



Homechoice West Berkshire

www.homechoicewb.org.uk

Version 04 | Autumn 2010



Scheme User Guide

your home • your choice



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L



WELCOME TO

Homechoice West Berkshire

helping you find a home in West Berkshire

You can contact the Housing Operations Team about your housing application. Our contact details are:

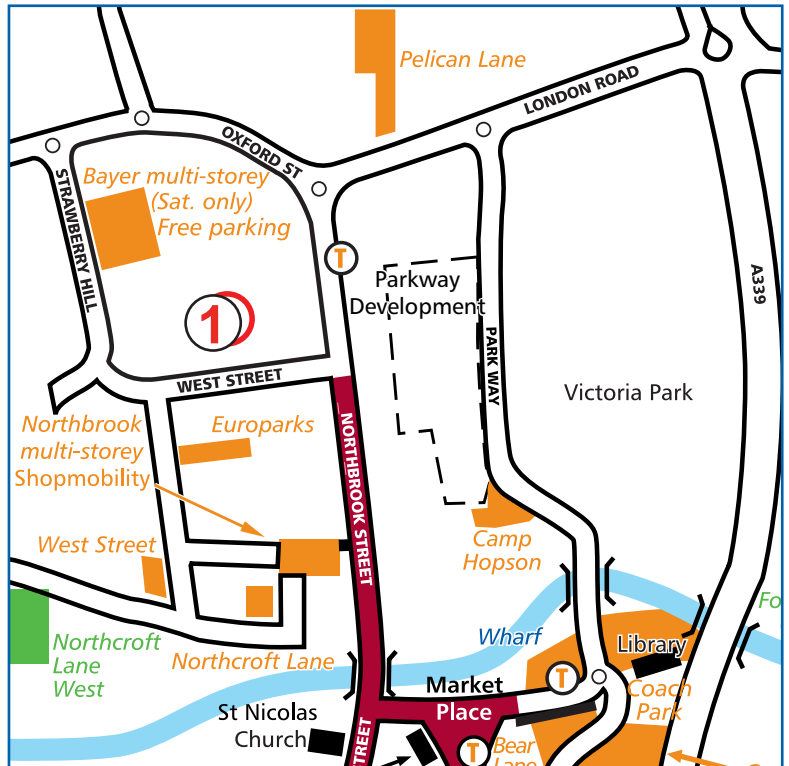
Telephone: **01635 519959 or 519603**

Look on the website:
www.Homechoicewb.org.uk or the West Berkshire Council general website
www.westberks.gov.uk

You can send an email to us via the housing pages on the website.

Write to us at:
**Housing Operations
Council Offices
West Street House,
West Street,
Newbury
RG14 1BZ**

1 Council Offices, West Street



Drop in and see a Housing Officer at West Street, Newbury:

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OPENING HOURS

Drop in at Council Offices
West Street House,
West Street, Newbury

Monday to Thursday 9.00am – 4.30pm
Friday 9.00am-4.00pm

Telephone
Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5.00pm
Friday - 8.30am - 4.30pm

POWERED BY



West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this information in a different format, such as audio tape, or in another language, please ask an English speaker to contact Housing Operations on Telephone 01635 519959 or 519603 who will be able to help.

Welcome to the Homechoice User Guide

Helping you find a new home in West Berkshire

Homechoicewb is the new Choice Based Lettings scheme for West Berkshire.

Homechoicewb gives you more choice about where you want to live. In the past, West Berkshire Council selected a property for you. With the new system, you can decide which properties to which your household is matched you would like to be considered for. (For example, a single person would not be eligible for a 3 bedroom property.)

Asking to be considered for one of the homes advertised is called 'bidding'. See page 8 of this guide to find out the different ways to bid.

Everybody accepted onto the Common Housing Register can take part and bid for homes in West Berkshire. The properties advertised belong to Housing Associations who are our partners. West Berkshire Council does not own any properties which are available through Choice Based Lettings.

Properties will be advertised on a weekly basis. You will be able to see basic details about each property available. There is more information about the advertisements on page 10.

We will provide feedback on previous properties that have been advertised so you will be able to see how many points the successful bidder for each property had.

You should be able to find all the information you need in this guide, but if you have any questions about Homechoicewb, please contact us. Contact details are on page 2 of this guide.

You should be able to find all the information you need in this guide, but if you have any questions about Homechoice West Berks you can contact the Housing Operations Team. Contact details are available on page 2 of this guide.

Five steps to a new home

Step 1: Membership

You are automatically a member of Homechoicewb if you are accepted onto the Common Housing Register.

Step 2: Registration

Once you have applied and been accepted onto the Register you will be registered on the Homechoicewb scheme and allocated a unique HomechoiceWB number.

Step 3: Choosing & Bidding

You can see the available properties on the HomechoiceWB website, or in the weekly Homechoicewb leaflet. If you find a property that you would like, you can bid for it so long as you are eligible.

Step 4: Offers

If your bid is top, you will be invited to view the property. If you like it, and, after all the usual checks, you are eligible, you will be offered the property. Some Housing Associations will invite the top three bidders to view the property. If the person who comes first refuses the property it is then offered to the next suitable bidder.

Step 5: Feedback

In every edition of the weekly Homechoicewb leaflet and on the Homechoicewb website, we will publish the results of previous bidding cycles. This will include how many people bid for each property and the number of points the successful bidder had.

How HomechoiceWB

There are five steps for you to follow in order to choose your new home:

Step 1 – Membership

You are automatically a member of HomechoiceWB if West Berkshire Council accepts you onto the Common Housing Register. If you are not on the Common Housing Register you can apply on-line at www.Homechoicewb.org.uk or contact the Housing

Operations Team for a paper application form. If you need more information about whether you are eligible, please contact the Housing Operations Team at West Berkshire Council.

Step 2 – Registration

Once your completed application has been assessed and you have been included on the Common Housing Register, we will write to you. We will tell you how many points you have, the size of property you are eligible for and your unique Homechoicewb number. You will also be sent a Scheme User Guide and a batch of postal bidding coupons.

If there are any changes to your household, accommodation or personal circumstances you must contact the Housing Operations Team at West Berkshire Council and let us know. You may have to complete another form and provide us with evidence. It is very important that we know any changes as it may change your points, or the type of property you are eligible for.

Step 3 – Bidding

You can bid for as many properties as you like (so long as you are eligible for them) in each weekly cycle. For example, if you are eligible for a two bed property and there is a two bed house and 3 two bed flats advertised, you can choose to bid for all 4 properties.

Properties are advertised in a leaflet called Homechoicewb and on the website www.homechoicewb.org.uk. There is more information about how to get the leaflet on page 7. The weekly cycle runs from 12.00 noon Thursday to 12.00 noon the following Wednesday.

Your bids must reach us by 12.00 noon Wednesday to be considered.

The adverts give you information about each property available for letting and a photograph will be included if available.

You can bid in 4 ways:

1. On the internet - go to www.homechoicewb.org.uk and log on with

your unique Homechoicewb number and your date of birth. Follow the instructions on screen.

2. By telephone - call 0870 727 6919 and follow the instructions. See page 8 about bidding by telephone. Calls cost 7p/minute.
3. By coupon - When you are first registered we will send blank coupons with your registration pack. Your coupons have your name and Homechoicewb number printed on them. This number is unique to you so no one else can use your coupons. See page 8 about how to complete your coupons. To request more coupons, simply tick the box on the coupon when you send it back or contact the Housing Operations Team and ask for more coupons. They will be posted to you.
4. In person at the West Street House, West Street Newbury

Step 4 – Offer

At the end of the weekly bid period, all bids for each property are put in priority order based on the number of points. If two bidders have the same number of points, the person who has been registered the longest is put first.

A shortlist of applicants is then produced. The top three bidders from each shortlist will be contacted by the relevant Housing Association and invited to view the property. Following the viewing, it will be offered to the person with the highest points. If they refuse the property, it is then offered to the next person on the list, and so on.

Please make sure you can be contacted and are available to view a property, or the Housing

Association may bypass you. You can give us contact details of someone else such as a relative, who is willing to act on your behalf.

You do not get penalised for withdrawing your bid for a property at the viewing stage, but if you are offered the property and then refuse it, it will count as a refusal of a reasonable offer. If you refuse three reasonable offers, your application may be suspended for 12 months.

If you are offered a property, you will not be offered another property until you have made a decision on the first offer.

Step 5 – Feedback

It is not possible to notify you individually when your bids have been unsuccessful but you can get this information from the website (see 'bidding history' after you have logged in), or see the HomechoiceWB leaflet.

All properties that have been advertised will be listed on the Feedback page of the leaflet once they have been let. This tells you how many people bid for each property as well as the points level of the successful bidder.

If you have any questions about how Homechoicewb applies to you or about bidding for properties please contact the Housing Operations Team, contact details are on page 2.



The Points Scheme

Homechoicewb's aim is to try and house those in greatest housing need. We use a points system based on applicant's circumstances to give a priority. Everybody on the Common Housing Register is awarded points based on the table below

Description	Criteria	Points awarded
Overcrowding	A separate bedroom is deemed to be needed for: a. a couple or single parent/adult b. up to 2 children under 5 years irrespective of sex c. up to 2 children of the same sex below the age of 10 (providing age gap no greater than 5 years) d. all other household members not covered above	10 points for each bedroom short of this target
Under Occupancy	Each bedroom in excess of requirements within the home	20 points per excess bedroom
Lacking or sharing any amenities listed Toilet, Bath or shower, kitchen, living room, water, electricity	Sharing or Lacking	20 points (one award) or 40 points (one award)
Security of Tenure (please note there are six Security of Tenure categories - points are awarded for one category only)	Temporary accom / supported housing schemes (needing move on)/ private rented, forces or tied with valid notice/hospital discharge within 3 months/ care leavers within 3 months	40 points (one award)
Security of Tenure	In hostel/supported lodgings/hospital/foster care/ adult placement/care home/No fixed abode/ without accommodation	30 points (one award)
Security of Tenure	Confirmed homeless at home/ awaiting temp accom/ duty owed by other Local Authority/non-accepted homeless by this LA/ all other private rented applicants	20 points (one award)
Security of Tenure - Statutory Homeless Applicants	Applicants who the LA have accepted a full housing duty to under section 190(2), 192(3), 193(2), 195(2) or HA 1985 section 65(2) or 68(2)	20 points (one award)
Security of Tenure	Living with family/friends	10 points (one award)
Security of Tenure	Tied/Forces/Owner occupied/ LA or RSL tenant/prison	0 points
Families	With children under 16 and no enclosed garden	5 points (one award)
Families	With children under 16 years and above or below floor level	5 points (one award)
Separation	Applicants forced to live apart from their children and/or partner because of inadequate accommodation	5 points (one award)
Medical Factors (to include disabilities where the accommodation is making the issues worse)	To be assessed by the Medical Panel using points matrix	100//50/20/15/10/5or 0 points
Social Needs Factors	To be assessed by the Social Needs Panel using points matrix	100/50/20/15/10/5 or 0 points
Condition of present accommodation	To be assessed by Environmental Health Officer on presentation of file and photos	100/50/20/15/10 or 5 points
Discretionary Factor	To be agreed by Housing Operations Manager	100/50/20/15/10/5 or 0 points
Time in Housing Need	Yearly on anniversary of application	5 points per year
Local Connection	As defined in allocation policy	10 points (one award)

Where to get the HomechoiceWB leaflet or view on-line

Each Homechoicewb leaflet is valid for one bidding cycle, running from 12.00 noon Thursday to 12.00 noon the following Wednesday. The date will clearly be shown on the front of the leaflet. Make sure you bid from a Homechoicewb leaflet that is in-date.

The Homechoicewb leaflets are available from:

Location	Opening times
Council Offices, West Street House, West Street, Newbury RG14 1BD	Monday - Friday 10.00am to 2.00pm
Sovereign South & West, Berkshire House, 17-24 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, RG14 5LL	Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm
The Lambourn Centre, Close End, Lambourn, Berkshire, RG17 8NJ	Monday - Friday 9.00am - 8.30pm Saturday and Sunday 9.00am - 1.00pm
West Berkshire Council Customer Services Office, Hungerford Library, Church Street, Hungerford, RG17 0JG	Wednesday 9.00am - 1.00pm also see library opening times below
James Butcher Housing Association, The Limes, 39b High Street, Theale, Reading, RG7 5AH	Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm Closed between 1.00 and 2.00pm each day.
Council Offices, Sainsbury's, Bath Road, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SA	Monday - Friday 8.30am - 6.00pm Saturday 8.30am - 1.00pm

You can see the weekly Homechoicewb leaflet on line at www.homechoicewb.org.uk website, as well as bid online. Free internet access is available at the locations below. If you need help to find and use the website please ask at these locations. The libraries all have different opening times - please call to check.

Location	Opening times
Council Offices, West Street, Newbury RG14 1BD	Monday - Friday 10.00am - 2.00pm
Newbury Library	Please call 01635 519900 for opening times
Thatcham Library	Please call 01635 866049 for opening times
Burghfield Common Library	Please call 01189 833632 for opening times
Hungerford Library	Please call 01488 682660 for opening times
Lambourn Library	Please call 01488 71350 for opening times
Mortimer Library	Please call 01189 332882 for opening times
Pangbourne Library	Please call 01189 844117 for opening times
Theale Library	Please call 01189 303207 for opening times or
For all libraries	Email info@westberks.gov.uk or see 'our libraries' on www.westberks.gov.uk

If you are unable to get a copy of the Homechoicewb leaflet from any of these locations or unable to see it on the internet, please contact the Housing Operations Team. See page 11 for details of how to get a copy posted to you

Bidding



Making your bids on the internet

The quickest and easiest way to bid is through our website www.homechoicewb.org.uk. Instructions are given on screen but you will need to know your unique HomechoiceWB number and date of birth in order to log on.

On the website there is an online copy of the Homechoicewb leaflet and as soon as you choose a property you can place a bid. If you have made a bid but then change your mind you can remove the bid (as long as the bidding cycle is still open). You can also view your bidding history once you have logged in.

Free internet access is available at libraries in West Berkshire and you can also bid online in reception at the Council Offices, Newbury, and at Sovereign (Opening hours and contact details on page 7).

Making your bids by Telephone

1 To begin making your bids dial: you can make up to 10 bids per call.	0870 727 6919
2 You will hear:	"Welcome to the Homechoice West Berks Property Line, Please enter the number section of your Reference number."
3 You should now enter the numerical part of your Reference number only. e.g. If your Reference number is WBC54321 you only need to type in '54321'. Once you have entered the correct number you will hear:	"Thank you. Please enter the day number of your birth date e.g. For 16/04/1960 enter 16 or for 08/01/58 enter 08 (you must put a 0 before a single number)"
4 You should now enter the day number of your date of birth. Once you have entered the correct number you will hear:	"Thank you. Please enter your first property reference bid number."
5 Once you have entered the property reference number correctly you will hear:	"Thank you if you would like to add an additional bid press 1 or press 2 to complete your bids."
6 If you have pressed one you will hear:	"Please enter your second property bid number or press the star key to complete your bidding."
7 Once you have entered the property reference number correctly you will hear:	"Thank you if you would like to add an additional bid press one or press two to complete your bids."
8 When you have finished bidding you will hear:	"Thank you for bidding on the Homechoice West Berks Property line."
If you have made errors you will hear some instructions as follows:	
9 If you have made an error with your number you will hear:	"I am sorry, the registration number you have entered is not recognised. Please try again."
In this case re-enter your number dialing carefully making sure the number is correct	
10 If you make further errors you will hear:	"I am sorry, the registration number you have entered is not found. Please check with your registering partner and call again."

How to complete your Bidding Coupon

HomechoiceWB Bid Coupon

Tick this box if you need more coupons sent to you



	Bid 1	Bid 2	Bid 3
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Your coupon has your name and your registration number printed on it - please check that these details are correct.
- Each property will have a 3 digit reference number, shown in the property advert in the Homechoicewbleaflet.
- For example if you want to apply for the properties which have the reference number 456, 491, and 444, you should mark the coupon as shown in the example copy. You should put an X in the first column against the relevant first digit of the reference number.
- You should put an X in the second column against the relevant second digit of the reference number.
- You should put an X in the third column against the relevant third digit of the reference number.
- Enter the date shown on the front of the Homechoicewb leaflet from which you are bidding for properties.
- Please return your coupon by post. The address is already on the coupon, but you will need to put a stamp on it.
- If you need more coupons, tick the box on the coupon or contact the Housing Operations Team.

Which Properties can I bid for?

You can choose whether you bid for a flat, house, bungalow or maisonette. The size of the property that you are eligible for is explained below. If you are unsure about the size of property you are eligible for, please contact the Housing Operations Team.

Household size

Property size

Single person	Bed-sit or 1 bedroom
Couple	1 bedroom
Single person or couple expecting a baby (with medical evidence to give proof of pregnancy)	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 1 child	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 2 children under 5 years	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 2 children, same sex, under 10 years	2 bedrooms
If age gap is greater than 5 years, then	3 bedrooms
An applicant requiring a live-in carer on a full-time or regular basis, and couples requiring separate bedrooms for medical reasons (specialist evidence will be sought in these circumstances).	2 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 2 children, opposite sex, elder child over 5 years	3 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 2 children, same sex, elder child over 10 years	3 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 3 children	3 bedrooms
Parent(s) and 4 children	3 or 4 bedrooms (dependant on family make-up)
Parent(s) and 5 children or more	4 or 5 bedrooms (dependant on family make-up)

The Adverts

This is an example of an advert

One bed flat



ref no: 456



Market Street, Newbury
 Landlord - Sovereign Housing Association
 Rent £80.00 per week
 £2.07 weekly service charge

Gas central heating. Shower. Double glazing. Secure door, entry system. 20 steps to access property.

Key to advert symbols



number of bedrooms in the property



Minimum & maximum number of people who can live in the property



Property designed for people of this age or above



Floor level of property, if flat or maisonette



Mobility Group One - suitable for wheelchair users for full time indoor and outdoor mobility.

Mobility Group Two - suitable for people who cannot manage stairs or steps or steep gradients and require a wheelchair for outdoor mobility.

Mobility Group Three - suitable for people able to manage two or three steps or stairs but unable to manage steep gradients.



Pets allowed



Lift

Feedback

Understanding the Feedback Reports

In each edition of the HomechoiceWB leaflet, there will be a feedback report. The feedback information contains lettings that have taken place since the previous edition.

Leaflet Issue Date - This is the publication date of the leaflet that the advert appeared in.

Advert Reference Number - Combined with the leaflet issue date, this gives a unique identity to any advert appearing in the leaflet.

Property size and type - a simple description of the property advertised

Location - location of the property within West Berkshire.

Bids - This is the total number of bids received for each property.

Letting Information - This is the number of points the successful bidder had.

Example of Feedback Report

Properties with a white background are either sheltered accommodation or have a minimum age requirement

Leaflet Issue Date	Advert Reference	Size	Property Type	Location	Letting Information		
					Bids	Points	Registration Date
5-May-06	001	1 bed	Flat	Newbury	62	100	2-Jun-06
5-May-06	002	1 bed	Flat	Thatcham	74	170	2-Jun-06
5-May-06	003	1 bed	Flat	Calcot	80	90	2-Jun-06
6-May-06	004	2 bed	house	Newbury	170	156	3-Jun-06
7-May-06	005	3 bed	house	Newbury	95	84	4-Jun-06
8-May-06	006	4 bed	house	Purley	29	87	5-Jun-06

General Information

Bid deadline

All bids for properties must reach the Housing Operations Team by 12.00 noon (Wednesday) on the closing date shown on the front of the Homechoicewb leaflet. If you are using coupons, make sure you allow enough time for the post to reach us.

Need help bidding?

You can ask a friend, family member or support worker to bid on your behalf. Please contact the Housing Operations Team at West Berkshire Council if you need help bidding or advice about the process. Bids can be made on the internet at www.homechoicewb.org.uk, by telephone on 0870 727 6919, by coupon or in person at the West Street House, West Street, Newbury.

Subscribe to the HomechoiceWB leaflet

There are several places you can pick up a copy of the Homechoicewb leaflet for free, explained on page 7. If you would like to receive a copy of the Homechoicewb leaflet every week posted directly to you, you can pay a subscription fee of £8.70 for three months. Please make cheques or postal orders payable to 'Locata(Housing services) Ltd' and send, together with your identification number and mailing address to: Homechoicewb, PO Box 383, Ruislip, HA4 4DT.

Housing Association Partners

A2 Dominion 0845 408 6666 www.A2housinggroup.co.uk	Anchor Housing Association 01274 381625 www.anchor.org.uk 0845 140 2020	Bromford Living 0845 6050604 0330 123 4034 www.bromford.co.uk
Catalyst Housing Group 0208 832 3334 www.chg.org.uk		Hanover Housing Association 0800 286 2575 www.hanover.org.uk
Home Group 01189 777 600 www.homegroup.org.uk	Southern Housing Group 01189 317290 0300 303 1771 service.centre@shgroup.org.uk	Jephson Housing Association 01793 602199 www.jephson.org.uk
Habinteg Housing Association 0207 822 8700 www.habinteg.org.uk	Kingfisher HVHS Housing Association 01256 302351/01256 302 302 www.kha.org.uk	London and Quadrant 0800 015 6536 www.lqgroup.org.uk
Places for People 0800 432 0002 www.placesforpeople.co.uk	Sanctuary Housing Association 0800 083 9283 www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk	Sovereign South & West 01635 550222 www.sovereign.org.uk
Testway Housing Ltd 01264 405 555 www.testway.co.uk	Thames Valley Housing 0208 607 0607 www.tvha.co.uk	One Housing Group 01628 670288 0300 123 9966 www.onehousinggroup.co.uk

Map of West Berkshire

