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Your user
guide to

Choice Based Lettings



homeconnections
letting...you choose



www.kingston.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

Choice Based Lettings is the way that council and housing association homes in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames have been allocated since 2006.

There has always been a severe shortage of social housing to rent in Kingston and we aim to ensure that all homes becoming available in the borough are let to those in the greatest need who would like to be offered them.

To do this, all applications for housing are placed in one of four priority bands from A to D based on an assessment of housing need, with the most urgent applications being in priority Band A. If an applicant's assessed need changes, their priority band will also change.

Waiting time in the current band is also taken into account when determining priority, as it is recognised that people's housing need generally increases while they are waiting to be housed.

Social rented homes in the borough that are due to become available for letting are advertised on the Home Connections website, which can be accessed from the Kingston Council website. New properties are advertised every Wednesday.

People registered for housing will be able to express an interest in being offered any advertised homes they are eligible for by making a 'bid' for them.

This guide explains how to go about bidding for homes and we hope you will find the process easy and straightforward. However, please do not hesitate to ask for help if you need it. We are here to help you get the most out of the scheme.

Our contact details are shown on page 10 of this guide.

ABOUT YOU

2. How to register

You will only be able to bid for advertised homes if you have been accepted on to the Kingston Housing Register. To apply you will need to complete an online registration form (details of how to do this can be found on the Council website).

Once registered, you will be issued with your individual User ID number and PIN (Personal Identification Number). These will give you access to Kingston Home Connections.

If you do not have your User ID and PIN you will not be able to participate. If you have lost these please contact the Allocations Team on 020 8547 5003.

3. What properties can I bid for?

The size and type of property you can bid for will depend on the size of your household and your assessed needs, together with the letting criteria set for each property.

All advertisements will clearly indicate property letting criteria and you will not be short-listed if you fail to meet these criteria.

Please note that the Council and partner landlords may apply additional letting criteria for customers:

- in arrears
- with a history of anti-social behaviour
- with specific community care needs.

ABOUT KINGSTON HOME CONNECTIONS

4. Bidding online

You will need to go online each week to see what properties are available and to choose any that you would like to live in. This improves your choice by allowing you to place bids 24 hours a day (from Wednesday to Sunday – while bidding is open) and at a location of your choice.

If you do not have your own access to the internet, public access points have been provided at the Information and Advice Centre in Guildhall Two for this purpose. There are also public access points at all of the libraries in the borough, and at a number of other locations.

Go to Kingston Council's website at:

- www.kingston.gov.uk
- under the heading "Housing, homeowners and renting", click on "Apply for council housing"
- click on "Bid for a property" then click on the blue box marked "View and bid for properties on Home Connections". This will take you to our home page on the Home Connections website. You can save this page as one of your favourites if you wish.
- to see a copy of the current advert, or those of previous weeks, click on the box to the left marked "This week's advert & results hyperlink". Click on "Back" to return to the home page
- to login and bid, click on the box marked "login"
- enter your User ID and PIN to gain access

Important - only use the blue "back" button on the Home Connections site, not the one at the top of the screen

- you are now in the "My Details" page which provides basic information about your housing application and properties you have previously selected
- click on the blue "View Properties" button and you will be able to see all available properties in the current bidding period of the size that you qualify for
- click on "Full Property Info" on the right side of your screen to see full details of the particular property you have chosen to look at. If you wish to bid for this property click on the button above the picture on the left hand side of the screen which says "click here to bid". This will record your selection
- if you do not need to see the full property details to bid, click on the small blank box to the left of the picture and a tick (✓) will appear. Then click on the button marked "Bid Property" in the middle of the screen
- you can bid for as many of the available properties as you like, but please check that you meet the lettings criteria mentioned in the advert, otherwise your bid may not be accepted, or may not count
- now wait until the advertisement closing date. If you have been successful, you will be contacted to arrange a viewing. Please note that we can only contact the successful bidder for each property, not the unsuccessful ones

5. Mobility

All customers with mobility problems (such as difficulty climbing stairs) should have had their needs assessed. Each customer will then be given a mobility category depending on their level of mobility. If anyone included on your application has mobility problems, please check with us to ensure that we are aware of this.

CAT 1	Customers who use a wheelchair all of the time
CAT 2	Customers who need a property that is wheelchair accessible – but do not use a wheelchair all of the time
CAT 3	Customers with mobility problems who cannot manage a flight of stairs
CAT 4	Customers with no mobility problems

All customers will be advised what category they have been awarded. Your own mobility category can be checked by contacting the Allocations Team, telephone 020 8547 5003.

Advertised properties suitable for someone with a mobility problem will usually have preference given to bidders in the mobility category for which they are most suitable. Although flexibility will be applied, generally:

- properties coded CAT 1 will be restricted to customers with a CAT 1 mobility assessment
- properties coded CAT 2 will be restricted to customers with CAT 1 or 2 mobility assessments
- properties coded CAT 3 will be restricted to customers with CAT 1, 2 or 3 mobility assessments
- properties coded CAT 4 will be advertised without restrictions. However if customers with CAT 1-3 bid for these properties they will not be given any extra priority during the short-listing process.

You should ensure that the mobility category of any advertised property matches your own mobility category, otherwise you may not be successful in recording your selection (bid).

6. Banding

Your application will be assessed and placed in one of four priority bands:

Band A Emergency/Top Priority

Band B Urgent Need to Move

Band C Identified Housing Need

Band D All other applicants

You will also be given a priority date, to reflect the length of time you have been in priority need of housing. To start with, this will be the same as your registration date, but if you later move up a band, it will change to the date you joined the higher band.

All applicants will be sent details of their:

- Band and Customer Category
- Mobility Category
- User ID and PIN.

7. Letting properties

After bidding closes we will have a list of everybody who has registered an expression of interest for each property, automatically sorted in order of priority band, and within each band, in order of waiting time. From these lists we will identify the highest suitable bidder for each property and telephone to invite them to view the property.

If there is any reason why we cannot offer the property to the highest bidder, for example if they have rent arrears, we will advise them of the reason and offer the home to the next highest bidder.

