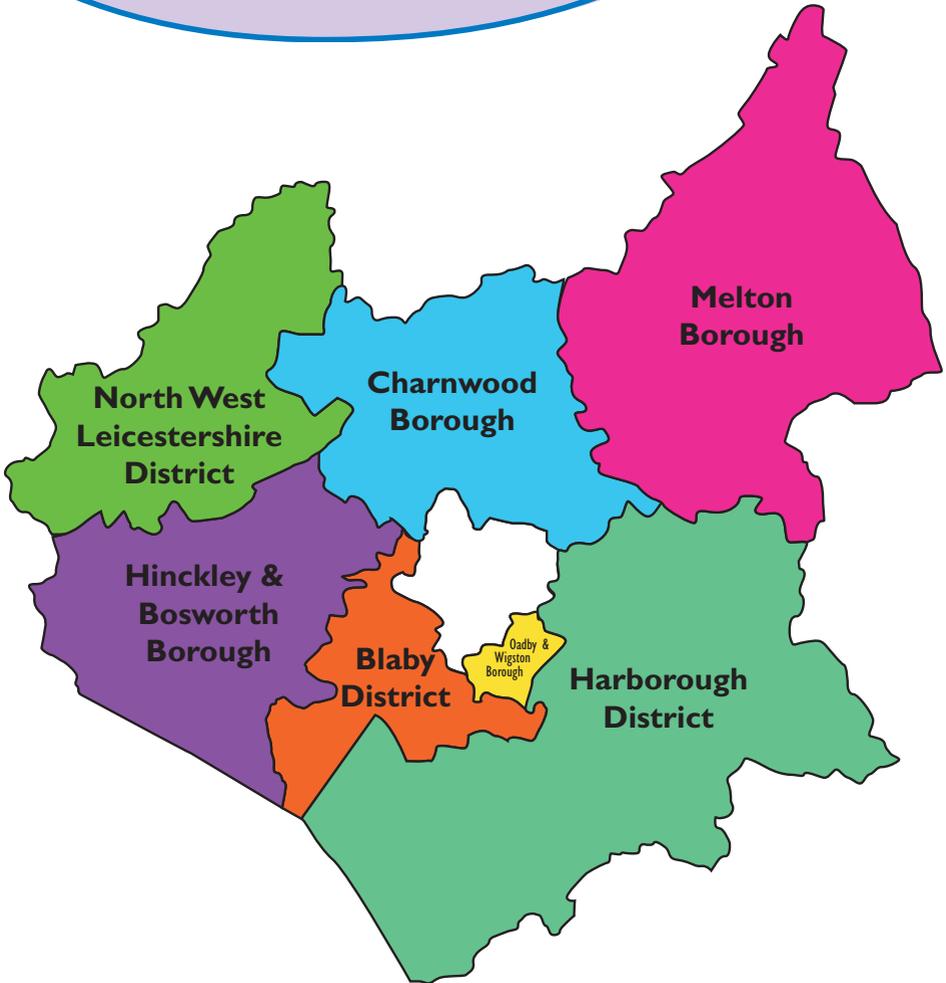


LEICESTERSHIRE

— Choice based lettings —
Home Seeker's Guide



Your Guide to finding a new home in Leicestershire

Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings is a partnership between Councils and housing associations covering North West Leicestershire and six other Council areas in Leicestershire. The scheme covers all of Leicestershire but not the City of Leicester which operates a separate lettings scheme.

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
- How our properties are advertised
- Which applications are given priority
- Which properties you can 'bid' for
- How to make bids

How Does it Work?

Every week the District Council will publish a list of available properties. As well as properties to rent from North West Leicestershire District Council and local housing associations, there may be houses to buy, house exchange opportunities and details of properties available from private landlords.

Once you have registered your housing application with us, you will be able to use your reference number to put up to two bids on at a time for those properties that interest you. When bidding closes the person at the top of the list will normally be contacted and offered the property. If they cannot take it then the next person on the list will be considered and so on until the property has been let.

If you can't register online, please call us on 0800 183 0357 to arrange a convenient time to make an application by phone

Step 1 – Joining the Housing Register

To apply you must be at least 16 years old. Applicants between the age of 16 to 18 years must provide a guarantor. Most people will be eligible to join the list. Those who may be turned down include people with a history of anti-social behaviour or, have only recently come to live in the UK or are only in the country temporarily, or have no connection to the District or sub-region.

The quickest way to register is to fill in the form online. Go to www.nwleics-homes.org.uk. Click on 'Application form' to download a form or to apply on line you need to click on the Login/My Account tab and then click on 'Register here' if you don't have a login. It is important you complete all the parts of the form that apply to you and submit a photo proof of identity and any other supporting documents the form asks for. If

you have children and they are going to live with you, you will also need to provide proof in the form of Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit payments.

If you do not complete all the relevant parts of the form or do not provide the proofs asked for within 14 days your form will be destroyed and you will have to reapply. The form is quite long but answering all the questions will help us to decide what help and advice we can offer you in your search for housing. If someone in your household has any medical problems or mobility difficulties, then you will be sent an additional form to fill out.

If you are eligible to join the register we will write advising you of your registration number, password and instructions on how to start bidding for vacant homes. We will also tell you about any restrictions to the type of property you can bid for and what your level of priority is. Registered home seekers in all priority Bands can bid but those

in the higher Bands will have a better chance of success.

If you are not eligible to register you will be given a reason why. If you are unhappy with the decision, you can ask for a review. The District Council publishes a full statement of

There are long waiting lists for council and housing association rented properties. If you have an urgent need for housing there may be other options you can consider. Contact Housing Choices for assistance.

its Allocations Policy on the Council's website.

Change of Circumstances

If your circumstances change after you are registered, you must tell us so we can re-assess your priority. We will always make checks before making an offer and if your details are not up to date the offer may be withdrawn.

Step 2 – Viewing advertised properties

Our aim is to advertise all Council and housing association vacancies every week. You can find the adverts on the District Council's page of the Leicestershire-homes web site and in the Property Listing, which will be available from the District Council offices and in other locations such as local libraries

and the Paypoints and the Citizens Advice Bureau. For a list of places where you can see the Property Listing, see the nwleics-homes.org.uk web site or ask Housing Advice for a list. There is more information about the properties on the web site than in the Property Listing.

We hope that by advertising all the properties available in this way, you will get to see how often the type of property you are interested in becomes available.

The adverts will give you details of the property landlord, the address and features of the property. It will also show any rules on who can be housed in the property. For example, if there are age limits or if pets are not allowed in the property.



PROPERTY REF: 43857
PROPERTY TYPE: 3 Bed,
5 Person House

Test Drive, Coalville, Leics. LE99 1AB
Total weekly rent £73.00 (50weeks)

Good local amenities and close to town centre. Preference may be given to larger household

Landlord: North West
Leicestershire District Council



We usually only post out Property Listings to those who have no other way of seeing the property adverts. If you think this applies to you, then please ask. If you need to see adverts in larger print we can do this as well. Contact details are on the back of this guide.

Step 3 – Bidding for advertised properties

‘Bidding’ is the word we use for selecting properties you would like to be offered. You will have two bids to use each week. You will be able to bid:

- Online via the web site
- By telephoning the freephone number 0300 011 0129

If you cannot bid yourself, we encourage you to get the help of a relative or friend. If you are getting help from Citizens Advice or another advice agency then they may also be able to help you place your bids.

If you are unable to place your bids then the Housing Choices Team can arrange to make bids for you.

If you cannot easily get access to the Internet, most public libraries in Leicestershire provide free Internet sessions. Using the web site is easy. Make an appointment with Housing Choices to come to our offices and we will show you how.

To place bids or to change them afterwards, you will need to know your registration number and have chosen a memorable date. You also need to make a note of the advert number of the property you are interested in.

Short-lists

If your details do not match those set for the property, you will not be able to bid for it. The web site or answer-phone will tell you the reason. All successful bids will be placed in order according to the Band they are in and then in date order (see 'Moving between Bands' on page 10 for more information about this). For most adverts priority will also be given to home seekers who have a connection with North West Leicestershire. On some occasions adverts may be restricted to existing tenants needing to move to more suitable housing.

When you bid you will be told where you are in the short-list. If you are not near the top of the list, then you can cancel the bid and change it to another property. **Please remember your queue position can change if others bid after you.** You can place your bids at any time during the bidding period. There is no 'first come, first served'.

Bidding starts at midnight on Wednesday every week and closes at midnight on the following Wednesday. The bidding deadline is shown on the adverts. **Late bids will not count.**

Provided the top-matched home seeker is eligible to receive the offer, they will be contacted by someone from the District Council or a housing association within a day or two of the end of bidding. You will have a chance to view the property before you have to decide whether to accept it or not.

If a home seeker turns down an offer, there is no penalty. However, if you refuse three offers in a row, you will be interviewed about the reasons before you can go on bidding.

Unsuccessful home seekers will not be contacted.

Checks

The District Council or Housing Association allocations staff making the offer will need to check to make sure you are entitled to be offered the property. Checks may cover previous tenancies, rent arrears, references and any missing proofs from your application.

Most housing associations have their own rules on lettings and may not always accept the home seeker at the top of the list. If a

home seeker is over-looked in this way they will be given a reason and will have the right to a review.

Once you have seen the property and are happy with it and all the checks have been carried out, you may be offered the tenancy. This should not take more than a week.

Feedback

Since 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 at www.nwleics-homes.org.uk and in the Property Listing. The table shows how many bids were made together with, the housing need Band and effective date of the winning bid. This will help you make better choices next time you bid.

Sometimes, if there is an urgent situation, a property may be let without being advertised but we will still include these properties in the results tables.

How short-lists are put in order...

All applications are assessed for their priority and put in one of four housing need Bands:

- **Priority Housing Need**
- **High Housing Need**
- **Medium Housing Need**
- **Low Housing Need**

Applicants with a local connection to the District will normally be considered before those living or working elsewhere. Applicants will then be placed in order of their housing need Band and then in date order.

Short-lists cont...

We call the date used to put the short-list in order the 'effective date'. This is either the date you first registered or the date you moved to a higher housing need Band.

Everyone who is registered has a chance to bid for properties but those in the higher Bands will be considered first. The Council and

its Housing Association partners have a responsibility to ensure people in urgent housing need do not become homeless. However, the Banding scheme ensures home seekers in a variety of different circumstances have a chance to be offered a new home.

The priority Bands are made up from the following categories:

PRIORITY HOUSING NEED	LOW HOUSING NEED
Homeless and the Council has a duty to offer housing	A home seeker with security of tenure and adequately housed with no welfare or medical need
Emergency medical need	Guilty of behaviour that affects suitability to be a tenant
Emergency welfare need	Transfer home seeker requiring move same bedroom size property and has no medical or welfare need to move
Multiple/complex housing needs	Only interested in HomeBuy/ Shared ownership options
Housing management priority	Deliberate worsening of housing circumstances to get higher priority
Displaced agricultural workers	Transfer home seeker with Secure or Assured Shorthold tenancies living outside the Leicestershire scheme with a local connection with the scheme but without a medical/welfare or other exceptional need to move
HIGH HOUSING NEED	
Has two or more qualifying Medium Housing Need categories	
Home seekers where there is overcrowding by two or more bedrooms	
In supported accommodation and approved for move-on or independent living	
Under-occupying social housing which is in high demand	
Under-occupying social housing and affected by welfare reform	
MEDIUM HOUSING NEED	
Other homeless households	
Poor housing conditions	
Medical need affected by housing	
Welfare need affected by housing	
Short-term accommodation	

For a full explanation of the Bands look on the District Council web site or ask the Council's Housing Choices Team.

Contact details are at the end of this guide.

Financial Assessment

If we consider that you have enough income, equity or savings to buy a home suitable for your needs or to put right problems with your current home, you will not be eligible to join the register. You may, however, qualify for HomeBuy or other Shared Ownership properties.

Additional Needs

In some cases, a home seeker has more than one type of housing need and this may move them from the Medium Band up to the High Band.

Priority for sheltered housing will go to home seekers in need of some support at home. Others may still apply and can be considered if they meet the minimum age requirements.

Mobility Needs

If you have physical disabilities that mean you have problems getting around we will assess your needs. We will then aim to match you to properties which are suitable for you. Look out for the mobility keys on the adverts, which will guide you on which properties to bid for (see page 11).

Local connection

To qualify as having a local connection to North West Leicestershire you must:

- permanently lived in the District for the past six months
- have lived in North West Leicestershire for at least six months in the last 12 months, or for at least three out of the last five years.
- Have permanent employment in the district
- Have close relatives living in the district
- Have other special circumstances that can be taken into account

There are additional rules that apply to some village housing schemes. Offers can only go to those who have a connection to the village or an adjoining parish area. If this applies, it will be stated on the advert.

Time limits for home seekers in the Priority and High Housing Need bands

We expect home seekers who have a high priority to be bidding regularly for suitable properties as they come up. Home seekers in the Priority Housing Need Band will have their priority reviewed every 8 weeks if they have not been bidding for

properties available to them, their need for housing may be changed and their priority reduced.

For home seekers in the High Housing Need Band, their priority will be reviewed after 16 weeks.

Moving between bands affects the date order used to short-list

If your priority changes and you are put into a higher Band your effective date will change from the date you applied to the date you were given the higher Band. This will make sure that those who have been in Priority and High Bands for the longest get offers first.

If the change in Band is because of a homeless application being made then the date used will be the date the home seeker applied as being homeless.

If you are moved back down to a Band you were in before, then you will be given back the date you had when you were last in that Band.

Property adverts - what to look out for

Some properties are particularly suited to older people. Look carefully at the age restrictions advertised.

Some Landlords do not allow pets in certain types of property or restrict the number of pets allowed. If you have pets please look carefully at the symbols advertised with the property before bidding.

There are symbols on the property adverts to show restrictions on who can bid for a property. Read the adverts carefully for any restrictions that might apply to you.

Area choices

Provided you are eligible to bid for the property, there will be no restriction on the areas you can choose. If you are not sure where a property is, you can click on 'Up my street' on the web site or ask the Council's Housing Advice team for details.

Remember - for most vacancies you will have more chance if you have a local connection to the area.

Below are some examples of the symbols and what they mean:



Alarm This property has a pull cord alarm



Bedrooms The number of bedrooms in this property



Electric Fire



Energy Performance Certificate



Minimum age The main or joint applicant must be at least 55



Parking This property has off road parking



Pets allowed



Supported This is a supported housing scheme



Mobility Key

Help with moving further afield

To help home seekers who want to move to another area within the scheme, some homes will be advertised to anyone registered within the sub-region. You will not need a District connection specific to that area in order to be considered for these properties.

These properties will mainly be advertised on the web site, not in the Property Listing, so look out for the separate adverts on the web. You can use both of your bids on these properties if you want to.

They will include a wide range of sheltered properties for elderly people and also specialist housing for people with physical disabilities.

How to make your bids for properties

Although we use the word bid, it does not involve any money. It just means you are telling the Council or housing association that you are interested in their property.

Remember, if you have already used two bids then you will not be able to use any more. If you prefer another property, you will need to cancel one of your bids and then bid again.

USING THE WEB SITE

1. Go to the Leicestershire homes web site:
www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk
2. Click on North West Leicestershire District Council.
3. Click Login/My Account and enter your reference number and memorable date.
4. Click Property search. Select your search options and click Search.
5. A summary of all the properties matching your search will be shown. If you are eligible to bid for a property it will have an Apply Now button.
6. Click Apply Now. You will be shown the full property details and asked to confirm your bid
7. If your bid is accepted your queue position will be shown.
Remember - your queue position may change if others bid after you. If your bid is not accepted a reason will be shown.
You must confirm your bid for it to be registered.

PHONE

1. Call 0300 011 0129
2. You will need to have:
 - Your unique reference number
 - Your memorable date
 - The advert numbers of properties you are bidding for
3. At the prompt, choose the language you want to use
4. At the prompt enter your unique reference number followed by #
5. At the prompt enter your memorable date in the correct format. E.G. for a memorable date of 1 Jan 2011 you must enter 01#01#2011#
6. Enter the advert number of the property you want to bid for. This is the number next to the picture on the advert.
7. Confirm the property you have selected by pressing 1. If you want to change your selection, press 2 and you will be asked to enter the property number again.

Calls are charged at the local rate, which may vary with your phone service provider.

More housing options

The District Council web pages contain information and advice about a range of local housing options.

Find out about how to do a mutual exchange by looking at the page on the web site or ask Housing Advice. You can register your interest in an exchange via the website or with www.homeswapper.co.uk. Homeswapper can send you matches from anywhere in the country and as the District Council is a member of Homeswapper you will not be charged for this service.

We also advertise opportunities to buy a home using the HomeBuy scheme. You can also look on the www.HomeBuy.co.uk web site. Shared Ownership significantly reduces the cost of buying a home. Look out for the adverts in the Property Listings and on the web site. If you are having difficulty arranging a mortgage, the HomeBuy service can give you advice.

There will also be details of how to find out more about private renting in your area. If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness and do not have the money for rent in advance, the District Council may be able to help. Contact the Housing Advice team for more details.

Do you think you might become homeless? If you are at risk of losing your home, for whatever reason, we have trained advisers on hand to help you. Ring today and ask for an appointment on 0800 952 0079.

Properties home-seekers can bid for

Size and type of property home seekers may normally make bids for.

(NB. This table takes account of property eligibility for all local authority partners not just North West Leicestershire District Council. Your registration letter will tell you what size properties you can bid for.)

	Single Person	Single person with access* to children	Couple	Couple or lone parent plus one other	Couple or lone parent plus two others	Couple or lone parent plus three others****	Couple or lone parent plus four or more others
FLAT							
Studio flat	✓	✓					
1 bed flat	✓	✓	✓				
2 bed flat/maisonette	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓	✓		
3 bed flat/maisonette				(✓)	✓	✓	✓
HOUSE							
1 bed	✓	✓	✓				
2 bed	(✓)		(✓)	✓	✓		
3 bed**				(✓)	✓	✓	✓
3 bed parlour*** house					✓	✓	✓
4+ bed							✓
BUNGALOW							
1 bed	✓	✓	✓				
2 bed	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓	✓		

Notes

- * Single person with children who do not live with them on a permanent basis.
- ** In some circumstances larger sized houses may be opened up to families with a two bedroom requirement.
- *** A parlour house is a house with a separate dining room.
- **** Households with three dependents, with one or more over the age of sixteen, may be entitled to bid for four plus bedroom houses.

- () 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 for those with three dependents, at least one of whom is aged 21 years or over.
- Specific eligibility criteria for larger homes (5 bedrooms +) will be clearly stated on any advertisement member of the household within three months of the date of the expected birth.
- If a home seeker needs an additional bedroom for a live-in carer then the carer can be added to the household.
- There may be additional criteria for households wanting to share. Please contact the relevant landlord for more details.

Please note

Each of the partner landlords to the Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings scheme including Registered Provider partners may have slightly different eligibility rules. Home seekers are advised to check with the property landlord if they are unsure and to check the eligibility criteria on each property advert when bidding

Sheltered Accommodation designed for elderly people and others with a support need

Housing with support or scheme manager or with 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	Couple/lone parent plus 1 other	Couple/lone parent plus 2 others
FLAT					
Studio flat	✓	(✓)			
1 bed	✓	(✓)	✓		
2 bed	✓	(✓)	✓	(✓)	(✓)
BUNGALOW					
1 bed	✓	(✓)	✓		
2 bed	✓	(✓)	✓	(✓)	(✓)

Age rules vary between 55 and 65 depending on the landlord. Age limits will be shown on the property advert. The age criteria normally only applies to the oldest partner in a couple. There may be additional criteria for households wanting to share. Please contact the relevant landlord for more details.

- () In some locations, sheltered accommodation designated for elderly or others with a support need may be opened up to other household types with support needs.

Please note

Each of the partner landlords to the Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings scheme including Registered Provider partners may have slightly different eligibility rules. Home seekers are advised to check with the property landlord if they are unsure and to check the eligibility criteria on each property advert when bidding

If you need this guide in a different format, for example, **large** print or Braille, please contact us. If you want the guide translated into another language, we can do this using Google Translate on our web site.

Housing Choices
North West Leicestershire District Council
Council Offices
London Road
Coalville
Leicester
LE67 3FJ

Tel: 0800 183 0357

Fax: 01530 454788

Email: housing.advice@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Web site: www.nwleics-homes.org.uk

