



OXFORD
REGISTER FOR
AFFORDABLE
HOUSING

Wanting to Move?

Information and Advice for Council and Housing
Association Tenants in Oxford



Translations available

অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা আছে
提供有翻譯本
तरजमे उपलब्ध हैं
उबनमे भिल सक्ते वन
ترجمہ دستیاب ہے

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print version or a copy of this
publication in another format
please contact us: ☎ 01865 252858**

Wanting to Move?

Introduction



This leaflet is for existing tenants of Oxford City Council or of any of the Housing Associations who are part of the Oxford Housing Register Partnership. These are listed on the back of this leaflet. If you are not an existing tenant but want to apply for affordable housing please see the leaflet called *Applying for Housing*.

What is the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing?



Oxford City Council has formed a partnership with Housing Associations who have properties in Oxford so that all rented properties are let through one single application process. The partner Associations are listed on the back of this leaflet. The allocation policy takes into account the scarcity of affordable housing in Oxford and the need to allocate vacant properties in a fair and efficient way. The full allocation policy can be found on the Council's web site (www.oxford.gov.uk) or can be viewed at one of the local offices listed on the back of this leaflet. Alternatively it can be purchased for a reasonable cost from the Housing Needs Service.

I want to move to a different property, how can I do this?



Housing Options include:

- A transfer to another Council or Housing Association property through the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing.
- A swap with another tenant who lives in a Council or Housing Association property in Oxford through the "Homeswapper" Mutual Exchange Scheme.

- A swap with a tenant of a Council or Housing Association who lives in a different local authority area through a national scheme (such as "homeswapper" or by being nominated by your landlord to another Council or Housing Association in a different area).
- Through the private sector with help to move into home ownership through (Homebuy) or finding a privately rented property.

Transfers via the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing

Who can apply?



Any existing Council or housing association tenant living in Oxford City. However your application is only likely to be approved if:

- You do not have a current court order against you for rent arrears or anti social behaviour.
- You are living in your property as your main home.

If you want to move because of problems with anti-social behaviour, problems with repairs or because you need your property to be adapted a transfer may not be the best option and you should speak to your own Landlord for advice.

How do I apply?



You can obtain a transfer form from your landlord's local office. This should be completed and returned to your landlord. Once you have done this your landlord will ensure the form is fully completed, check any information required to support your transfer application and send the form and any information you have provided with a Landlord

Reference to the Housing Needs Team for your application to be assessed. It is useful to discuss your housing needs with your Housing Officer or Estate Manager as they will be able to advise you and can help you complete the form. You should consider other options that might help you find a more suitable home such as the Mutual Exchange Scheme. Your Estate Manager or Housing Officer will be able to advise you how to apply for a mutual exchange.

How will my application be assessed?



Oxford City Council will assess your application in line with the allocations policy. Information about this is in the Choice Based Lettings Guide. Your application will be placed in a priority band based on your housing need. You will then be sent a letter telling you which band you are in and what type of properties you are eligible to bid for through our Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Very rarely there are circumstances that are not fully covered by the banding system where a tenant has "exceptional social and welfare circumstances" not covered in the Allocations Policy that affect their Housing Needs. The Council has an Exceptional Circumstances Panel comprising of Senior Housing Officers who are delegated authority to award additional priority to a tenant's transfer application, if the Panel agree that an applicant has exceptional Social and Welfare circumstances (not already considered to have been assessed under the Allocations Scheme). Please talk to your housing officer, estate manager or a member of the Housing Needs Team if you want to know more about this.

What type of housing can I be considered for?

The following table gives an indication of the size of the property you will usually be able to bid for depending on your family make up and your housing requirements.

Size of Household	Size of Property
Single applicant	Studio or 1 bedroom
Couples	1 bedroom
Applicant(s) with one child	2 bedrooms
Applicant(s) with two children	2 or 3 bedrooms.
Applicant(s) with three children	3 or 4 bedrooms
Applicant(s) with four children	3 or 4 bedrooms. A three bedroom property can be offered dependent on the age and gender of the children and the size of the property
Applicant(s) with five children	4 or 5 bedrooms or 3 bedroom 'parlour' type property (Parlour houses have two reception rooms, one of which can be used as a bedroom).

Do I need to do anything while I am waiting on the list?



Yes. To be considered for accommodation, you must express an interest in a property by making 'bids' through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. You will be given more information on this when your application is added to the Housing register. You will be required to re-registered annually. A form will be sent out to enable you to do this. **You must notify us if your circumstances change at any point.** You can contact any of the local offices listed for information about your application or the Housing Needs Team on Oxford 252858.

My property is too big for me and I want to move to a smaller home. Is there any additional help you can offer me?



Because the demand for larger properties is so high, landlords run schemes to help people who are willing to move to a smaller home. This may include being placed in a higher priority band and help with paying moving and removal expenses. You should check with your own landlord to see if they run such a scheme.

How does Choice Based Lettings work?



Choice Based Lettings is an advert based scheme used to allocate council and housing association homes. Properties available to let are advertised and you can express an interest in properties you are interested in (make a bid). Choice Based Lettings will not solve the shortage of social housing in Oxford but it will give applicants more choice. Properties becoming available to let in Oxford (and some properties from neighbouring Districts in the Oxfordshire Sub-Region) are advertised every two weeks. To check what properties are available you can visit the Choice-Based Lettings website: www.oxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk or pick up a free

newsletter called **Direction Home** from Local Offices and outlets throughout the city. If you need help with using the website or would like a full list of where you can pick up a newsletter contact your Housing Officer, Estate Manager or the Housing Needs Team.

When a bidding cycle closes all bids are put in priority order based on the Allocations Policy. You can find more information about Choice Based Lettings in the Choice Based Lettings User Guide.

What happens if my bid is successful?



If your name is at the top of the priority list you will normally be offered the property. The landlord may carry out eligibility checks first (e.g. rent checks, household circumstance checks).

A viewing will be arranged soon after the bidding round so make sure you are available.

And if my bids are unsuccessful?



To improve your chances of finding the right home look at the feedback from previous advert cycles. We publish information about homes that have been let. We tell you the number of applicants that bid for a property, the band and registration date of the successful applicants. This will help you decide whether to look for other types of property or areas where you may not have to wait as long, or to consider other housing options.

Mutual Exchange Scheme



If you are a secure or assured tenant you may be able to swap your home with another tenant who lives in a Council or Housing Association property. This may increase your chances of moving and is also a good scheme for people who may not be given high priority on the transfer register but who still want to move.

Before you can swap your property you must get the permission of your landlord. The landlord can refuse permission in certain circumstances. The main ones are:

- An eviction notice has been served
- Either of the homes are too large or small for the households who are involved in the exchange
- The home has been built or adapted for people with disabilities or is part of a group of special needs accommodation (such as sheltered housing) and the swap would result in the home being occupied by someone without those needs

Your landlord will also expect your rent account to be clear and that any outstanding repairs are reported to your landlord or carried out by yourself if they are your responsibility.

How do I find someone to exchange with?



Oxford City Council and most housing associations operating in Oxfordshire have joined "homeswapper". This is a national scheme for tenants who want to exchange within Oxford and/or nationally (including across Oxfordshire). This service is free to Oxford City Council tenants and also tenants of housing associations that have joined the scheme.

Homeswapper offers many advantages over local exchange

lists because it allows tenants to include not only local areas they want to move to, but also areas outside of the Oxford too.

To join the scheme or to find out more visit the homeswapper web site homeswapper.co.uk or contact your Estate Manager, Housing Officer or the Housing Needs Team.

If you register at the HomeSwapper web site, once your entry on the web site has been approved by your landlord, you will be able to access information about tenants within Oxfordshire and the rest of the UK who wish to exchange properties. HomeSwapper will also e-mail or text you at regular intervals with details of suitable exchange partners.

You can view hard copies of the HomeSwapper register of people in Oxfordshire who would like to exchange properties, and also of people in other parts of the UK wanting to exchange to a property in Oxfordshire. These are available in our receptions at St Aldate's Chambers, Templar's Square and Oxford City Homes, Horspath Road. These registers will be updated once a month.

What happens if I find someone to swap with?



When you have found an address you think may be suitable you must contact the tenant yourself and discuss the exchange.

You must make sure you view the property as no repairs (other than those which are the landlords responsibility) will be carried out.

When you exchange you take on the same tenancy as the tenant you exchange with (called a deed of assignment). This may mean you take on different rights such as the right to buy. **Please contact your landlord for advice if you have found a possible exchange.**

Once you are satisfied you should inform your landlord and make sure the other person does the same. Your landlords will then tell you if they can approve the exchange and complete the paperwork. It is very important you do not move until this is done. Oxford City Council will not sanction any mutual exchange where payment between the tenants exchanging happens and we may take legal action.

How do I find out more information?



Oxford City Council tenants should contact Oxford City Homes on 0800 227676

Other Council or Housing Association tenants should contact their Housing Officer

Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes and Renting in the Private Sector

Low cost Home Ownership schemes



HomeBuy is the agency in this area that provides information and advice about a number of different low cost home ownership schemes. If you are interested in these schemes you should register with HomeBuy. You can telephone them on 0845 601 7729 or visit their web site www.homebuy.co.uk

There are separate leaflets about HomeBuy available from the local offices.

You also need to register on the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing because the Council is normally responsible for putting names of housing applicants forward to the Association when low-cost home ownership properties become available.

Renting in the private sector



Some residents will be very unlikely to find the property they want within the Social Housing sector. This is because certain types of property, particularly houses, are in short supply. Oxford City Council operates the Home Choice scheme. The Council will provide the tenancy deposit that is needed to obtain private rented accommodation and can also offer advice on all aspects of the lettings process and prompt housing benefit payments.

Who can apply?



Any council or RSL tenant living in the City. Generally the scheme is most suitable for those who have not had problems managing their tenancy. The Council must be

satisfied that you can meet the rent either directly or through Housing Benefit. If you move into private sector accommodation you will lose your security of tenure. Properties are usually let for an initial 12 months on an Assured Shorthold tenancy and renewed yearly after that. Some landlords prefer to offer 6month tenancies. **You must ensure you get full legal advice about the change to your tenancy status if you are interested in this scheme.**

How do I apply?



You should contact the Private Sector Team at Oxford City Council by calling **01865 252858**. Advice and support will be provided but if you do want to go ahead you will be expected to find your own property.

Useful contacts



- **Agnes Smith Advice Centre**
T: 01865 770206
- **Barton Information Centre**
T 01865 744152
- **Citizens Advice Bureau,**
95 St Aldates, Oxford
T 0870 220 0608
E oxfordcab@cabnet.org.uk
www.oxfordcab.org
- Rose Hill and Donnington Advice Centre
T: 01865 438634

A full list of advice services can be found in the **Housing Options** leaflet

List of local housing offices



- **Housing Needs Team**
Oxford City Council, St Aldate's Chambers, St Aldate's
Oxford OX1 1DS
T 01865 252858
E housingneeds@oxford.gov.uk
- **Oxford Citizens Housing Association**
244 Barns Road, Oxford OX4 3RW
T 01865 773000
- **Catalyst Communities Housing Association**
The Farmhouse, Nightingale Avenue, Blackbird Leys,
Oxford OX4 7BU
T 01865 712244
- **A2Dominion Housing Group**
Godstow Court, 5 West Way, Oxford OX2 0GE
T 0800 432 0077

Oxford City Council Customer Service Centres



Please phone 01865 252849 to book an appointment

- **Templars Square Customer Service Centre**
2–3 Bank Court, Templars Square Shopping Centre,
Cowley, Oxford OX4 3UZ
- **St Aldate's Customer Service Centre**
109–113 St Aldate's Oxford OX1 1DS

Limited hour 'surgeries' are also held at the following offices.
Please phone **0800 227676** for information

- **Barton Information Centre**
Oxford City Council, Underhill Circus, Oxford OX3 9LS
- **Rose Hill Office**
Oxford City Council, AshhurstWay, Oxford OX4 4RF

Notes

The Oxford Register for Affordable Housing is a partnership between Oxford City Council and the Housing Associations listed below



OXFORD
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List of partner agencies

Oxford City Council

Bromford Housing Group

Catalyst Communities Housing Association

A2Dominion Housing Group

Home Group

Jephson Homes Housing Association

Oxford Citizens Housing Association

Paradigm Housing Group

Soha Housing

Thames Valley Housing Association