

# Eastleigh Homechoice Guidance Notes



## **Eastleigh Homechoice Guidance Notes**

This leaflet is available in other formats and languages. If you need assistance please contact the Housing Advice Section of Eastleigh Borough Council on 023 8068 8165, or your own landlord if you are a Housing Association tenant living in the Borough.

### **What is Homechoice?**

Homechoice is the name of the housing register for the allocation of social housing for the Borough of Eastleigh. Anybody wanting to move to or within social housing in Eastleigh, must be registered on Homechoice.

### **How does Homechoice work?**

Housing Association vacancies within the Borough are advertised and anyone on Homechoice can apply for them. The applicant with the highest priority who is eligible for the property will be offered the accommodation.

### **What properties are available?**

There are no council properties in Eastleigh. All social housing here is owned and managed by Housing Associations. Housing Associations advertise their properties available to let on Homechoice. Low cost home ownership, keyworker and some private sector properties are also advertised.

## **Social housing stock in the Eastleigh Borough**

### **Atlantic Housing Limited Properties**

Atlantic Housing Limited own the majority of social housing stock in the Borough. The make up of their stock is detailed below. This will change from time to time as the stock decreases and increases due to Right to Acquire, Right to Buy, the demolition of affordable stock, and the availability of new developments.

### General Needs Properties (for those under the age of 60)

Area	1 Bed Flat	2 Bed Flat	2 Bed House	3 Bed House	3 Bed Parlour House *	4 Bed House
Bishopstoke	93	60	128	122	66	0
Botley	45	14	11	27	17	0
Bursledon	35	3	54	95 (plus 1 x 3 bed flat)	10	6
Chandlers Ford	246	46	73	149 (plus 9 x 3 bed flat)	43	0
Eastleigh	230	253	72	115	514	7
Fair Oak	18	14	0	24	11	0
Hamble	11	20	16	48	19	3
Hedge End	86	46	28	45	27	3
Netley Abbey	76 (plus 1 x 1 bed house)	14	36	101	59	0
West End	4	22	24	22	12	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>19</b>

- Not all 3 bed parlour houses are suitable to be used for four bed need, particularly properties in Bishopstoke where none of these are suitable for a four bed need.

### Properties for those aged 60 and over

Area	1 Bed Flat	1 bed bungalow	2 Bed Bungalow
Bishopstoke	0	16	20
Botley	0	20	15
Bursledon	0	17	20
Chandlers Ford	14	125	2
Eastleigh	0	60	131
Fair Oak	8	22	23
Hamble	0	18	54
Hedge End	0	25	46
Netley Abbey	0	18	64
West End	0	16	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>411</b>

### Swaythling Housing Society Ltd properties

Swaythling Housing Society Ltd own a significant amount of social housing in the Borough.

#### General Needs Properties (for those under the age of 60)

Area	1 Bed Flat	2 Bed Flat	2 Bed House	3 Bed House	3 Bed Parlour House *	4 Bed House
Bishopstoke	0	0	30	9	0	2
Botley	1	21	0	0	0	0
Bursledon	7 (plus 6 x 1 bed houses)	8	111	50	0	8
Chandlers Ford	24	1	0	0	0	0
Eastleigh	19 (plus 1 x 1 bed house)	25	117	31	0	4
Fair Oak	0	0	21	0 (plus 9 x 3 bed flats)	0	0
Hamble	3 (plus 2 x 1 bed house)	12	22	9	0	0
Hedge End	4 (plus 26 x 1 bed houses)	13	78	32	0	3
Netley Abbey	0	0	10	0	0	0
West End	11 (plus 2 x 1 bed houses)	10	55	24	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>

### Properties for those aged 60 and over

Area	1 Bed Flat	3 Bed Flat	1 Bed Bungalow	2 Bed Bungalow
Bishopstoke	0	0	0	22
Botley	0	0	0	0
Bursledon	0	0	0	0
Chandlers Ford	0	0	0	0
Eastleigh	41	1	0	0
Fair Oak	29	0	0	0
Hamble	0	0	0	0
Hedge End	0	0	0	0
Netley Abbey	0	0	0	0
West End	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>

There are other Housing Associations that own and manage properties in the Borough, many of which are sheltered housing. For more information on sheltered housing, please request a sheltered housing directory (or visit [www.eastleigh.gov.uk](http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk)).

### Who can apply to Homechoice?

Anyone aged 16 or over (provided you are not subject to asylum or immigration regulations), including existing Housing Association tenants living in Eastleigh, may apply to Homechoice.

You may be excluded from Homechoice, or have your priority reduced if you have been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. You may also have your priority reduced if you have the financial resources available to meet your own housing costs, or if you have no local connection with the Borough.

Housing Associations have their own allocations policies and are unlikely to house people who owe money to a Housing Association or Council, or hold a tenancy elsewhere, or have a financial interest in a property. Some Housing Associations will not offer tenancies to friends who want to live together. Some may not award tenancies to applicants who are under 18 even though they may have a guarantor.

### How can I apply to the Homechoice Register?

You can apply on to Homechoice by completing an application on line at [www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk) or get an application form from any of these organisations;

---

**Housing Services**

Eastleigh Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Leigh Road  
Eastleigh  
SO50 9YN

Tel. 023 8068 8165

[www.eastleigh.gov.uk](http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk)

**Atlantic Housing Limited**

Charlotte Yonge House  
Tollgate  
Chandlers Ford  
SO53 3YP

Tel. 08000 191469

[www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk)

**Swaythling Housing Society Ltd**

Collins House  
Bishopstoke Road  
Eastleigh  
SO50 6AD

Tel. 023 8062 8000

[www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk)

**Hyde Housing Association**

Hampshire Regional Office  
63 St Marys St  
Southampton  
Hants

Tel. 023 8083 6800

[www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk)

If you have special housing needs because of a disability, you should also complete a Medical and Disability Information form available at the above locations.

**What happens to my application?**

When we receive your application we will check;

if you are eligible to go on Homechoice (changes to an applicant's immigration status or the statutory eligibility criteria prior to an allocation could affect their eligibility);  
that you have supplied proof of child benefit for each child listed on the application;  
the priority banding you get;  
the number of bedrooms you can apply for; and  
if you have a local connection.

You will be called a 'new applicant' or a 'transfer'.

Transfers are;

Housing Association tenants in the Borough who have the right to transfer.

New applicants are all other applicants.

We will write to you when you have been registered and give you your;  
Homechoice reference number;  
Your application date (the date your application was received);  
Your priority banding;  
Your bedroom requirement;  
Property request vouchers:  
Whether you have a local connection with us.

---

You should check that these details are correct. If your circumstances change you must tell us.

### How is my application prioritised?

Applicants are placed in one of four priority bands:

“Urgent”      “High Priority”      “Priority”      “No Priority”

#### “Urgent” applicants;

Applicants will only be allocated into the **Urgent** category following assessment by the Housing Support Panel if they fall into a reasonable preference group and where there may be additional preference awarded and serious or very significant consequences may result if an applicant is not given overriding priority. Applicants who have been awarded urgent banding and have not moved within 6 months will have their priority reviewed to check if it is still appropriate for them to remain in the current band.

#### “High Priority” applicants;

Applicants and tenants will be placed in the **High Priority** category if they have two or more indicators of reasonable preference.

Where the Housing Support Panel agree an applicant has additional preference and there may be serious or significant issues and consequences the Housing Support Panel may reduce the priority from Urgent to High Priority if any of the following apply;

the applicant has resources available to meet his housing costs; Or,

the behaviour of the applicant (or a member of his household) is such that it affects his suitability to be a tenant; Or,

there is no local connection between the applicant and Eastleigh Borough Council.

Where the Housing Support Panel agree an applicant has additional preference and there may be serious or significant issues but significant consequences will not result, an applicant may only be awarded High Priority.

#### “Priority” applicants;

- 1) people who are homeless within the meaning of Housing Act 1996, Part 7 (homelessness) (proof of No Fixed Abode status will be required);
- 2) people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under Housing Act 1996 sections 190 (2), 193 (2) or 195 (2) (or the equivalent duties under Housing Act 1985), or who are occupying accommodation provided to them by a local housing

---

authority under Housing Act 1996 section 192 93) (a relevant decision letter from your local authority will be required);

- 3) people who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions. This includes people who are; lacking essential facilities such as bathroom, kitchen, internal WC, water supply, or electricity; sharing essential facilities with another household; occupying temporary or insecure accommodation in the Borough; overcrowded (see section on bedroom eligibility); living in housing which is so hazardous having regard to the Health and Housing Safety Rating System that the best possible course of action is to prohibit the use of the property for human habitation; Housing Association tenants living in the Borough who are under occupying their accommodation; Housing Association tenants living in the Borough who are occupying accommodation that is required for redevelopment; Housing Association tenants living in the Borough who have a dependant child/ children aged 16 or under and are living in a flat above ground floor level; Applicants who are occupying Housing Association accommodation in the Borough who are not entitled to succeed to a tenancy and are living in 'use and occupation'.

- 4) people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability. This includes people who have;
- a diagnosed mental illness or disorder;
  - a physical or learning disability;
  - chronic or progressive medical conditions (eg MS, HIV/AIDS);
  - infirmity due to age;
  - person suffering from, or the need to recover from the effects of violence (including racial attacks) or threats of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse;
  - need for adapted housing where the current home cannot be adapted to meet needs;
  - need improved heating (on medical grounds);
  - want sheltered housing;
  - need ground floor accommodation (on medical grounds);
  - applicants who are living in supported housing in the Borough, who no longer need it and are ready to move into more independent accommodation;
  - Those living in temporary or insecure accommodation in the Borough (excluding homeless accepted applicants living in Atlantic Housing temporary accommodation in the borough, and Housing Association tenants who have an introductory or probationary tenancy).

Applicants will be required to provide written evidence (at their expense) from a relevant professional who confirms the medical/welfare issue, that their condition is made worse by their housing situation, and how a move to alternative accommodation will improve the households circumstances. In cases involving violence, Police support is required.

- 5) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship, to themselves or others. This will include the need to be near friends/relatives or medical facility on medical grounds.

---

Local housing authorities may devise their own indicators of the criteria in the reasonable preference categories in the 1996 Act (as amended) s 167 (2). Where such indicators have been used, these have been incorporated into the five reasonable preference categories as detailed above.

**“No Priority”** applicants;

Applicants who do not show any element of being in a reasonable preference group but who wish to move.

Applicants and tenants who are on the register will be placed into one of four different categories or bands. Applicants within the same category will be prioritised by date order according to their application date. If circumstances change, and an applicant is moved into a higher band, they will be prioritised by date order based on the date on which they were placed in the new band. If circumstances change, and an applicant is moved into a lower band, they will be prioritised by date order based on the date on which they were placed in their previous band.

In most circumstances, properties will normally be labeled so that preference is given to applicants with a connection with Eastleigh Borough area. An applicant will have a local connection to Eastleigh if;

Applicant or member of applicant’s household resides or has resided in the borough for;

6 MONTHS OUT OF THE LAST 12

3 YEARS OUT OF THE LAST 5

Applicant or member of applicant’s household works in the Borough;

Applicant or member of applicants household has close family living in the Borough who have done so for at least 5 YEARS (close family includes parents, children, siblings).

Or, there are other special reasons.

Proof of local connection criteria will be required.

### **What’s my position on Homechoice?**

Under Homechoice it will not be helpful for you to look at your position on the register. Instead of checking your position on the register you need to look at the results of the allocations which are on the Homechoice website. You will be able to see how long the successful bidders have been on the register, and this will help you work out how much longer you should have to wait. Lettings results are available at Eastleigh Borough Council Housing Services Office, in the offices of Atlantic Housing Limited, Swaythling Housing Society, or on the Homechoice website at [www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk)

---

## How many bedrooms am I eligible for?

1 bed properties:	single people or couples
2 bed properties:	single person or couple with one child; single person or couple with two children of the same sex where the eldest is 10 or under
3 bed properties:	single person or couple with three children; single person or couple with two children of opposite sex; single person or couple with two children of the same sex where the eldest is 11 or over
4 or more bed properties:	single person or couple with four or more children; single person or couple with three children in order to prevent opposite sex children sharing or children aged 11 or over sharing
Properties for those over 60	Only applicants aged 60 or over may apply for properties advertised as available to households aged 60 or over. Adverts normally spell out age requirements.

Depending on family size, women who are seven or more months pregnant may be entitled to another bedroom.

Any additional adults over the age of 18 may also be entitled to their own room.

## Children living with separated or divorced parents

Homechoice will not usually take into account children of a tenant or applicant who have a bedroom in a property elsewhere. However consideration may be given where the child aged under 16 lives with the applicant for more than 50% of the time. Appropriate supporting evidence must be provided. In cases of long term fostering or adoption, requests for additional bedrooms will be considered by the Housing Support Panel on receipt of appropriate evidence.

## What if I have medical problems or a disability?

Most people with a medical condition go into the priority band. Some people may be eligible to go into the High Priority band if they fall into two or more reasonable preference

---

categories. An applicant with one reasonable preference category may also be awarded additional priority by the Housing Support Panel, and be placed in the High Priority or Urgent band. An applicant will only be placed into the urgent band where there may be serious or very significant consequences if an applicant is not given overriding priority.

A medical and disability information form can be obtained from any of the addresses listed in the 'How can I apply to the register'? section.

The Housing Support Panel is made up of representatives from the Council, Housing Associations, Children/Adult Services, Occupational Therapist and floating support services. It meets on a monthly basis to assess applications received for higher banding. If you want further information, please request a Housing Support Panel leaflet or visit [www.eastleigh.gov.uk](http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk)

### **How do I apply for properties?**

Properties available to let will be advertised each week at the following locations;

On the internet at [www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk)

On the 24 hour telephone hotline – call 0845 602 4582;

And at the following locations;

#### **Eastleigh**

Eastleigh Borough Council, Civic Offices, Leigh Road, Eastleigh

Atlantic Housing Limited, Charlotte Yonge House, Tollgate, Chandlers Ford

Swaythling Housing Society Ltd, Collins House, Bishopstoke Road, Eastleigh

Eastleigh Library, Swan Centre, Eastleigh

Town Centre Office, Wells Place, Eastleigh

Citizens Advice Bureau, 101 Leigh Road, Eastleigh

#### **Bishopstoke**

Riverside (The Mill) Notice Board

#### **Chandlers Ford**

Library, Oakmount Road

---

**Botley**

Main Notice Board, High Street

**Fair Oak**

Fair Oak Parish Council Notice Board,  
Village Hall, Shorts Road

**West End**

West End Parish Notice Board, Parish  
Centre, Chapels Road

**Hedge End**

Hedge End Town Council Centre 2000, St  
Johns Road

**Bursledon**

Pilands Wood Area Office, Chamberlayne  
Road

**Netley**

Netley Parish Offices, 22 Station Road,  
Netley Abbey

Butlocks Heath Post Office, Woolston Road

**Hamble**

Coronation Parade Post Office, 5  
Coronation Parade

Hamble Parish Notice Board, Memorial  
Hall, High Street

**Southampton**

HydeMartlet, 63 St Mary Street, St Mary's

You can apply for a property by either;

**Submitting a voucher on line** at [www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk](http://www.eastleighhomechoice.co.uk) or

**Texting on 07797 877001**

Open up a new text message;

Enter ebcho followed by a space;

enter your five digit homechoice reference number followed by a space;

enter your surname followed by a space;

then enter the reference number of the property you wish to apply for.

Your text message should look like this; ebcho 99999 smith 1752

Send this to the text number above. Or;

**Submitting a card voucher**

Completing a property request voucher (like this)

## Eastleigh Homechoice Property Request Voucher

Your reference: 99999

Mr & Mrs Smith  
1 Apple Road  
Chandlers Ford

About the property you are requesting:

Property ref: 1752  
First line of address: 1 Bond Avenue  
Advert Closing Date: 1 January 2007

**Only bid once for each property you want to apply for. Do not apply for properties you are not eligible for - it wastes your time and ours.**

You are responsible for your bids getting to Eastleigh Borough Council by the advert closing date. Bids received after the closing date will not be accepted.

### Choose like you mean it

There are no restrictions on the number of properties you can apply for each week but nobody wants homes to be left empty longer than necessary, especially when there are so many people seeking a home in Eastleigh. Housing Associations advertising properties through this service have to let homes as soon as possible.

Sometimes properties take longer to let than expected because customers who have successfully bid for them, decide not to take them. Though it is accepted that being able to say "thanks but no thanks" is part of having a choice, there are occasions when the wasted time this involves for customers and Housing Associations, could be avoided.

We will try to give you property information that makes it easy for you to bid for properties you really want. We suggest that before bidding you check:

### Location?

Is the property in an area you'd be happy to live in? Is it in easy reach of places that are important to you?

### How Many Bed Spaces?

Are the bedrooms large enough? Adverts will indicate who is eligible to apply for the property.

---

## Have you a Head for Heights?

Many flats and maisonettes are on upper floors. Do you want to be on the ground floor only?

## Alternatives?

If you decide that you cannot wait to be able to choose a rented home from a Housing Association, or that you'd prefer something different, why not check out your housing options in the housing section of [www.eastleigh.gov.uk](http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk). This includes information and links to other services that may be able to help you choose your housing solution.

## What happens after my voucher is received – who gets housed?

After the property advert closing date, all voucher requests are checked for eligibility and put in priority order.

If you are successful, you will usually be contacted by the landlord of the property within 10 days of the closing date (in practice Housing Associations will endeavour to contact you within 3 days of the closing date). Only successful applicants will be contacted.

## What if I am successful?

The Housing Association will check your application and confirm you are eligible for the vacancy. Where there has been a history of anti social behaviour in an area, this may be taken into account when selecting suitable tenants for vacancies in accordance with the Respect Standard or equivalent for Housing Management. They will take references from previous landlords. Some landlords may wish to visit you at your home or call you into their offices to verify your application.

After viewing the property if you decide to accept it, arrangements will be made to sign the tenancy agreement and move in. Landlords cannot afford to have properties standing empty and **you may be expected to start your new tenancy very quickly**. If you do not wish to accept the property, please let the landlord know quickly so that it can be offered to the next person.

## Am I ever going to get housed?

Eastleigh is an area of high demand. At the time of printing there are approximately 5500 applicants on Homechoice waiting for an offer. Most applicants will wait some time (even years) before they receive an offer.

Applicants under 60 in the no priority band are unlikely ever to receive an offer of housing through Homechoice and should consider other housing options.

## What if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change (for example you have moved home or had a baby), you must

---

tell us and complete a new Homechoice application form.

If circumstances change, and an applicant is moved into a higher band, they will be prioritised by date order based on the date on which they were placed in the band. If circumstances change, and an applicant is moved into a lower band, they will be prioritised by date order based on the date on which they were placed in their previous band.

Each year we will ask you to update your details on a review form to ensure the information we hold about you is correct. Failure to respond to this review will mean your application is removed from Homechoice and you will have to start again from the bottom of the list.

### **What if I don't think my banding is right?**

You can appeal against the following Homechoice decisions;

your eligibility to join the register;

your priority on the register;

If you are a tenant of a Housing Association and are living in the Borough of Eastleigh, and think the decision is wrong, you must contact your landlord within **14** days of receiving the decision letter. A Senior Staff Member who was not involved in the original decision will review your case and you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the review, you can request your case be considered on appeal by the Housing Support Panel, within **14** days of receiving the decision letter.

For all other applicants, who think the decision is wrong, you should contact the Council within **14** days of receiving the decision letter. A Senior Officer who was not involved in the original decision will review your case and you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the review, you can request your case be considered on appeal by the Housing Support Panel within **14** days of receiving the decision letter.

There is no right of review or appeal on a Housing Support Panel decision.

### **Statement of Choice**

It is the Council's policy on choice to offer housing applicants as much choice as is practical. Housing Association vacancies in the Borough are advertised through the Eastleigh Homechoice lettings scheme. Applicants on Homechoice will have received 'property request vouchers' which can be submitted for any home the applicant is eligible to apply for.

### **Do we restrict your bids?**

No. You can apply for as many properties you wish to be considered for at any one time, but you can only apply for properties you are eligible to apply for i.e if you have a one bedroom need you are not eligible to apply for 3 bedroom properties. If you are under 60 you cannot apply for properties available to those 60 or over.

---

### **What if I am an accepted homeless applicant?**

You can apply for as many properties as you want to. If you do not apply within a reasonable timescale, the Council will apply on your behalf. You may then be offered a property as a 'final offer' of permanent accommodation. This means the Council has ended its duty to you under homelessness legislation. The Council will not do this without writing to you first. If an applicant refuses two suitable offers, they will be advised in writing that the next suitable offer they receive will be their final offer, and failure to accept that will result in their temporary accommodation being terminated. Whilst they will be able to remain on the Homechoice Housing Register, their priority may be affected.

### **What if I want to refuse an offer?**

There are no penalties for refusing an offer of accommodation unless you are an accepted homeless applicant at final offer stage.

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

If you are or will be homeless please contact the Housing Advice section at Eastleigh Borough Council for advice on 023 8068 8165.

### **Equality and Diversity Policy**

The Eastleigh Homechoice group is committed to equality, recognising people's diversity and believing that all housing applicants should be treated with respect and dignity. We will monitor and review Eastleigh Homechoice to ensure that no section of the community is disadvantaged by the way it works.

### **Data Protection Statement**

The information you give will be held by Eastleigh Borough Council and will be shared with other members of the Eastleigh Homechoice Housing Register Group. It may also be shared with external agencies eg Social Services and other support agencies, and government bodies in order to properly assess your application. The information may be used for administration, checking information you have provided, providing advice, research or managing your application and/or tenancy. By signing and returning your Homechoice Application form, you consent to us processing personal and sensitive data for the purposes noted above.