by housing | |
| Welfare need affected by housing | |
| Short-term accommodation | |

| LOW HOUSING NEED | |
|--|--|
| No local connection to the sub-region | |
| Has the financial means to provide their housing | |
| Owner or joint owner of property with no medical or welfare needs | |
| Owes a housing related debt and there is no arrangement to pay or a payment plan has not been kept | |
| Guilty of behaviour which affects suitability to be a tenant | |
| Transfer applicant only eligible for a like for like move | |
| Joint tenant of social housing property where the other party will not be moving | |
| Only interested in HomeBuy/Shared ownership options | |
| Deliberate worsening of housing circumstances to get higher priority | |

You can place bids on up to three properties in any bid cycle. You can withdraw your bid or change the properties you are interested in at any time up to the bid closing date.

If your details do not match those set for the property, you will not be able to bid for it. The website or answer-phone will tell you the reason. All successful bids will be placed in order according to the band they are in and then the date order of their application. For most adverts priority will also be given to homeseekers who have a connection with the local area. On some occasions adverts may be restricted to existing tenants needing to move to more suitable housing.

You can place your bids at any time during the bidding period. Newsletters, posters and the website all show the deadline for receiving bids. Late bids will not count.

Area Choices

Provided you are eligible to bid for the property there will be no restriction on the areas you can choose. If you are not sure where a property is, you can click on 'Up my street' on the web site or check the maps available for each Council area. However, for most vacancies you will have more chance if you have a local connection to the area.

To help homeseekers who want to move to another area, the Councils have created a county-wide pool of properties open to anyone registered with the scheme. You will not need a local connection to be considered for these properties.

Look out for these adverts on the website and in the extra pages in the newsletters. You can use one or more of your three bids on these properties.

Matching

Once the bidding has closed, the Housing Options Team will make a list of everyone who bid for the property.

Applicants with a local connection to the district will be considered before those living or working elsewhere. Applicants will then be placed in order of their bands:

- **Priority band households will appear first.**
- **High** second
- **Medium** and then
- **Low** last

Selection

Provided the top matched homeseeker is eligible to receive the offer from the Housing Association or Council, they will be contacted by the Housing Association within a day or two of the end of the bidding cycle. You will have a chance to view the property before you have to decide whether to accept it or not.

Unsuccessful homeseekers will not be contacted. If a homeseeker turns down an offer, there is no penalty. However, if you refuse seven offers you will be interviewed about the reasons before you can go on bidding.

Checks

The Housing Association will then check the details of the household with the highest priority to make sure that the information given on their registration form is correct. It will be at this stage that they will check things such as rent arrears (missed rent payments). This is because homeseekers with rent arrears will not normally qualify to be offered a property.

Offer

Once you have viewed the property and your eligibility has been confirmed the Housing Association may offer you the tenancy for that property.

Feedback

Feedback is when we tell you about who was top of the list. Since we cannot contact everyone who bids to tell them the result, we will publish tables of results for each set of adverts. You will find these on the websites and in the Property Newsletter. The table shows how many bids were made and the band and date of the winning bid. This will help you make better choices next time you bid.

How Does the Banding Scheme Work?

Everyone who is registered has a chance to bid for properties but those in the higher bands will be considered first provided that they meet the Housing Association's or Council's eligibility criteria. Councils and Housing Associations have a responsibility to ensure that people in urgent housing need do not become homeless. However, we aim to ensure that homeseekers in a variety of different circumstances have a chance to be offered a new home.

Housing and transfer applications will be assessed and placed in one of 4 bands. Applications in each band will be placed in date order, the application with the oldest date having the highest position in that band. The date used is either the date your application was registered with us or the date you moved in to a higher band. The four bands are as follows:

PRIORITY HOUSING NEED

Homeless - Households to whom the Council has a statutory duty to secure accommodation.

Emergency medical need

Emergency welfare need

Multiple/complex housing needs

Housing management priority

Displaced agricultural workers

HIGH HOUSING NEED

Has 2 or more qualifying Medium Housing Need categories

Home seekers where there is overcrowding by two or more bedrooms

In supported accommodation and approved for move-on or independent living

Under-occupying social housing which is in high demand