



Housing Scheme Guide

Finding a home just got a whole lot easier. More help, more choice, more opportunity to find your next home.

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How to use this guide

On page 4 you will find a quick guide describing the scheme. Page 5 describes which properties you will be able to bid for and page 8 describes how bidders will be prioritised. On pages 11-13 you will find more details on how to place your bids.

Welcome to BFC My choice



About BFC My choice

Welcome to BFC My choice - your route to a new affordable rented home in Bracknell Forest.

BFC My choice gives you the opportunity to:

- Register for housing in Bracknell Forest
- Find out about housing association properties that are available for letting
- Express an interest in a property that you would like to be considered for by making a bid - to be able to bid for properties you must first be on the Housing Register

All available properties are advertised on the internet at **www.bfcmychoice.org.uk**

This site is also where you can:

- Complete an application to join the Housing Register
- Access your completed application form you have given us and update it should your circumstances change
- Complete your annual renewal
- Access important information on the scheme
- Contact the Housing Options Team with any questions you might have

Properties will also be advertised in a newsletter that you can pick up at various locations, including libraries throughout the borough. BFC My choice gives you the opportunity to choose your new home.

Need more help?

If you have any questions about using BFC My choice please visit the website at **www.bfcmychoice.org.uk** or phone the Housing Options Team on **01344 352009** or e-mail us at **housing.options@bracknell-forest.gov.uk**

5 easy steps to your new home...

1. Register

How to register

To apply to join the Housing Register you must be over 16 years of age. You will need to complete an on-line pre-qualification questionnaire and then if you are eligible to join the housing register, you can complete the on-line application form, these can be found at www.bfmychoice.org.uk or if you need assistance contact the Housing Options Team on 01344 352009.

Along with your application form you will be asked to provide the following documents:

- Proof of identity for all household members (e.g. passports, birth certificates)
- Proof of current address (e.g. recent gas or electricity bill)
- Proof of income (e.g. payslips, bank statements or benefit documents)
- You may also be asked to provide other documents depending on your circumstances

The documents will need to be sent or brought to the Housing Options Team in Time Square.

Any application forms which are not completed fully or properly cannot be processed so you will not be able to access the housing register until the information is fully completed and is correct.

What happens once I have registered?

Once your application form has been assessed and you are registered we will confirm the following with you:

- Your housing application number
- The band your application has been placed in and your priority date
- The number of bedrooms you are entitled to
- How you can start bidding for properties

Please note that if the information on which your application has been assessed is later found to be inaccurate we will change your band and priority accordingly.

You must tell us if there are any changes in your circumstances so that we can re-assess your application and if necessary make changes to your band and priority date. You can tell us about any changes by amending your application form on line or by sending in the information. If you have a change of circumstances that you have not disclosed that directly affects your housing, your application may be placed under review or suspended.

With BFC My Choice, finding a home is easier. It gives you greater opportunity to find a home of your choice and it does not limit you to certain areas.



2. Choose

Which properties can I bid for?

You are only able to bid on properties that you are eligible for. For example, if you need only one bedroom then you will not be able to bid for a two bedroom property.

All property advertisements will be accompanied by symbols which will tell you more about any requirements which may apply to the property. For example, sometimes only transfer or homeless households may bid or in some properties pets are not allowed.

You can find out more in our Allocation Policy which is available in full on the website.

Number of bids

You may bid for any property that you are eligible for in each advertising period. You can also easily withdraw a bid if you change your mind.

Minimum and maximum age

Some properties may have an age restriction attached to them and these will be clearly indicated. For example bungalows will generally be restricted to the over 50's.

Minimum and maximum bedroom need

This will depend on your family composition and the size of the property available. Your registration letter will tell you what size property you can bid for.

3. Bidding

How are properties advertised?

Properties are advertised each week on the website at www.bfcmychoice.org.uk and in the newsletter that is available in a variety of locations. Properties appear on the website each Friday, and are available for bidding until midnight on the following Tuesday.

The adverts

To help you decide which properties are right for you, the adverts detail the landlord, location, size, rent and other features of the property. The adverts may also tell you if there are any special requirements that you must meet.

Expressing your interest in a property

You can express your interest in a property in one of the following ways:

On the website

Visit **www.bfcmychoice.org.uk** and login using your housing application number and memorable date.

By telephone

Call our 24hr automated bidding line.

5 easy steps to your new home...

4. Offer

All bids received will be put in priority order to produce a shortlist of the top 3 households. We will then check the households as in some cases housing associations will not accept households with rent arrears or other housing related debts. We may need to move down the list if someone in the top three is in those circumstances or has already been offered a property or has had some other change of circumstances. Once checked the list will be nominated to the housing association.

Shortlisted applicants must be residents in the Bracknell Forest area and will now be prioritised in the following way:

- Applicants in the highest band starting with
- Band A through to Band D
- Applicants that are working at least 16 hours a week and meet the criteria for working households
- The date of placement in the band (effective date) - this may be different to the date of registration in cases where an applicant has moved up a band
- In cases where families have two or more children of different genders and where one child is over the age of 10 years, they will be prioritised over families where children are the same gender or are younger than 10 years

- Applicants who are members or former members of the Armed Forces including bereaved spouses and civil partners applying within five years of discharge
- Applicants without financial resources to meet their housing needs will be prioritised above those applicants that have financial resources to meet their housing need

When you are invited to view a property the housing association will need to see photo identification of the main applicant this could be in the form of a Bracknell Forest Council e+ card. Details of how to obtain this free card are available at **www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk**.

If you are offered a property by a housing association you will not be able to bid for any other properties until you have decided to accept or refuse the offer.

If you are offered two suitable properties in a year but refuse them we will not let you make a further bid for 12 months. Your application will be suspended and your priority Band will be reviewed.



5. Results

We will publish information about homes that have been successfully let. We will tell you the number of applicants that bid for a property and the band and priority date of the successful applicants. This information will be published in the newsletter and is available in the Recent Lets section of the website.

This will give you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and how long you would normally have to wait. You can then decide whether to look for other types of property or areas where you may not have to wait as long.



How are applications prioritised?

Bracknell Forest Council's allocation policy works by assessing your application and placing it in one of four bands depending on your housing need and how quickly you need to move. The policy is available at www.bfcmchoice.org.uk or from the Housing Options Team.

Moving between bands

If your circumstances change and you move up a band, the date used will normally be the date you moved into that band. If you move down a band, the date used will normally be the date that you were previously in that band or a higher band.

Applications from households in Band C and Band D can move up a band but not to Band A, and this is based on how long they have been waiting on the Council's housing register.

Time limited bands

If your application is placed in Band A there is a limit on the length of time you can remain in the band as the band reflects the most urgent need to move. This is six months. At the end of this period your application will be reviewed and the time extended or your priority reduced.

Home owners

If you own or part-own a property your application will be assessed and it will be assumed that you have sufficient financial resources to meet your housing need. If this is not the case you will need to be able to demonstrate that you are unable to do so.



Band A

Band A - Emergency

- Urgent need to move due to violence, harassment, protection issues
- Severe or life threatening medical need
- Statutory notices
- 3 or more categories of need from Band B
- RSL Decants for major works or re-development (where scheme has been agreed with the Council)
- RSL under-occupying successors
- RSL Management Transfers - only on a like for like basis in line with the RSL policy

Band B

Band B - Urgent

- Overcrowded by 2 bedrooms or more as defined by the bedroom standard
- Medical need has a severe impact on normal life and likely to deteriorate
- Need for or releasing adapted social rented housing
- Household has avoided homelessness 5 or more times since being on the Housing Register by securing alternative private rented accommodation
- Need to move to a locality within the borough to give/receive support to maintain independent living. N/A for outside of the borough
- Under occupying RSL tenants moving to smaller properties or older persons accommodation
- Moving on from Supported Housing
- 3 or more categories of need from Band C
- Moving between bands (time waiting)
- Approved Foster Carer in-BFC - borough only - approved by Chief Officer for Adult Social Care

Band C

Band C - High

- Priority need/accepted homeless households in temporary accommodation with Bracknell Forest Council
- Overcrowded by one bedroom as defined by the bedroom standard
- Medical need is stable and has a significant impact on normal life
- High social / welfare needs (identified by external agency)
- Household has avoided homelessness 4 times since being on the Housing Register by securing alternative private rented accommodation
- Need to move to a locality to be close to specialist facility
- 3 or more categories of need from Band D
- Moving between bands (time waiting)

Band D

Band D - Medium

- Homeless applicants, for which there is no statutory duty
- Households with children under 10 years living in flat 1st floor or above with no lift
- Household has avoided homelessness up to 3 times since being on the Housing Register by securing alternative private rented accommodation
- Living with family / friends or other sharing arrangement
- Medical need has an impact on normal life
- Need to move to a locality to give/receive support to reduce social isolation. N/A for outside of the borough
- Moving between bands (time waiting)

Bidding on the web



Bidding on the website

The website address to use when placing a bid is: www.bfcmchoice.org.uk. You can find the details of all the properties that meet your needs, and also place a bid, withdraw a bid, find out if you are eligible and what your current queue position is.

You can only bid for properties where you match the advert requirements.

For example, if the property advert states 'Suitable for a couple and two children' then only couples with two children can bid for that property regardless of your banding.

To access the website click on the My Homepage option then enter your housing register reference number and memorable date. At this stage your login will be confirmed and details of any current bids will be shown.

Click the Property Search option. Select any search criteria that you require (for example you may wish to search for a particular size of property) and click search.

A list of properties matching your search criteria will be displayed. If you are eligible for a property then an 'Apply Now' button will appear. Your current queue position (should you bid for this property) will also be shown but note that this can change as other people bid. If you are not eligible then the reason you are not eligible will be displayed.

For a property to which you are Eligible, click the 'Apply Now' button. You will be shown the property details and asked to confirm your bid. When you confirm your bid you will be told that your bid has been successfully placed.



Bidding by phone

Bidding by phone

The number to call when placing a bid is **0300 0112130**. You will be charged the local rate for this call but note that this rate may vary depending on your telephone service provider.

Through the telephone system you can find out if you are eligible, place a bid, withdraw a bid, and what your current queue position is. You can only bid for properties where you match the property requirements.

Bidding using the telephone system is made using the number keypad on your telephone. As well as using the numbers on the number keypad you will also need to use the hash key.

What you will need to bid by phone

In order to bid you will need:

- Your personal reference number
- Your memorable date
- The reference numbers of the properties that you are eligible to bid for

Start by calling the bidding line on 0300 0112130

What you will hear

“Welcome to Bracknell Forest Council My choice.”

“Please enter your personal reference number followed by the hash key.”

“You have entered the following reference number.” (the reference you entered will be read back to you).

“Press 1 to confirm your reference number or press 2 to re-enter the number.”

“Thank you. Your reference number has been accepted.”

“Please enter the day of the month of your memorable date followed by the hash key.”

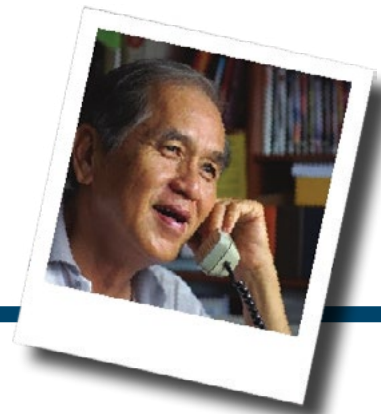
“Thank you. Please enter the month of your memorable date followed by the hash key.”

“Thank you. Please enter the year of your memorable date using all four numbers followed by the hash key. For example:

one nine five six to represent the year 1965.”

“Thank you. Your details match our records.”

“To place a bid press 1. To review your current bids press 2 or press 3 to exit.”



Making a bid - What you will hear

“ Please enter the property reference number of the property you wish to bid on followed by the hash key. “

“ You have entered the following property reference number “ (the property reference number will be read back to you. If you are not eligible you will be told your current queue position. Please note that your queue position will change as other people bid).

“ Press 1 to bid on this property or press 2 to bid on a different property. “

“ Your bid has been accepted. “

Review/cancel your bids - What you will hear

“ You have bid on these properties.” (If you have already bid for properties you will be read a list of the properties with a number for example property one number 9491)

“ Press the number of the property that you wish to cancel the bid for followed by the hash key.”

“ Subsequent bids may affect your queue position, and some properties may be offered to the most suitable candidate.”

“ Press 1 if you are sure you want to cancel your bid otherwise press 2 to exit.”

Exit - What you will hear

“ Thank you for using the system goodbye.”



Notes



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