

Applying for a home with Longhurst

This leaflet explains what you need to do if you wish to apply for accommodation with Longhurst.

What is Longhurst Homes?

We are a social landlord registered with the Housing Corporation, which is the Government body responsible for promoting and supervising housing associations.

We aim to provide good quality, affordable housing on the basis of need, and work towards maintaining and developing communities where people want to live.

How do we let our homes?

There are a number of ways in which you can be offered housing with Longhurst. This could be through one of the following:

- Direct application - this is where we have our own housing register and a percentage of our homes are allocated to applicants on this list.
- Nomination from the local authority's housing register - a percentage of our homes are allocated to applicants who have applied directly to their local authority.
- Common housing registers - this is where we do not hold a separate waiting list and all lettings are made from a central register, usually maintained by the local authority.



- Through local choice-based lettings schemes - this is where vacant homes within the area are advertised and applicants are invited to place 'bids' for a home.

We are aiming to achieve a simple way of applying for a home, where one application is made to the local authority for both housing association and local authority rented homes. We are working closely with our local authority partners to achieve this.

Enclosed with this leaflet is information on how homes are let in your local authority area.

What type of properties do you have?

We currently have over 3,000 properties which range from studio flats to 4-bedroom houses. These are spread throughout the East Midlands.

We will send out information with our application form that will tell you about where we have properties and the type of properties you can apply for.

If you want more information or an application form, please telephone our Customer Service Centre on freephone **0800 111 4013**.

What type of property can I consider for housing?

The type of property you can consider depends on your circumstances and listed is a general guide for some of our property types.

Property Type	Size of Household	Average Rent*
Studio Flat / Bedsit	Single Person	£61.58
One Bedroom Property	Single Person or Couple without children or with access to children overnight	£63.12
Two Bedroom Property	Applicant with one or two children of the same sex	£66.28
Three / Four Bedroom Property	Applicant with two or more children	£69.82
One / Two Bedroom Bungalows	Applicant over 60 years old	£63.80
Sheltered Housing	Applicant over 60 years old or disabled applicant	£66.94
Specially adapted Disabled Properties	Person (or family depending on the type of dwelling) who has a proven need for the particular adaptation	£69.91

* Average rent and service charge as at 31st March 2007

Who can be re-housed?

We house applicants who are in housing need and who do not have a sufficient income to secure other reasonable housing. We also offer homes to older people and disabled people in housing need.

We do not discriminate on grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic origin, sexuality, disability, religion, marital status or age.

We cannot offer a home to applicants who by law are ineligible for re-housing. For example, those seeking asylum or people who do not have a legal right to remain in the United Kingdom.

Will I know my position on the register?

Unfortunately, for applicants placed in bands B, C or D, we still cannot provide your exact position on the list as new applicants accepted into a higher band than yours will go above your overall position on the list.

This is because we need to take into account people's circumstances rather than decide priority purely on the basis of time spent waiting for accommodation.

Review

We will review your circumstances every year to check your application is still banded correctly.

Who do I contact for any further information?

Please telephone our Customer Service Centre on freephone **0800 111 4013** or see the addresses below for your local office.

Please let us know if you want a copy of the Housing Corporation leaflet 'Charter for Housing Association Applicants and Residents'.

To avoid unnecessary delay please attach all information with your original application, or reply to our requests for information as quickly as possible.

If you are offered one of our homes you will be expected to keep to our tenancy contract conditions. Please contact us if you would like a draft copy of our tenancy contract.

When will you let me know if I have been accepted?

We will try and write to you within 10 days of receiving your application, to tell you if:

- your application has been accepted, including details of which band you are in, and the reasons behind this decision.

What if I am refused?

We will write and tell you why we have refused your application. You can re-apply if your circumstances change. See section 'What to do if you disagree with any of our decisions'.

How long will I have to wait for housing?

How long you will have to wait depends upon:

- how many suitable properties we have in your chosen areas
- how many of these properties become empty
- how many people are above you on the register.

We do not normally re-house applicants who are owner-occupiers unless:

- you need sheltered accommodation
- your mortgage lender is repossessing your home
- your relationship has broken down and as a result you need to leave your current home
- your current home is unsuitable due to ill health.

We do not normally re-house applicants who are under 18 except where:

- you have a dependent child or you are expecting a baby and/or
- your local authority has accepted you as homeless and
- you have an appropriate support package in place.

Where you are considered 'vulnerable', such as you have drug or alcohol dependency or mental illness which may affect your ability to manage your tenancy, we will expect an appropriate support package to be arranged. Accepting the support will normally be a condition of your tenancy contract.

Applicants who may be excluded from re-housing

We will not normally consider applicants who come into the following groups:

- you have supplied significantly false or misleading information about your housing application

- if you, or any member of your household have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be one of our tenants. For example, noise nuisance, domestic violence, racial harassment, intimidation and drug dealing or if legal action has been taken against you for breaking your tenancy conditions. This will not apply where this behaviour took place 2 or more years before the date of your application and you can show that you have managed a tenancy satisfactorily in the meantime
- if you have housing debt of more than £500 owed to us or other landlords
- if you owe less than £500 you may be placed in band D of our housing register
- applicants coming via the local authority with housing debt of greater £250.

We do not operate blanket exclusions and each application will be reviewed before making a decision. In reviewing the case we will take account of the reason for the exclusion, efforts to resolve the problem, as well as the level of housing need and any vulnerability.

We will let you know in writing the reason for our decision and when your application can be reviewed.

Applicants for sheltered housing

For sheltered housing we will normally accept applications from you if you meet the following criteria:

- you are over 60 years of age and retired from full-time employment

How do I apply to go onto the Longhurst's Housing Register?

Please complete our application form and return to the address on the front of the form. If you need help filling in the form please let us know.

If you do not complete the application form in full you may not be accepted onto the register. The application form should be returned with photocopies of the following items:

- two proofs of address for each applicant
- proof of National Insurance Number for each applicant, where applicable
- applicants from abroad must provide documentation to confirm proof of identification, nationality and immigration status. Verification may be sought from the Immigration Services or relevant local authority
- any supporting evidence that we require. Refer to the guidance when you complete the application form.

What happens next?

We will check to see if we can consider you for the type of housing that you are asking for. We will tell you if we are unable to do so and where possible give advice on any alternatives you may wish to consider.

We will complete checks on the information provided on the application form. We will ask for references from previous landlords and any other agencies as appropriate.

We have enclosed information about the categories in each band within this leaflet.

In each band the priority of applicants is decided by the date we received the application. However, applications can be re-dated in certain circumstances, such as a change in circumstances and where an offer of accommodation is refused.

Do I have to live in the area where I want to be housed?

In order to qualify for bands A or B you must have a local connection to the borough or the neighbouring borough in which you have applied for housing. This means:

- you should currently live in the local authority or neighbouring local authority area in which you wish to live, or
- you have previously lived in the local authority area or neighbouring local authority area at any time in your life for a continuous period of not less than 5 years
- you have close family living in the local authority area or neighbouring local authority area
- you have permanent employment in the local authority area or neighbouring local authority area
- or you are fleeing violence and are unable to move to an area where you have a local connection.

- or you are over 50 and have a physical or learning disability or other community care need
- you are able to live safely and independently with the level of support that can be provided
- you are in need of support provided and willing to accept the support provided by the Scheme Manager and the community alarm system
- you would benefit from the environment provided by sheltered housing.

When you apply you will be asked to take part in a needs assessment interview either in your own home or at your chosen sheltered scheme, to see that we can meet any physical, social or tenancy support needs that you may have.

We aim to carry out this assessment within 28 days of receiving your application and we will advise you in writing if we are unable to accept your application.

Fast Track Lettings

We operate a fast track letting policy for properties that are classed as harder to let. These properties are advertised in the local press and via our Customer Service Centre. Applicants who respond to the advert will be assessed in line with Longhurst's lettings policy.

How do I make an application?

First of all you should use the information sheet provided to check the way we let homes in the area of your choice.

- **Direct applications**

Where we accept applications directly you should read the section later in this leaflet called 'Longhurst's Housing Register'. You will need to complete our housing application form.

- **Nominations**

Only a small percentage of homes are let to direct applicants. You should also register for housing with the local authority and let them know that you are interested in a housing association property. Your details will be passed to us if you are selected for re-housing.

- **Common Housing Registers**

Where these are in place, you should apply directly to the organisation who manages the list. This is normally the local authority but details are supplied in this leaflet.

- **Choice-based lettings**

Where these are in place, you should apply directly to the organisation managing the housing register. Once your application has been accepted, you will receive information on how you can bid for one of our empty homes. Details of properties are advertised in a number of ways, such as the local housing press and internet sites.

If you are unsure about the arrangements that are operating in your area or require help in making an application, please contact our Customer Service Centre on freephone 0800 111 4013.

What to do if you disagree with any of our decisions

If you have a query about how we have processed your application, please contact us to discuss your concerns.

If you are unhappy about a decision made to either refuse or exclude you from re-housing, please contact us within 28 days of the date of our decision letter, explaining why you disagree with our decision. Your case will then be reviewed by the Head of Tenancy Services.

If you are still unhappy with our decision, you should contact us again using our complaints process.

Longhurst's Housing Register

We aim to operate a housing register, which is easy to understand and is a fair way of letting our homes to people waiting for accommodation.

We make an assessment of housing need and prioritise each application by grouping applicants into one of four bands.

How do you decide what Band I will be placed in?

There are 4 bands - A, B, C, D which reflect different levels of housing need; Band A for those in greatest housing need. We have grouped different categories of need within each band and we will look at your circumstances and place your application in the appropriate band.