

CHARNWOOD HOMESEEKERS GUIDE

Your guide to finding a new home in Leicestershire

Leicestershire choice based lettings (CBL) is a partnership between councils and Housing Associations covering the seven council areas in Leicestershire. Please note this scheme covers all of Leicestershire but does not include the City of Leicester itself.

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
- About the band system
- Which properties you can 'bid' for
- How to make bids



CONTENTS

1. What is Choice Based Lettings?	4
2. How does Leicestershire CBL work?	4
3. Joining the Housing Register	5
3.1 Who can go on the Housing Register	5
4. How the band system works	6
4.1 The 4 housing bands – a summary	7
4.2 Moving between housing need bands	8
4.3 Financial assessment.....	8
4.4 Mobility needs	9
4.5 Self-selection mobility categories	9
4.6 Local connection	10
4.7 Sub regional connection.....	10
4.8 Time limits for homeseekers in priority or high bands.....	10
5. How properties are advertised	11
6. Property ‘bidding’	12
6.1 Size & type of property you can bid for.....	12
6.2 Sheltered accommodation for elderly people & others with a support need.....	14
6.4 Matching	16
6.5 Selection	17
6.6 Refusals.....	17
6.7 Checks.....	17
6.8 Feedback	17
7. How to ‘bid’ for a property	18
7.1 Online via the website	18
7.2 By phone.....	19
7.3 By text message.....	19

8. How to appeal a decision about your housing application	20
8.1 Who may appeal?	20
8.2 How do I appeal?	21
8.3 How does the appeal process work?	21
8.4 Getting help and advice.....	22
8.5 Can I appeal against any other decision?	22
9. More housing options.....	22
9.1 Are you already a social housing tenant?	22
9.2 Are you interested in shared ownership or HomeBuy schemes?	22
9.3 Do you think you might become homeless?	23

1. WHAT IS CHOICE BASED LETTINGS?

Choice based lettings, or CBL, is a new approach to letting social housing which makes lettings arrangements more transparent by advertising the council or Housing Association properties that become available.

Homeseekers will be able to see how many council or Housing Association homes become available and will have more control over the lettings process as they can 'bid' for the properties they are interested in.

CBL does not increase the amount of available social housing but it provides homeseekers with accurate information on how many homes are actually available, where these homes are located, and their chances of being housed.

2. HOW DOES LEICESTERSHIRE CBL WORK?

Every two weeks, the seven councils in Leicestershire publish details of all available properties to rent from the councils and local Housing Associations. There will be house exchange opportunities, and in some areas, properties from private landlords will be available.

Once you have registered with one of the councils, you will be able to use your registration number (or login number) to bid every two weeks for up to three properties that interest you.

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

The information in this booklet is for people who are registered with Charnwood Borough Council. People looking for housing are referred to as **homeseekers**.

Please note there is high demand for properties and there is likely to be a long wait for accommodation for many homeseekers. If you have an urgent need for housing, there may be other options you can consider. Ask for housing advice from Housing Needs on 01509 63 4567.

3. JOINING THE HOUSING REGISTER

If you would like to use the CBL scheme, or if you are an existing tenant who wants to move, you need to be registered with Charnwood Borough Council or any other district council in Leicestershire.

3.1 WHO CAN GO ON THE HOUSING REGISTER

The Housing Register is open to everyone aged over the age of 16 years (homeseekers under the age of 18 years may not be eligible for all property types from all landlords) except:

- Certain people from abroad as defined by legislation (please ask for more information)
- People who the council considers to be unsuitable to be a tenant, for example, people who have a recent history of serious or persistent arrears or antisocial behaviour

You will need to fill in and return a **Housing Application Form**. These are available from:

- Charnwood Borough Council offices
- Download a form at www.charnwood.gov.uk
- Or telephone:

- Customer Services on 01509 263151
- Housing Needs on 01509 63 4567

Please make sure you fill in all parts of the application form. Remember to provide all the proofs you are asked for – returning the form without all the necessary proofs could delay registration of your application.

The information you give us on the application 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 are eligible to join the Housing Register, we will tell you:

- Your **registration number**
- Your **effective date of registration**
- The **band** your application has been placed in

If you are not eligible to join the Housing Register, we will tell you why. If you disagree with the decision, you can appeal to Charnwood Borough Council.

For more information on how to appeal, see Section 8 below.

All registrations and all decisions on lettings are made in accordance with the Allocations Policy. You can see the council's Allocations Policy by going to <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/housingpoliciesandinformation>.

4. HOW THE BAND SYSTEM WORKS

The council aims to house those people in greatest need and does this through the banding system. Homeseekers are placed in bands according to their housing circumstances and level of housing need.

Councils and Housing Association 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 homeseekers will be assessed and placed in one of 4 bands. Homeseekers in each band will be placed in date order – so the homeseeker with the oldest registration date will have the highest position in that band. The date used is either the date your application was registered with us or the date you moved into a higher band.

4.1 THE 4 HOUSING BANDS – A SUMMARY

PRIORITY HOUSING NEED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless – to whom the council has a statutory duty to offer housing • Emergency medical need • Emergency welfare need • Multiple/complex housing needs • Housing management priority • Displaced agricultural workers
HIGH HOUSING NEED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has 2 or more needs from different sections in Medium Housing Need (short term accommodation cannot be counted as one of the 2 needs) • Is overcrowded and short of two or more bedrooms • In supported accommodation and approved for move-on or independent living • Under-occupying social housing which is in high demand
MEDIUM HOUSING NEED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Leicestershire sub-region
- Has the financial means to provide their own housing
- Owner or joint owner of a property with no medical or welfare needs
- New homeseeker with security of tenure and no welfare or medical need to move
- Owes a housing debt – where there is no arrangement to pay
- Owes a housing debt – where a payment plan has not been maintained
- Guilty of behaviour which affects suitability to be a tenant
- Transfer homeseeker 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 or shared ownership options
- Deliberate worsening of housing circumstances to get higher priority

4.2 MOVING BETWEEN HOUSING NEED BANDS

A homeseeker's housing need band will change if their level of need changes.

When a homeseeker moves up to a higher housing band, their effective date will change to the date they moved into the higher band. The exception is:

- Homeseekers moving to the priority band because the council has a full homelessness duty to them will have their effective date changed to the date they presented as homeless

If a homeseeker moves to a lower band, their effective date will be the date they were previously in that band. If the homeseeker has not been in that band previously, they will retain their current effective date.

4.3 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 placed in the low housing need band.

4.4 MOBILITY NEEDS

If you need ground floor accommodation, accommodation that has been specially adapted or you have a mobility problem, then you will be asked to complete a mobility assessment form.

There are 6 self-selection housing mobility categories and the homeseeker must select the category which best describes their mobility needs. You will then be able to bid for a property type that best meets your mobility needs.

4.5 SELF-SELECTION MOBILITY CATEGORIES

CATEGORY	SELF-SELECTION CATEGORY	PROPERTY TYPE
 A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My legs are unable to support my weight and I need to use a wheelchair when indoors and outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A property that is fully suitable for a wheelchair to be used inside and outside
 B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I use a wheelchair but can walk a short distance. I cannot climb steps or stairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wheelchair accessible property with no steps or stairs
 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not use a wheelchair but walk with difficulty. I cannot climb steps or stairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A property with level access from the street, with no steps or stairs
 D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not use a wheelchair; I find it difficult to walk, but can manage one or two steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A property with no stairs but 1 or 2 steps
 E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I need a downstairs toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A property with a ground floor toilet and has stairs or steps
 F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have a disability or a medical problem, such as kidney dialysis or epilepsy, requiring more suitable accommodation, which does not fall into any of the above categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A standard property suitable for disabled people who need extra space

4.6 LOCAL CONNECTION

To qualify as having a local connection, you must:

- Live permanently in the borough of Charnwood
- Have lived in the borough for at least 6 months in the last 12 months
OR at least 3 years in the last 5 years
- Have permanent employment in the borough
- Have close relatives living in the borough
- Have other special circumstances taken into account

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

4.7 SUB REGIONAL CONNECTION

Some properties will be advertised across all seven council areas.

For these properties, preference is given to homeseekers with a local connection to **any** of the seven council areas over homeseekers who have no local connection to any of the council areas.

4.8 TIME LIMITS FOR HOMESEEKERS IN PRIORITY OR HIGH BANDS

We expect homeseekers who are in the high and priority bands to be bidding regularly for suitable properties.

Homeseekers in the priority band will have their priority reviewed after 12 weeks. If you are in the priority band and have not been bidding for available properties, your need for housing and your priority may be changed.

Homeseekers in the high band will have their priority reviewed after 24 weeks.

5. HOW PROPERTIES ARE ADVERTISED

Vacancies for council and Housing Association properties will be advertised every two weeks. You can find the adverts:

- On the council's website
- In the property listings newsletter
- At all council offices
- In several locations across the borough – details can be found on the council's website

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 the property listings newsletter to homeseekers who have no other way of seeing the property adverts. If you think this applies to you, please contact Housing Needs on 01509 63 4567.

The property adverts will tell you about the properties available and who can bid for them (see the table on page 12 for more information). The property adverts will also tell you:

- Who the landlord is
- Location of the property
- Size of the property and other features (for example, adaptations)
- Rent
- Age and other requirements – the symbols (pictures) in the advert will tell you if there are any age requirements or other restrictions about who can bid for the property

- Bedroom requirement – homeseekers with a bedroom requirement smaller or larger than this will not be able to bid
- Where available, a photograph of the property or a similar type of property will be provided. If you are viewing online, you will be able to access information about the local area and facilities.

Remember that 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).

6. PROPERTY 'BIDDING'

'Bidding' is the word we use for homeseekers selecting properties they would like to be offered. Bidding does not involve money in any way.

6.1 SIZE & TYPE OF PROPERTY YOU CAN BID FOR

The table below shows which properties your household type can bid for.

	SINGLE PERSON	SINGLE PERSON WITH ACCESS* TO CHILDREN	COUPLE	COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS ONE OTHER	COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS TWO OTHERS	COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS THREE OTHERS	COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS FOUR OR MORE OTHERS
Studio flat	✓	✓					
1 bedroom flat	✓	✓	✓				
1 bedroom house	✓	✓	✓				
1 bedroom bungalow	✓	✓	✓				
2 bedroom flat/maisonette	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2 bedroom house	(✓)		(✓)	✓	✓		
2 bedroom bungalow	(✓)		✓	✓			
3 bedroom house**				(✓)	✓	✓	✓
3 bedroom flat/maisonette				(✓)	✓	✓	✓
3 bedroom parlour*** house					✓	✓	✓
4+ bedroom house						(✓)	✓

* Single person with children who do not live with them on a permanent basis

** In some circumstances, larger sized houses may be available for families with a two bedroom requirement

*** A parlour house is a house with a separate dining room

**** Households with three dependents may be entitled to bid for four plus bedrooms

() In some locations, two bedroom property types may be opened up for households with a one bedroom requirement; three bedroom properties may be open to those with a two bedroom requirement; and four bedroom properties may be open to those with a 3 bedroom requirement

Where a household contains a pregnant woman, the expected child will count as an extra member of the household.

If a homeseeker needs an additional bedroom for a live-in carer, then the carer can be added to the household.

Please note that Charnwood Borough Council has a very small number of houses with more than 4 bedrooms. Allocations to these properties will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

6.2 SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE & OTHERS WITH A SUPPORT NEED

Sheltered accommodation housing is available with support or a scheme manager or will have a fitted alarm call system. Details of the support available will be given in the property advert.

	SINGLE ELDERLY PERSON	YOUNGER SINGLE PERSON WITH SUPPORT NEEDS	ELDERLY COUPLE
Studio flat	✓	✓	
1 bedroom flat	✓	✓	✓
1 bedroom bungalow	✓	✓	✓
2 bedroom flat	✓	✓	✓
2 bedroom bungalow	✓	✓	✓

Age rules vary between **55 and 65** and depend on who the landlord is. Age limits will be shown on the property advert. The age limit normally applies to the oldest partner in a couple.

6.3 AREA CHOICES IN CHARNWOOD



LOUGHBOROUGH	VILLAGES	VILLAGES
Ashby Road Estate	Anstey	Rearsby
Warwick	Barkby	Ratcliffe on the Wreake
Knighthorpe	Barrow	Rothley
Thorpe Acre	Beeby	Seagrave
Nottingham Road area	Birstall	Shepshed
Shelthorpe Road	Burton on the Wolds	Sileby
Shelthorpe	Cossington	South Croxton
Leicester Road area	Cotes	Swithland
Derby Road area	Cropston	System
Town Centre	East Goscote	Thrussington
Town Centre Ashby Road	Hathern	Thurcaston
Forest Road	Hoton	Thurmaston
	Mountsorrel	Ulverscroft
	Newtown Linford	Walton on the Wolds
	Prestwold	Wanlip
	Queniborough	Woodhouse Eaves
	Quorn	Wymeswold

If you are eligible to bid for the property (see the table on page 13 for information about properties you can bid for), there will be no restriction on the areas you can choose. However, for most vacancies, you will have a better chance of being offered a property if you have a local connection to the district the property is in.

If you are not sure where a property is, you can click on www.UpMyStreet.com or check the maps available for each council area.

To help homeseekers who want to move outside the Charnwood area, there will be some 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 which will be clearly marked. You can use one or more of your bids on these properties.

6.4 MATCHING

Once the bidding has closed, a list will be compiled of everyone who has bid for the property. Homeseekers with a local connection to the borough will be considered before those without a connection. Homeseekers will then be placed in order of their bands as follows:

- **Priority** housing need band households will appear first
- **High** housing need band households will appear second
- **Medium** housing need band households will appear third
- **Low** housing need band households will appear last

Where there is more than one homeseeker in any band, the effective date, will be the deciding factor so that the people with the highest need who have been waiting longest will get priority.

6.5 SELECTION

Provided the top matched homeseeker is eligible to receive the offer, they will be contacted within a day or two of the end of bidding. If offered the property, 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.

6.6 REFUSALS

If a homeseeker turns down an offer, there is no penalty. However, if you refuse seven offers, you will be interviewed about the reasons for refusing. You will not be able to bid again until you have attended this interview.

6.7 CHECKS

Before an offer is made, final checks will be made on the details of the household with the highest priority – this is to make sure that the information given on the homeseeker's application form is correct and that they are still eligible for housing. It will be at this stage that we check things like rent arrears (missed rent payments) – homeseekers with rent arrears of £300 or more and who have not kept to a payment plan for at least 12 weeks, will not normally qualify to be offered a property. Housing Associations may also run credit checks.

If details have changed or the homeseeker no longer meets the criteria, an offer will not be made and we will pass to the next homeseeker on the list.

6.8 FEEDBACK

Feedback is when we tell you about who was top of the list. As 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 website and in the property listings newsletter.

The tables show how many bids were made and the band and date of the successful bid. This will help you make better choices next time you bid.

7. HOW TO 'BID' FOR A PROPERTY

Bidding does not involve any money but means that you, the homeseeker, can tell Charnwood Borough Council which properties you are interested in. You can bid online, by phone and by text message.

7.1 ONLINE VIA THE WEBSITE

- (a) Type www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk into the address bar of your internet browser
- (b) Click on **Charnwood Borough Council**. You can save the page in your Favourites so that you can find it easily next time you bid
- (c) Click on **Login/My Account** and enter your registration number (or login number) and memorable date. Your login will be confirmed and any existing bids will be shown
- (d) Click on **Property Search**
- (e) Select your search options and click on **Search**
- (f) A summary of all the properties matching your search will be shown. If you are eligible to bid for a property, the advert will have an **Apply Now** button
Remember, if you have already used 3 bids, you will not be able to bid for any more properties. If you would like to bid for another property, you will need to cancel one of your bids and then bid again.
- (g) Click **Apply Now**

- You will be shown the full property details and asked to **Confirm** your bid
- If your bid is accepted, your queue position will be shown
- If your bid is not accepted, a reason will be shown

7.2 BY PHONE

- (a) You will need to have the following information:
 - Your registration number
 - Your memorable date
 - The property reference number for each property you are bidding for
- (b) Call the telephone bidding line on **030 00 11 0129** – this is an automated voice service and you will need to follow the instructions you hear. You will need to use the number keys on your keypad and the # key

Calls are charged at the local rate – call charges may vary with different phone service providers.

7.3 BY TEXT MESSAGE

- (a) You will need to have the following information:
 - Your registration number
 - Your memorable date
 - The property reference number for each property you are bidding for
- (b) You can bid for 1 or 2 properties with each text message
- (c) Type in your registration number followed by a space
- (d) Type in your memorable date as **dd/mm/yyyy** followed by a space
- (e) Type in the reference number for property 1 followed by a space
- (f) Type in the reference number for property 2 followed by a space

- (g) Send the message to **07537 402597**
- (h) You will receive a text message which will either:
 - Confirm your position in the queue – you will not be able to undo a text bid and change it to another property
 - Refuse your bid
- (i) To bid for property 3, repeat steps (c) to (e) above

8. HOW TO APPEAL A DECISION ABOUT YOUR HOUSING APPLICATION

Under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), you may have the right in certain circumstances to request a review of decisions taken by the council concerning your housing application.

8.1 WHO MAY APPEAL?

If a homeseeker does not agree with a decision made by the council about their application or a decision which affects their housing application, they have the right to appeal. Homeseekers may appeal:

- If the council decides not to allow you to access the council's lettings scheme for accommodation
- If the council refuses to reinstate a home seekers application which has been cancelled
- About the facts of your case which have been, or are likely to be, taken into account when considering whether an allocation is made to you
- If you believe that your application has been assessed incorrectly and placed in the wrong housing need band
- Where a homeseeker wants to be considered for a property type that they are not eligible for

If a homeseeker is matched for a property but has been refused the offer of accommodation by a Housing Association, you should appeal to the Housing Association to review its decision. Each Housing Association operates its own appeals process and the Housing Needs team will be able to provide the homeseeker with a copy of the relevant appeals procedure.

8.2 HOW DO I APPEAL?

The council must notify you in writing of any decision it makes on your application. If you would like to appeal against the decision, you should put your request for a review in writing within 28 days from the date you have received the decision to:

The Housing Needs Manager
Charnwood Borough Council
Southfield Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire LE11 2TT

If you have difficulty with putting your request in writing, the council will consider alternative arrangements. Please contact the Senior Housing Options Officer to discuss this. You should forward any documents on which you rely within 14 days of your request.

The council considers that 28 days is sufficient time to request a review. However the council may be prepared to consider requests after this time depending on the circumstances of the case. You must contact the Senior Housing Options Officer to discuss this as soon as you are in receipt of the letter notifying you of the time limit to request a review.

8.3 HOW DOES THE APPEAL PROCESS WORK?

The officer considering the appeal will not have been involved in the original decision.

8.4 GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

If you would like help and advice, you should contact The Bridge Housing Advice Centre, the local Citizens Advice Bureau, a solicitor or other advice agency. You should provide them with a copy of the council's decision letter and any additional information that may be relevant.

8.5 CAN I APPEAL AGAINST ANY OTHER DECISION?

If you disagree with any other decision not covered above, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Housing Needs section as soon as possible. If, having done this, you remain unhappy, please ask for your case to be referred to a senior housing manager for a further, informal review.

You may, of course, also seek independent legal advice from a solicitor or advice centre.

9. MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

9.1 ARE YOU ALREADY A SOCIAL HOUSING TENANT?

If you are already a social housing tenant, you can find out about how to do a **mutual exchange**, by looking at Charnwood Borough Council's 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.

9.2 ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SHARED OWNERSHIP OR HOMEBUY SCHEMES?

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

We also advertise opportunities to buy a home using the **HomeBuy** scheme.

For more information, see www.HomeBuy.co.uk.

9.3 DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BECOME HOMELESS?

If you are at risk of losing your home for any reason, our housing advisers are on hand to help you. Contact Housing Needs on 01509 63 4567.

Housing Needs
Charnwood Borough Council
Southfield Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2TT
Tel: 01509 63 4567
Email: housing@charnwood.gov.uk

This information is available in different formats. To access these please phone (01509) 634560.

এ তথ্যাদি অন্যান্য মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যায়। এসব পেতে হলে দয়াকরে (01509) 634560 এ নাম্বারে টেলিফোন করুন।

這資料具不同的格式，請致電 (01509) 634560 索取。

आ माहिती जुदी जुदी पद्धतिओमां उपलब्ध छे. ते भेणववा माटे कृपा करी आ नंअर पर झेन करे (01509) 634560.

यह जानकारी अलग-अलग प्रारूपों में मिल सकती है। इनको पाने के लिये कृपया यह नंबर डायल कीजिये (01509) 634560.

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵਖ-ਵਖ ਸਕਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਏ। ਇਹ ਚਾਹਿਲ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮਿਹਰਬਾਨੀ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ (01509) 634560



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