



Lettings Policy

How to access council and housing association property in Newcastle

September 2007

This information is about our lettings service. If you need this in your language or a different language phone 0191 278 8633. This information is also available in large print, Braille and audio tape. We can also arrange for you to see a British Sign Language interpreter.

Bengali এই তথ্য হল আমাদের লেটিং সার্ভিস(ভাড়া বিষয়ক) সম্বন্ধে। এই তথ্য যদি <বাংলায়> অথবা অন্য কোন ভাষায় প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে এই নাম্বারে ফোন করুন- ০১৯১ ২৭৮ ৮৬৩৩

Chinese 这是有关我们的出租服务的信息。如果您需要此信息的普通话版本或其它语言版本，请致电 0191 278 8633 索取。

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French Ces informations concernent notre service de location. Si vous avez besoin de ces informations en français ou dans une autre langue, téléphonez au : 0191 278 8633.

Kurdish ئەم زانیاریانە سەبارەت بە خزمەتەکانی کرێی ئێمە. ئەگەر چەزتان لە وەرگرتنی ئەم زانیاریانە بە زمانی کوردی یا ھەر زمانێکی دیكە ھەبە بە ژمارە تەلەفۆنی 0191 278 8633 پێوەندی بکەن.

Portuguese Esta informação refere-se ao serviço de arrendamento. Se precisar desta informação em português ou noutra língua, queira ligar para o 0191 278 8633.

Russian Информация о наших услугах сдачи жилья в наем. Если Вы нуждаетесь в этой информации на русском или другом языке звоните по тел. 0191 278 8633.

Spanish Ésta es información sobre nuestro servicio de adjudicación. Si necesita esta información en español o en otro idioma, llame al 0191 278 8633.

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1. How to get Council and Housing Association property in Newcastle

Newcastle City Council, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) the housing management organisation for Council Housing and the following Housing Associations operate a “**choice based lettings policy**” called Your Choice Homes (YCH).

Anchor Trust	Methodist Homes
Byker Bridge Housing Association	NomadE5
Cheviot Housing	Places for People
Guinness Trust	Railway Housing
Hanover Housing Association	Riverside North East
Home Housing	William Sutton Trust
Housing 21	Two Castles
Johnnie Johnson	

Through this policy we aim to;

- ✓ encourage customer choice and empowerment
- ✓ stimulate interest in renting housing in Newcastle
- ✓ increase housing options for people in Newcastle
- ✓ encourage choice and opportunities for housing in other areas of the region
- ✓ increase our customer’s commitment to their homes
- ✓ encourage mixed and balanced communities that contribute to sustainable regeneration
- ✓ promote wider social inclusion by helping vulnerable people exercise choice

We will give you good quality information about our services. This will help you make better choices about your future home.

Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) manages the choice based lettings policy on behalf of Newcastle City Council and its partner housing associations through the Your Choice Homes (YCH) scheme. **YHN** and the partner landlords will share the responsibility to make sure customers are aware and understand the policy and the process.

The **YCH** city centre property shop is like an estate agent. It advertises homes, tells people how to use the scheme and helps people to bid. Help and advice is also available from other teams who work for YHN, like Community Housing Offices and Advice and Support Workers.

In this policy, when we talk about housing offices, officers and managers we mean YHN, its Community Housing Offices, local Housing Service Managers and similar officers in our partner landlords. **See Appendix 2 for a list of housing management contacts and addresses.**

2. How Your choice homes works and help to use the scheme

This part of the policy explains how YCH works.

All homes managed by Your Homes Newcastle on behalf of the Council are included.

Other partner landlords nominate homes to YCH in accordance with the nominations agreement. This agreement is between partners and the Council.

The nominations agreement says that 50% of all available homes will be sent to YCH to advertise. If a partner builds new homes we will get 100% to advertise.

To apply for a house through YCH you must fill in an application form and be eligible for the scheme. The application form asks basic information about:

- you and who you want to share your home with (to match with vacancy size);
- your housing history;
- how long you have lived at your present home and;
- your ethnic background (for monitoring)

Homes will be advertised on a weekly basis and you can bid for up to three properties each week. **See our guide to YCH in Appendix Three.**

To be considered for a particular home you must

1. meet any specific criteria on the advert and
2. bid for the property.

See section 5 which is called 'How to find a home'. This tells you about how to bid and the criteria that are placed on adverts.

Where there is more than one person interested in the same property we will normally offer it to the person who has lived in their current home the longest.

When we decide how long you have lived at your current home we will consider how long you have been continually living in it as your sole or principal home. We will disregard any times when you have had to stay away from home on a temporary basis. This could be due to a long hospital stay or a period when you were working away.

You must be aged 16 or over to join YCH., Any time living at your current address after your sixteenth birthday will be counted as part of that continuous period. We will only consider the length of residency of the main applicant.

In operating YCH, Housing Managers consider the Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for local housing authorities that was issued by the Government in November 2002.

Help available to use the service

If you need help to join the scheme you will be offered appropriate advice and support by staff.

We will try to identify your support needs when you apply. We will work with you and anyone

who already supports you, like an advocate, to make sure you can make your choices. .

We will provide information in Braille, large print or on audiotape. If your first language is not English we can either arrange for an appointment to be made with an interpreter or a connection to Language Line, a telephone interpretation service.

3. Who is eligible to join Your choice homes

Anyone aged **16** years or over can apply for YCH. It doesn't matter what their current housing circumstances are. However there will be some people who will not be eligible.

Those who will not normally be accepted onto the scheme are:

- Certain persons from abroad or who are subject to immigration control
- Any person who the Council decides should be ineligible because they or a member of his or her household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant

See Appendix One for more information about this

Behaviour will be treated as unacceptable if it is/was bad enough to entitle the Council to a Possession Order if either:

- a) you had been a 'secure tenant' of the Council, whether or not you actually were, or
- b) when the behaviour of someone in your household is being taken into account, if s/he had been living with a secure tenant, whether or not they actually were. Examples of the type of behaviour that could result in a decision of ineligibility could be:

- ✓ previous/current rent arrears or other breaches of tenancy
- ✓ previous/current property damage
- ✓ harassment/anti-social behaviour or relevant criminal activity

These examples apply regardless of who your landlord is/was when they happened.

These examples apply no matter who your landlord is/was when they happened and no matter what form of tenure you had at that time. You did not have to be a secure tenant nor did an eviction have had to take place. The test is had you been a secure tenant at that time was the behaviour sufficient to result in a possession order being granted.

The Council, its partner landlords and people who live in Newcastle also have a right to expect certain standards of behaviour. Therefore before we accept you onto YCH and/or make a firm offer of a property, we may seek certain references to help us decide whether or not you are eligible. These will usually be from previous landlords.

See section 8 which is called 'Verification checks' and will give you more information.

If the Council decides you are not eligible the manager who has made the decision will write to you and tell you the reasons why. You can ask for a review of this decision. You can also reapply at a later date if you can show that your circumstances have changed and the previous unacceptable behaviour should no longer be held against you.

See section 10 which is called 'Reviews and Appeals' and will tell you how to do this.

4. How to apply for Your choice homes

You must fill in an application form and make sure you complete all the relevant parts. You will need to provide proof of how long you have lived at your current home as soon as you can. We use this to decide who to offer a property to when more than one person bids for the same property. You must also provide us with information about;

- your family size
- ethnic background
- the names of two referees and permission to seek references from them.

Sometimes we may need to contact other agencies to decide your eligibility to join YCH. You can hand in your application form to the property shop or any Housing Office where it will be registered within five working days. This is a service standard. We will write to you to tell you that we have registered your form. This letter will tell you about the checks we have to make.

You can also apply online via the **YCH** website www.yourchoicehomes.org.

See Appendix 2 which gives a list of contact details.

No matter where you apply, your local Council Housing Office will confirm your length of residency date and decide whether you are eligible to join the scheme. If you live outside Newcastle, the property shop will do this.

See section 8 which is called 'Verification checks' and will give you more information.

We will offer additional help if you have difficulty completing the application form or you have a language or literacy difficulty. We can also arrange a home visit for you if you would prefer this or if you have mobility problems.

If you are eligible for the scheme we will write to you and confirm:

- your **YCH** reference number
- your length of residency date. This is the date when you started to live in your current home
- how to find out about homes and how to bid

Application on YCH does not commit Your Homes Newcastle or other participating landlords to offer you a particular property or any property at all.

If your circumstances involve **immediate or urgent need** for rehousing (either when you apply for registration or anytime after), you can ask to be considered for either Priority status or in some circumstances a Housing Management letting.

See section 6 which is called 'Urgent and immediate housing need (Priority Status)' and section 7 which is called 'Balanced Communities'.

Housing applications from members of staff and their families

To show that the lettings policy is fair and transparent, applications for housing from employees or representatives of the following organisations must declare their interest when they apply or when they are offered a property.

- Newcastle City Council, including elected members
- Your Homes Newcastle, including elected members

Applications from employees and elected members relatives and members of their household must also declare an interest.

Such applications will be assessed in the normal way, but offers of accommodation will not be made without the approval of the Manager of Housing Needs/Your choice homes.

5. How to find a home

Information and advertising

We will tell you where to get or view information on available homes. If you have difficulty accessing the service we may also provide for additional information and arrange advice and support from a range of partner agencies service.

Available homes will be advertised each week in selected local newspapers, on our website (www.yourchoicetohomes.org), at our city centre property shop and at all housing offices. We may also provide information at a range of public buildings such as libraries and community centres.

Information on available homes will include a photograph of most properties, property details, rent charges, location and any special criteria. Where possible we will provide additional relevant information about each property advertised and local amenities. **See Property specific criteria below.**

The advert will also tell you who the landlord is. Other partners may offer a different type of tenancy like an Assured Tenancy. If it is a home managed by YHN you may be granted an Introductory Tenancy or a Secure Tenancy. You can get more information about what this means from your local Housing Office or the YCH property shop.

Bidding

To bid you can:

- Call in to the Property Shop, any YHN Housing Office or partner landlord
- Write to us and tell us which homes you want to bid for
- Telephone us on 0191 277 2020 or call any YHN Housing Office
- Log on to our website www.yourchoicetohomes.org, search for a home and bid
- Emailing us at your.choice.homes@yhn.org.uk

You have **6 days** from the advert being published (noon on Tuesday until noon the following Monday) to bid. The advert will confirm the deadline for bids. You can bid for up to **3 properties** in any given lettings week. This weekly lettings cycle may be subject to change.

Letting a home

We will compile a list of the customers who have bid for each property. They send this list to the appropriate Housing Offices. Where more than one customer has bid the housing office will check if customers meet the criteria for the property. The customer who has lived longest at their current address will normally be selected. When someone has an assessed immediate and urgent need they will be selected first. They still have to match any specific criteria for the property.

There might be some exceptional cases where someone else will be selected first but this will only be for good housing management reasons.

See Section 6 which is called 'Urgent and immediate need' and will tell you about priority status and property criteria below.

Individual Housing Associations may decide not to use length of residency as a tiebreak in circumstances where it does not fit with the policies of their organisation or criteria for certain schemes. YCH property shop can provide information about certain schemes but if you are in any doubt you should approach the relevant Housing Association for further advice. **See property specific criteria below.**

No distinction will be made between current council tenants, current housing association tenants and other customers whether they are currently living in Newcastle or elsewhere.

At this stage further verification checks may be carried out to confirm identity, update information from previously obtained references and to, match these with vacancy type and size and length of residency. **See section 8 Verification checks.**

If at this stage you:

- a) tell us you want to have a joint tenancy with someone who is, or would be ineligible to join the scheme for example for previous unacceptable behaviour; or
- b) have someone as part of your household who was not previously included in your application and whose previous behaviour has been serious enough to make you ineligible for accommodation under the scheme as set out in Section 3 above; or
- c) you or someone in your household has behaved in a way that would make you ineligible since you joined the scheme; or
- d) we have become aware of circumstances that make you ineligible, for example a previous relevant criminal conviction

then we will not grant you a tenancy and may review whether you are still eligible in your own right.

When you are the successful person for more than one property at the same time you will be asked to decide quickly which properties you do not wish to consider so that other people can be considered. In this case where you do not act reasonably in reaching a quick decision the landlord reserves the right to act as if your interest has been withdrawn. We will tell you if we are going to do this.

If you are selected the appropriate landlord will make a formal offer, arrange a viewing and then let the property. You will be asked to tell us within 48 hours of viewing the property whether or not you are accepting it. Where adults share accommodation as partners or there is a wish for two or more adult members of the household to share the commitment to the household a joint tenancy will normally be granted. Either you or the landlord can withdraw from the arrangement up until the point you accept the tenancy in writing, which indicates that a formal agreement has been reached.

If a property has been formally advertised twice and no suitable customers identified, the Housing Manager can decide to market the property as an "open market property" and let it to

the first suitable customer. This is at the discretion of the local manager and may include people who are ineligible because of unacceptable behaviour where they think it appropriate.

Property specific criteria

All Council properties managed by Your Homes Newcastle will be advertised unless a specific property needs to be used for a Housing Management Letting or for a Local Lettings Plan. Local housing managers will be responsible for deciding which properties are not advertised through the Scheme. This will be authorised by a Senior Manager for audit purposes.

See section 7 which is called ‘Balanced Communities’.

The partner landlords are usually required to make the best use of stock. This means we will normally tell you a minimum or maximum size of household that the property is suitable for. Some properties have special features making them particularly suitable for certain customers, whilst some neighbourhoods have a shortage of a particular type of property (which may be in high demand) or blocks that are formally designated for certain age groups. In these types of cases local housing managers will also apply specific criteria appropriate to the individual property concerned.

Only those customers who bid and who fit the criteria will be considered. However, where no specific criteria are attached to a property then any customer who bids will be considered.

The following specific criteria are examples that may be placed on a property:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Reason</u>
No children	The physical nature of the property. For example, some upper floor flats or multi-storey blocks.
Minimum age	Applies where a property/scheme has been designated for certain age groups - for example sheltered schemes and some bungalows and multi storey blocks. It would normally be expected that all members of the household fit the criteria.
Minimum or maximum number of persons	We prefer that properties are not under or over occupied.
Preference to customers requiring care or support due to age or disability	Warden supported or Sheltered property
Preference to disabled persons / wheelchair users	Adapted property
No dogs or cats	Where a property or scheme has a formal no pets policy (normally any properties with communal entrances)

For the purposes of property criteria a child is:

- someone under 16;
- someone under 18 who is in full time education or training; or
- someone under 18 who is unable to support themselves.

A child will be counted as a member of the household of an adult who is responsible for their day to day care. This includes situations where two adults have equal joint care. However a child will not be counted as a member of the household when they only visit at weekends and holidays.

In those cases when a child visits at weekends and holidays there are locations in Newcastle where we may be able to relax property specific criteria to allow for extra bedrooms to accommodate children. Supporting evidence may be requested from other agencies or the court depending on the individual circumstances.

Properties which have been adapted to meet the needs of people with a disability may be offered directly to people that need a property with those specific adaptations. When there is no applicant who can make best use of the property we may remove the adaptations or advertise it as is.

6. Urgent and immediate housing need

This category will only be applied in exceptional circumstances

If you are experiencing **immediate and urgent** housing need, you **may** be given priority status. We will consider giving you priority status if you need to move because of:

- **severe disability or health grounds** You, or a member of your household have a very urgent medical need that cannot be addressed by remaining in your current property or by finding suitable property through the general YCH route.
- **domestic violence, harassment or racial harassment** You are a victim of domestic violence or harassment including racial harassment amounting to violence or threats of violence.
- **homelessness and the Council** has a duty to house you under sec 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996
- your home is subject to major building work or will be **demolished as part of a regeneration scheme**
- **you are occupying housing that is unsatisfactory because it is insanitary or statutorily overcrowded** the physical housing condition of your home is so bad that it would be unreasonable to expect you to remain there for any period of time.
- **you would suffer hardship if you could not move to a particular locality** for example to take up employment to get you out of relying on benefit
- **you live in housing that is linked to your job** for YHN or the City Council and you have retired or been made redundant
- You have **welfare needs** because of ongoing care and support needs, you need to move on from supported accommodation and are being supported by the Housing Pathways Scheme, you are a foster carer who may not have a child living with you at the moment but need to move to be able/continue to foster (confirmation will be required from Social Services) or you have child protection issues

You can apply for priority status when you join Your choice homes. You can also do this any time afterwards by contacting your local Community Housing Office or the property shop to discuss your needs with a housing officer.

You have to be registered on YCH to apply for priority status. When you are not on the Scheme because you are ineligible but you have an immediate and urgent need then you may be considered for a Housing Management Let and made a specific offer of accommodation suitable to your needs.

See section 7 which is called 'Balanced Communities'. This gives you more information.

It may be the case that some people have needs in more than one category which on their own may not be considered immediate and urgent but when combined are serious enough to

be awarded priority status.

If you are assessed and accepted as being in urgent and immediate need you will be given time limited priority status – usually for three months. During this period you will be able to bid for any properties advertised for which you match the specific criteria for the property. The time limit will only be extended **in exceptional circumstances** and will be at the discretion of the housing manager.

In the event of more than one customer with priority status bidding for the same property, selection will normally be based on the date on which the priority status was awarded. However, where someone has qualified for priority status by falling within more than one priority category they will have preference over customers who qualify in fewer categories. In exceptional cases the Council reserves the right to vary this criteria for good Housing Management reasons.

You will automatically lose your priority status after 3 months unless the Housing Manager is satisfied that there are good reasons outside your control for you not being able to get a property. An example of this would be where you require a specially adapted property and none have been available in the three-month period. If you lose your priority status you can only ask to be considered for priority again if there is a significant change in your circumstances, although you can remain on the general scheme.

Recommendations and restrictions

In some priority cases we may attach a recommendation or restriction on the type or location of property for which you can bid. This can be for good housing management reasons, or to help us make sure that any property in which you bid will meet your individual urgent need or a restriction may also be made in conjunction with a specific tenancy condition, such as accepting a support package.

Homelessness

If you are someone to whom we have a legal duty to house. For example you are accepted as homeless, in priority need and your priority status has expired, we will make a single suitable offer to discharge our legal duty. If you do not accept this you can still remain on the general scheme.

If you are a homeless priority and receive an offer as a result of a bid, provided it is suitable to your needs this will count as the offer with which we discharge our legal duty to you. We will write to you and tell you if this is the case. If you do not accept that particular offer you will lose your priority status but you can remain on the general scheme.

If you are given priority status under the scheme because of homelessness you can ask the Council to make you a specific offer of a suitable property rather than you having to bid for properties when they are advertised. If so, we will make you a suitable offer as soon as we can. However, if you then refuse the offer we make, you will lose your priority status.

If you are eligible to join the scheme and are assessed as homeless but intentionally homeless (you have been made homeless as a result of unacceptable behaviour, or rent arrears) or not in priority need you will not get priority status but we will give you reasonable preference over other people by making you a specific offer of a property. This will be suitable to your needs

from property that we always have available and will serve to alleviate your homelessness. If, for whatever reason, you do not accept this offer you may remain on the general scheme.

Temporary accommodation

If you have priority status and are living in temporary or emergency accommodation provided by the Council, Homeless Support Services and Housing Officers may within the three-month period identify a suitable property from those available and make a specific offer of it to you. This will be because; either (a) you have not been expressing interest in available properties or (b) demand is being placed on the temporary or emergency accommodation. Refusal of such a suitable offer will result in the removal of the priority status. You would normally have to leave the temporary accommodation but may express interest through the general scheme.

Even if you are not living in temporary or emergency accommodation, we reserve the right to make a specific offer to you within your three-month period of priority status if there are good housing management reasons for doing so. An example of this might be when you have priority status because your home is subject to major building work and it is important that work starts as soon as possible.

Demolition schemes to facilitate regeneration

If your home is to be demolished as part of a redevelopment scheme you will normally be issued with priority status and can bid for any home advertised.

We will phase the issuing of priority status to match the phasing of redevelopment work in order to minimise disruption to tenants and the community.

You may be given first preference when new housing becomes available to replace your existing home. You will be informed of this when the redevelopment scheme is formally approved.

You will only be made an offer of a property which matches your housing need unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Where possible you will be offered a suitable property in your locality if you have a need to remain in the area and wish to do so.

You will have the right to a review of these decisions. **See section 10 which is called 'Reviews and Appeals'.**

7. Balanced communities

Housing Management Lettings

There will be certain circumstances when empty properties will not be advertised in the normal way. These will normally apply to the following situations where the council and its partner landlords may need to use vacant properties for specific management purposes. The qualifying person will normally be either resident in Newcastle or have a strong local connection and they will receive one reasonable offer of accommodation:

- people having to move from areas affected by major repairs or demolition
- asylum seekers and other national priorities
- Emergency Plan re-housing (for example accommodation which may be required following fire, flood or other major incident)
- Witness Protection Scheme
- some homeless cases where the person is ineligible or there is a need to move customers rapidly through temporary accommodation to avoid the use of bed and breakfast; or where priority status has expired and the Council has a duty to provide accommodation
- other exceptional housing management reasons

In these circumstances normally the date on which the decision was made to offer a Housing Management Letting will determine the order in which properties are offered. Where a Housing Management Letting is awarded to someone who otherwise would be ineligible to join the scheme (because of a current or previous breach of tenancy such as rent arrears or property damage, for instance) any property offered will normally be in the area of the City where this breach occurred. In any event, it will not be in an area considered by YHN or other landlord to be of higher demand.

Local lettings plans

YHN Area Boards are able to draw up local lettings plans that use information about letting trends in their area as a means of creating more sustainable communities in Newcastle. Area Boards may consider:

- the number of lettings
- where most availability has occurred and why
- how long tenancies are lasting
- the number of vacant homes
- how quickly vacancies are filled

They may also plan for the next year:

- an estimate of vacancies they expect
- local targets for performance

Area Board's proposals may involve, for example, giving preference to specific groups of people for specific types of properties or in specific localities where this would benefit the community

They may also consider:

- a maximum or minimum age limit for certain properties
- a requirement for a connection with the local community - for example giving or receiving support to or from family/extended family, voluntary work, day care, play groups or other support from locally based organisations
- Preference for people who are able to pay rent from a wage or savings and are not reliant solely on state benefits (excluding pensions)

Each Manager will consider an appropriate distribution of properties between Housing Management lettings, Local lettings plans and General lettings and will be as flexible as possible in using any property specific criteria.

Partner landlords who have stock within the area will be consulted on the need or otherwise for a local plan. The majority of lettings will be made from the general lettings category rather than Housing Management lettings or Local lettings plans. Even in exceptional cases Those lettings will not exceed more than 50% of available properties in each neighbourhood. **The exception to this will be whereby first preference is given to residents whose home is demolished to facilitate regeneration and new housing is available to replace existing homes. Full details are provided in the Council's housing development process.**

The Council will monitor the effectiveness and fairness of the lettings made and their distribution throughout the City and will also scrutinise and approve or reject proposals for local lettings plans. This monitoring will also ensure that vulnerable people and those in immediate urgent need can participate fully within the scheme.

8. Verification checks

We aim to give customers who apply, choice and quality of service. However, the communities where you may choose to live have a right to expect certain standards of behaviour from their neighbours, as does your landlord. You, as a potential tenant, have obligations to the communities where you will live and to your landlord. We tell you about these checks when you apply for YCH and that it may include references about your suitability as a tenant. This may also apply to anyone that you wish to have living with you.

See Section 3 which is called ‘Who is eligible to join Your choice homes’.

The checks may be done at any stage of the process and on more than one occasion for the following reasons:

- confirmation of your identity and household details
- current or previous rent arrears or other breaches of tenancy
- current or previous property damage
- harassment/anti-social behaviour or relevant criminal activity
- confirmation that you meet the specific criteria for the property

If you are an existing Council tenant you will be expected to leave your current home in a reasonable state of decoration and undamaged (other than fair wear and tear). You will be given the chance to either rectify or pay for any damage. If you do not meet the conditions placed on you, you will not be allowed to take up a new tenancy and in cases of very serious or malicious damage may be deemed ineligible and your application cancelled.

If you can't provide us with all the required information to confirm your circumstances and suitability as a tenant we will seek references from previous landlords. Council tax records will be checked where necessary for length of residency and checks will be made with the Police through the Safer Estates Agreement where appropriate.

If the checks are satisfactory and you meet the stated eligibility criteria, you will be formally accepted to the scheme.

If the verification checks are not satisfactory then you will not be eligible to join YCH and will not be able to bid for any available home. When we receive all the information needed to confirm eligibility we will write to you within 10 working days. This is a service standard. This also applies if you were originally eligible but between that time and further checks, information has come to light that you could no longer be considered to be a suitable tenant.

In some very exceptional cases you may still be offered a tenancy subject to specific conditions such as an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement and this will normally be offered through a Housing Management Let and will be at the discretion of the Housing Manager.

Note that you need to provide the information required to carry out the verification checks, including the giving of any necessary consent and evidence of length of

residency if this cannot be easily confirmed by the Council. We may for example wish to see a Passport or Driving Licence, Benefit Book, Utilities Bill or other evidence relating to your identity and length of residency.

9. Monitoring and openness

Results of all completed lettings will be published monthly and made available at all housing offices and the property shop. Details will include the following:

- types of property let during the period
- total number of bids received for each property advertised
- confirmation of the length of residency of the selected customers

We will monitor personal information from the YCH registration form and use this to improve services.

We will send customers personal information about where they are likely to be housed. This will include:

- information which shows the type and location of the homes available based on individual circumstances and how long you might wait for it. This will be given to you when you join the scheme.
- individual reports will be provided to customers on request or if there is a change in circumstances.

10. Reviews and appeals

You will be able to request a review or an appeal against decisions relating to:

- your ineligibility from Your Choice Homes membership
- you being denied priority status, an extension of the three month period or a Housing Management let
- the reasonableness of any offer made to you with priority status or as a Housing Management let
- how long you have continuously lived in your home

Your request for a review must be submitted in writing to the person who made the original decision within 21 days of the date of the letter notifying you of the original decision. You should explain why you think the decision was wrong. Within 5 working days they will confirm in writing that they have received your letter and he or she will reconsider his or her original decision based on your written submission.

If their decision remains the same a panel of at least two Senior Independent Officers not involved in the original decision will then review it, again on the basis of your written submission. This will be dealt with within 21 days of the review request being received.

Written confirmation of the review decision will be given no later than 5 working days after the review/appeal period.

A person who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a review can request an appeal. However, such an appeal to Housing Appeals Panel (elected members) will only be referred at the discretion of the Chief Executive of Your Homes Newcastle, and the case must involve unusual or exceptional circumstances or raise points of principle or policy not covered by the existing scheme.

Your request for an appeal must be submitted to the Chief Executive of Your Homes Newcastle in writing within 21 days of the review decision date. Written confirmation of the Chief Executive's decision will be given within 21 days of the appeal request. If the decision is to allow your appeal, you will receive notification of the Panel meeting and may attend with representation.

Homeless appeals

If the reason you have been denied priority status is because the Council considers it does not have a duty to house you under Sec 193(2) or 195(2) Housing Act 1985 then your request for a review should be made to the Councils Housing Advice Centre. A Senior Homelessness Officer not involved in the original decision will then review your case.

In homeless cases where the appeal is on a point of law this should be made to the County Court within 21 days of notification of the review decision.

Individual Housing Associations may decide to vary the practice of making an offer to someone with either priority status or longest length of residency in circumstances where it does not fit with the policies of their organisation or criteria for certain schemes. **Where this is the case and you do not agree with the decision you must seek information about the Appeals procedure operated by that landlord.**

11. Other lettings and future plans

The following provisions apply to Council tenancies. Housing Associations may have different policies, which you can check with them.

Succession

When a secure tenant dies it may be possible for a member of his or her family (including a same sex partner) to claim their tenancy. The Council has agreed to extend tenants rights by allowing this to happen twice. If an occupant of the property is not allowed to succeed to that tenancy they will be asked to complete a YCH registration form and be considered under that policy.

Direct exchanges by assignment

As an alternative to accessing housing through YCH we encourage Council tenants to consider direct exchanges with other Council tenants and tenants of other landlords. Details of the way in which this works and the implications for those exchanging are available from Community Housing Offices.

National Mobility schemes

It is the Council's policy to take part in National Mobility schemes to help those people who want to move to another area of the country. Those people wishing to move into Newcastle can do so through YCH. Further details of how the scheme can assist people wishing to move out of Newcastle are available from any Community Housing office or the property shop.

Garages

The Council has lock up garages available to rent at various locations throughout the City. You can apply to YHN for these. The application form details the order in which we allocate to a range of priority categories. Date order will normally be used to distinguish between applicants in the same priority category. Where the garage is required for a vehicle used by a registered disabled person, the disabled person may be entitled to an allowance. Further details are available from Community Housing Offices.

Regeneration

If your home is to be demolished as part of a redevelopment scheme to facilitate regeneration the Housing Redevelopment Process provides full details of what to expect. This includes whether new housing will be provided to replace your existing home and whether you will receive first preference for this housing.

In the future

We are planning to work even closer with the participating landlords to maximise convenience to our customers and increase choice. In addition we will look to extending the lettings service to include other Local Authorities and accredited private landlords.

Appendix One

Eligibility to join Your Choice Homes related to Immigration status or persons from abroad

The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) Regulations 2006 have effect from 1 June 2006 and set out those persons who are ineligible for accommodation under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 because of their immigration status or because they are from abroad.

Those persons subject to immigration control unless he/she is either:

- (a) Class A – a person who is recorded by the secretary of State as a refugee within the definition in Article 1 of the Refugee Convention and who has leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom; or
- (b) Class B – a person who has exceptional leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom granted outside the provisions of the Immigration Rules; and who is not subject to a condition requiring him to maintain and accommodate himself, and any person who is dependent on him, without recourse to public funds; or
- (c) Class C – a person who is habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland and whose leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom is not subject to limitation or condition, other than a person who has been given leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom upon an undertaking given by his sponsor; who has been resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland for less than five years beginning on the date of entry or the date on which the sponsor gave the undertaking in respect of him, whichever date is the later; and whose sponsors or, where there is more than one sponsor, at least one of whose sponsors, is still alive; or
- (d) Class D – a person who left the territory of Montserrat after 1st November 1995 because of the effect on the territory of a volcanic eruption

A person who is not subject to immigration control is to be treated as a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation under Part 6 of the 1996 Act if:

- (a) he is not habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or the Republic of Ireland; or
- (b) his only right to reside in the United Kingdom is derived from his status as a jobseeker or the family member of a jobseeker; or is an initial right to reside for a period exceeding three months under regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations; or his only right to reside in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland is a right equivalent to one of those mentioned in sub-paragraph (b) which is derived from the Treaty establishing the European Community

Any person who had already been allocated accommodation by the Council prior to 1 June 2006 is not affected by these rules.

Annexes 6-11 of the Code of Guidance for local housing authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation issues by the ODPM in November 2002 describes in more detail the different conditions of eligibility.

These conditions are very complex and if you are in doubt about your eligibility you should contact a solicitor or appropriate advice agency. Your local housing office or YCH property shop can point you in the right direction.

Appendix Two - Contact Details

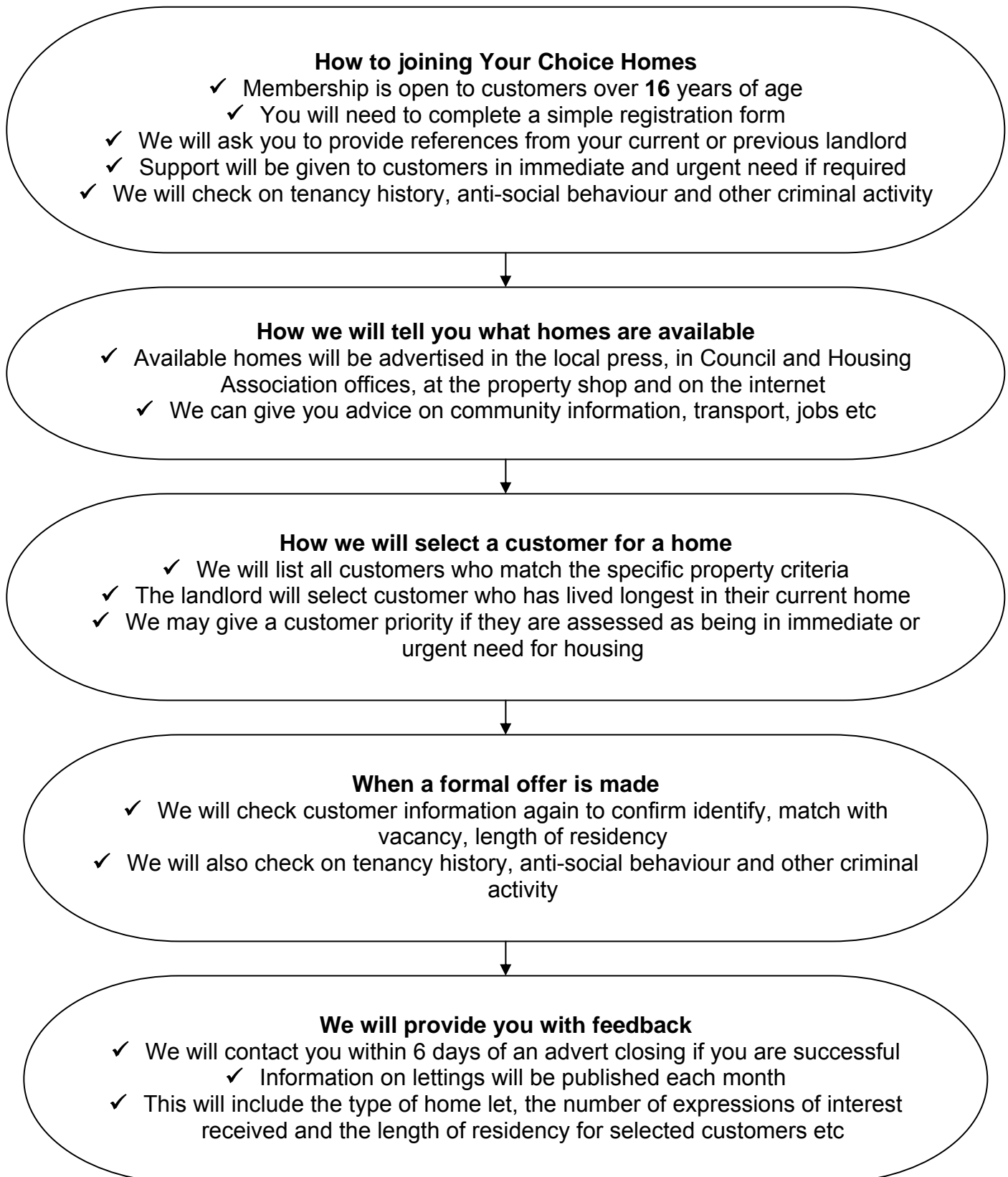
YHN Office Name	Address	Telephone Number	Fax Number
Avison Street	Avison Street (Off Stanhope Street) Arthur's Hill Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5DX	0191 277 1300	0191 277 1299
Blakelaw	Sheriff Leas Springfield Road Blakelaw Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 3DS	0191 277 1000	0191 277 1011
Byker	45-47 Brinkburn Street Byker Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 1QN	0191 278 1555	0191 278 1533
Cruddas Park	Cruddas Park Shopping Centre Westmorland Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7EN	0191 277 1066	0191 277 1088
Elswick	71 Mill Lane Elswick Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6TB	0191 277 1111	0191 277 1121
Fenham	199/201 Two Ball Lonnen Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9RS	0191 277 1200	0191 277 1211
Gosforth	Council Offices High Street Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1JL	0191 277 1166	0191 277 1177
Newbiggin Hall (Satellite Office)	1 Yetholm Place Newbiggin Hall Estate Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 4ED	0191 277 1400	0191 277 1388
North Benwell	68A Adelaide Terrace North Benwell Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 8BD	0191 277 1484	0191 277 1494

North Kenton	141-145 Banbury Road North Kenton Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3SQ	0191 277 1234	0191 277 1242
Scotswood (Satellite Office)	468-470 Armstrong Road Scotswood Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 6BY	0191 277 1355	0191 277 1363
Shieldfield	Stoddart House Clarence Walk Shieldfield Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1AB	0191 278 1566	0191 278 1570
St Anthony's	172/174 St Anthony's Road Walker Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 2ND	0191 278 1600	0191 278 1611
Walker	Walker Centre Church Walk Walker Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 3BS	0191 278 8455	0191 278 8466
West Denton	West Denton Shopping Centre West Denton Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2QZ	0191 277 1044	0191 277 1055
YCH Property Shop	18 New Bridge Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8AW	0191 277 2020	0191 277 2222

Housing Association	Address	Telephone Number	Fax Number
Anchor Trust	Burbank House Balliol Business Park Benton Lane Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 8EN	0191 270 6000	0191 270 1645
Cheviot Housing	Beaminstor Way East Kingston Park Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 2ER	0191 238 3800	0191 238 3900
Guinness Trust	West 3, ASAMA Court Amethyst Road Newcastle Business Park Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7ED	0191 273 6233	0191 273 6063
Hanover Housing Association	Thomas Duggan House Manor Lane Shipleigh BD18 3RB	01274 599 686	01274 531 021
Home Housing	270 Stanhope Street Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 5JT	0845 606 3031	0191 272 3681
Housing 21	Unit 1R, North Shields Business Centre, Liberty Way Sunderland SR6 0QA	0191 510 3562	0191 510 2795
Johnnie Johnson	16 Telford Court Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2DB	0845 604 1095	
Methodist Homes	Brooksland Court Tunstall Road, Leeds LS11 5HL	0113 271 5805	
NomadE5	Wrendale House William Street Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1TD	0191 268 4800	0191 229 7373

Housing Association	Address	Telephone Number	Fax Number
Places for People	4th Floor Maybrook House Grainger Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 5JE	0191 211 3100	0191 232 3976
Riverside North East	1 Osborne Terrace Jesmond Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1NE	0845 155 9001	0191 239 0606
Railway Housing	Bank Top house Garbutt Square Neasham Road Darlington DL1 4DR	01325 482 125	01325 384 641
Two Castles	154 New Bridge St Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2TE	0191 261 4774	0191 261 9692
William Sutton Housing	Barton House 49 North Moor Road Huntington York YO32 9YY	01904 750 044	01904 750 710

Appendix Three – How the scheme works flow chart



Your choice homes

If you would like to find out more write to:

John Urwin
Your choice homes Property Shop
18 New Bridge Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8AW

Tel 0191 277 2020
Fax 0191 277 2024
Minicom 0191 278 1896

Email your.choice.homes@yhn.org.uk
Website www.yourchoicehomes.org

Property Shop Opening Hours

Monday	8.30am to 4.30pm
Tuesday	8.30am to 6.00pm
Wednesday	8.30am to 6.00pm
Thursday	8.30am to 4.30pm
Friday	8.30am to 4.30pm

You can also contact any Your Homes Newcastle Community Housing Office



Community Care Alarm Service

For any customer living in Newcastle. If they have worries about:

- Falling at home
- Feeling unwell
- Strangers or other callers at their door

You can call for help. They are fast, reliable, friendly and affordable.

Customers don't have to dial for help or even be near their alarm to call.

To find out more contact:

Alyson Bell
YHN House
Benton Park Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7LX

Tel 0191 278 8699

Fax 0191 278 7755

Minicom 0191 278 7754

Email commcarealarmservice@yhn.org.uk

Newcastle Furniture Service

Can help customers to settle or remain in their homes by supporting them with the furniture they need. Anyone who takes up a tenancy with the council can apply for a furnished tenancy.

The furniture is leased to customer who will pay a weekly charge. This is added to their rent. If any items that are supplied are faulty or need replacing because of wear and tear we will repair or replace them.

To find out more contact:

Jason Wylie
Newcastle Furniture Service
Unit 1
Wincomblee road
Walker
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE6 3PF

Tel 0191 278 1888
Fax 0191 278 1884
Minicom 0191 278 1896
Email yhn@yhn.org.uk

Housing Advice Centre

Can help provide information and advice about housing to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They may be offered temporary accommodation or a permanent home.

To find out more contact:

Gill Simm
Housing Advice Centre
112-114 Pilgrim Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 6SQ

Tel 0191 277 1711
Fax 0191 277 1722

Advice and Support Service

We give customers that extra help to find accommodation and set up and run their home.

In particular, we work with customers currently in hospital or in supported accommodation and need help to remain in or find another home.

We are there if customers need:

- help to find appropriate housing
- help to get removal arrangement sorted out
- help to access funds for furnishing
- help to apply for benefits
- help to get gas and electric supplies on
- help to set up payment methods for bills

We are available to help customers registered on Your choice homes, current tenants and customers wanting to live in the private sector.

To find out more contact:

Suzanne Halliwell
Advice and Support Team
Your Homes Newcastle
Benton Park Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7LX

Tel 0191 278 8621
Fax 0191 278 8604
Minicom 0191 278 1896
Email yhn@yhn.org.uk

Inline Newcastle

INLINE helps young people aged 16-17 who are in housing need and living in council tenancies in Newcastle.

We offer support that helps young people to manage their tenancy successfully.

We recognise that young people are individuals who deserve to be treated with respect, listened to and supported in planning their move to their own home. Visits to young people are frequent and can continue for up to 2 years.

To find out more contact:

Kim McMaster
INLINE Newcastle
Council Offices
Gosforth High Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 1JL

Tel 0191 277 1166
Fax 0191 277 1177
Minicom 0191 278 1896
Email yhn@yhn.org.uk

Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones helps young vulnerable homeless people between the age of 16-21 by providing direct access and supported accommodation.

We recognise the needs and rights of young people and assist them to participate in their own support plans and the development of the organisation.

To find out more contact:

**Kim McMaster
Stepping Stones
Council Offices
Gosforth High Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 1JL**

**Tel 0191 277 1166
Fax 0191 277 1177
Minicom 0191 278 1896
Email yhn@yhn.org.uk**

Housing, Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement Team

We believe that residents are entitled to live in well managed homes where they feel good about themselves and their communities.

Your Homes Newcastle is committed to taking clear steps to deal effectively with anti-social behaviour, nuisance and harassment so that residents can enjoy a comfortable and safe environment to live in.

Our dedicated Housing, Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement Team aims to reduce anti-social behaviour through supporting victims and taking action against those who cause problems for their neighbours.

To find out more contact:

Nick Dodgeon
Housing, Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement Team
YHN House
Benton Park Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7LX

Tel 0191 278 8740
Fax 0191 278 8758
Minicom 0191 278 1896
Email newcstleasbunit@yhn.org.uk

You can also contact the team by calling in at your local housing office.

