

A Guide to...



Finding a Home

A choice based lettings service from
Tamworth Borough Council

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Introduction

Finding A Home is the Council's new choice based housing allocation scheme, which has been designed to be simpler and easier to understand. Being open and transparent ensures a fairer way of letting empty homes.

What are the benefits?

- Allowing you to make informed decisions about where you want to live and when you want to move;
- Helping to create settled communities and making the best use of our housing stock; and
- Having an interactive website to express interest on advertised vacant properties.

The allocations policy uses a banding system that is based on housing need. We will use this policy to assess the housing need of applicants and which band reflects their needs. (The policy is available from our website and can be posted out to you on request, see contact details on page 18)

Applicants in the highest band will have been assessed as having a greater need for finding a home. Within a band, priority will be given to those who have been waiting the longest in their band.

Anyone aged over 16 may complete an application and express an interest in available properties, however in order to be offered a property anyone under 18 will require a trustee who is prepared to accept the legal responsibility for the tenancy until the applicant is 18 years of age. Tamworth Borough Council would normally expect this trustee to be a parent or guardian other than in certain defined circumstances. For further information please contact the Housing Advice Team (see contact details on Page 18)

How to join the Finding a Home register;

Step 1. Complete an application form

Before you are able to choose a home you will need to join our housing register. This is easy to do by;

- Completing an application form at Marmion House
- Requesting a form to be posted out to you;
- The form is also available to download from our website. (see contact details on page 18)

Step 2. Provide to us all the information we have asked for

For all applications we will require proof of your identity and current circumstances.

This is so we can work out the correct band that your application will be awarded. We may write to you asking for extra information, this may include letters from people who are supporting your move.

It is important for you to provide this information because otherwise you may be in a lower band, which may delay your ability to find a new home.

Step 3. Your registered application

Once your application has been accepted, we will write to you within 28 working days and tell you;

- Your Band*
- The number of bedrooms you are entitled to
- Your application reference number (please keep a note for future reference)

*The higher your band the higher your housing needs. If you are in band 1 or band 1+ your application will be monitored to ensure that you are supported in bidding and accessing our system.

Step 4 Search for a Home

Only applicants who are registered can express an interest in any of the properties advertised.

Every week we will advertise all the available empty properties on our website, in the local press and posters displayed in Marmion House reception. The advert will tell you the closing date and details about the property; number of bedrooms, type of heating, rent charges and if there are any restrictions such as pets or age limits as well as information about the local amenities.

Once you have found a suitable home you will need to 'express an interest' or 'bid' in one of the following ways;

- On the Finding A home website;
- By telephoning Housing Advice to place an expression of interest on your behalf (see contact details page 18); or
- Visiting Marmion House to make use of the computer terminals available in reception, staff will be on hand to offer you any assistance.
- Via a third party such as a support worker
- Via a proxy bid (that will be where a bid, deemed to be suitable, is made on your behalf by the council or a partner agency)

You will need your housing application number and property reference number to make an expression of interest.

Step 5 Find out if you have been successful

Once we have collected everybody's expression of interest we will select the successful applicant. If you have been successful we will contact you and arrange for you to view the property.

A date will be agreed for you to collect the keys to your new home.

We will not contact you if you have been unsuccessful. All results will be displayed on our Finding a Home website and you will be able to use this property information to assess your likelihood of finding a home. We will also be monitoring access and satisfaction with the system and will be contacting you about your customer experience, even if you have not been successful in bidding.

If you have not been successful check the website for details of feedback. This will tell you;

- The band the successful applicant was in.

This information will help you decide if you need to consider other areas and/ or type of property you express an interest in. This may give you a better chance of being successful.

What are the Bands?

People will be placed into one of five bands to reflect their priority for housing.

Applicants in Band 1+ will be ranked first followed by Bands 1, 2, 3 and 4.

There will be no blanket exclusions for applicants without a local connection or with savings. Applicants will be assessed in accordance with their housing need. We will be monitoring the impact of this through an annual impact assessment, which will inform the annual lettings plan.

Applicants with a history of rent arrears may find their banding priority order reduced. Applicants with a history of anti social behaviour may find themselves suspended from joining the housing register for up to five years. The policy outlines further details in relation to this.

Band	Categories
Band 1+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants assessed as statutory homeless from Tamworth Borough Council who are owed a full housing duty in Tamworth and who also display exceptional cumulative housing needs where the needs in question were not specifically related to their homelessness application. Applicants will be placed in this band for 2 months after which there will be a review of this priority award.
Band 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants assessed as statutory homeless by Tamworth Borough Council and are owed a full housing duty in Tamworth. Applicant's current home is within Tamworth and is due to be demolished, or is subject to a Demolition Order or to a Prohibition Order covering a main part of the dwelling, or has been included within a Clearance Area or has a lack of facilities. This would include situations where the condition of the property occupied is seriously detrimental to the health of any of the household and the defects to the property cannot be readily remedied. Where applicants are unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation due to high medical need or disability. Applicants with a high need for alternative accommodation on the grounds of significant social welfare need including issues of vulnerability. Applicants with a need to move to a particular locality where significant hardship would be caused if they did not move. Applicants who are overcrowded because their present home is short of at least 3 bedrooms. Applicants who can not continue to live in their current home because of serious harassment or violence including domestic violence linked to a homelessness assessment. Applicants that are presently the tenant of Tamworth Borough Council, and are prepared to move to a flat or bungalow, thereby making their current home available to a household that needs a house.

Band	Categories
Band 1 continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants that are presently living in medium term supported housing and are required to move on. Confirmation from the organisation providing the supported accommodation that the applicant(s) is ready to move on and have completed a programme will be required (in accordance with Service Level Agreements of other specific arrangements in place). Applicants who are non - successor households and joint tenancy termination households.
Band 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who are assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness but to whom a full housing duty is not owed and who may be from other Local Authorities where there is no statutory duty to obtain housing. Applicants with a medium need for alternative accommodation on the grounds of serious social/welfare need including issues of vulnerability. Applicants with a medium medical need who have been assessed as requiring suitable alternative accommodation because their medical condition and/ or disability is having a significant detrimental affect on their ability to live independently at home. Applicants who are overcrowded because their present home is short of at least 2 bedrooms. Applicants who are in Armed Forces accommodation and have received a discharge notice. Applicants with a low medical need or disability where a move to more suitable alternative accommodation would improve their health.
Band 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who have a low housing need on welfare grounds will be placed in Band 3 Applicants who are overcrowded because their bedroom is short of 1 bedroom. Applicants who are currently adequately housed but who want to live independently of family or friends and have no other housing need. Households with children aged 5 and under living in accommodation above the ground floor (removed when child reaches age of 5) Applicants who are sharing facilities with more than 1 household, not of the same family this would include sharing the bathroom or kitchen.
Band 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who have no identified housing need or who have the financial resources and ability to find their own housing solutions.

If there are 2 or more applicants with a similar level of need qualifying for a property, the date they entered the band will be used as a tiebreaker. If the band date are the same and the level of need is similar then the deciding factor will be to offer the property to the applicant whose household best fits the property attributes to ensure the best use of stock.

The policy will also support emerging households and if you are pregnant then you may have a further bedroom entitlement.

What is a change of housing circumstances?

You must tell Housing Advice as soon as possible of any change of circumstances these include;

- Proof of pregnancy;
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application form who has left the current accommodation;
- Any change of name or address;
- Any additions to the household (proof of residence and identification will be required);
- A change to your accommodation status for e.g. Notice to Quit received;
- A change in an applicants medical situation; and
- A change in immigration status.

Further information of bandings

The Council has a legal duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to ensure that homeless applicants owed a full housing duty under s, 193(2) are provided with suitable accommodation. Applicants meeting this criteria will have received a letter from the Council and be placed in Band 1.

Where a homeless customer exhibits an exceptional cumulative need, such as high medical or social needs, they may be placed in Band 1+.

Homeless applicants are awarded priority within the allocations scheme because of their urgent need to be re-housed. For this reason homeless applicants will be placed in Band 1 or Band 1+ for a period of 2 months from the date of the decision on their application after which there will be a review of the priority awarded to their application which could result in their application being placed in a lower band.

Applicants who are assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and there is no duty owed by Tamworth Borough Council will be placed in Band 2.

We will work with all applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to provide them with assistance and options appropriate to their circumstances.

Cumulative need can be applied to any application where the household has two or more of the identified needs within Bands 1 and 2. In Band 3 the low award on medical or welfare needs is not subject to the cumulative needs and will not escalate an application to a higher band. Any application that meets two or more of the identified needs will be moved up by one band level.

Medical and Welfare needs will need to be supported by an appropriately qualified specialist. For example any award of a High medical need would need to be supported by a senior health practitioner or specialist and the current housing conditions would need to demonstrate a major adverse effect to the applicant or a member of their household. Examples may include a wheelchair user occupying a home where the facilities are upstairs and therefore inaccessible.

A High welfare award will be awarded if the current housing situation is so significant it will have a serious impact on the well being of the applicants. This would require third party corroboration from an agency involved in the case. Examples may include people who may need to move as a result of racial or homophobic abuse and the move is supported by the police.

Any application that is awarded a High medical or welfare need will be assigned a case officer who will work with you to achieve a successful allocation. This will include monitoring your bids to ensure that you are placing bids on suitable properties and if necessary by making a proxy bid on your behalf. Further information on proxy bids is available in the frequently asked questions section on page 15.

Accommodation will normally be offered according to an applicant's needs as detailed in the table on the next page.

Property Household Criteria

Property type	Allocation Guide
Bedsit / studio flat	Single person
One bed flat	Single person / childless couple
One bed Bungalow	Single person / couple one over age of 60 (younger people with a disability can also be considered)
High rise - two bed flats	Childless couples aged over 50+
Two bed bungalow	Couple with medical conditions requiring 2 bedrooms/couple with or without medical conditions over the age of 60/single person with live in carer/ single person who is disabled subject to officer decision.
Two bed flat	Couples or households with one child or children who do not live with them but regularly visit (proof of access required)
Two bed maisonette	Couples or households with one child or children who do not live with them but regularly visit (proof of access)
Two bed house	Couples or households with 1 or 2 children
Three bed flat	Households with 2 or more children
Three bed maisonette	Households with 2 or more children who do not live with them but regularly visit (proof of access)
Three bed house	Households with 2 or more children
Four bed house	Households with three or more children
Five bed house	Households with four or more children
Seven bed house	Households with five or more children
Sheltered Housing	Single or couples aged 60+ with an assessed need for supported housing (in exceptional circumstances people below this age can be considered).

The Council reserves the right to under occupy homes if this is the best use of housing stock lead by housing demand, adaptation or through individual personal need.

- Please note the property household criteria for maisonettes is currently under review and we may have in the future a local Lettings plan for these properties.

Council Housing by type and location

location	House					Flat			Bungalow		Maisonette		
	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	7 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Amington	11	190	14				32		21	2	56		
Belgrave	23	182	32	7	1				8		53		
Bolehall	102	118	24	2			22			1	55		
Borough Road		30											
Coton Green	10	34							19				
Dosthill	3	20							9	4			
Fazeley		67				8	24				22		
Gillway	60	106					70		10	60			
Glascote	52	305	29				7		38	52	28		30
Kettlebrook	13	133	2						7				
Leyfields	10	116	10			6	125		38	8	74		12
Old Amington			18			1	16			10	24		5
Old Glascote	8	59	1				11		5	9	9		
Stonydelph	104	331	18				101		33		102		
Town centre		11				180	166	1			7		2
The Leys	2	56				7	3			4	1		
Wilnecote	99	113	6			15	5		6		24		77

(Studio flats are included in the 1 bed flat property)

Sheltered Housing Properties

Scheme	Provider	Location	Bungalow		Flat		
			1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Cheatle Court	Tamworth BC	Dosthill			36		
Glenfield	Tamworth BC	Kettlebrook	7		27		
Oakendale	Tamworth BC	Stondelph			29	1	
Annandale	Tamworth BC	Stonydelph	21	2	8		
Edward Court	Tamworth BC	Glascote	26		14		
Bright Crescent	Tamworth BC	Kettlebrook			17	10	
Anker Moor Court	Tamworth BC	Bolehall			36	2	
Sunset Close	Tamworth BC	Town centre	8	16	11		3
Burns Road	Tamworth BC	Leyfields	14				
Magnolia	Tamworth BC	Amington	13		8		
Russell House	William Sutton Trust	Glascote			24		
Shannons Mill	Touchstone HA	Town centre			94		

(Studio flats are included in the 1 bed flat property type)

Extra Care Housing

Scheme	Provider	Location	Flats	
			1 bed	2 bed
Thomas Hardy Court	Tamworth Borough Council	Leyfields	48	1
MacGregor Tithe	Waterloo Housing Association	Town centre	64	6

Other housing options

Tamworth Borough Council believes that introducing choice based lettings and a simplified way of managing the housing waiting list is only one way to meet people's housing needs. The council is committed to investing in a wide range of housing options including those mentioned below.

Transfers are included in the Finding a Home service.

Tamworth Borough Council tenants are able to participate in the Finding a Home choice based lettings scheme. Transfer tenants will be assessed and banded in accordance with their housing need. In order to be offered a property transfer tenants will have to pass a property inspection, the allocations team can let you have further details.

Incentive to move scheme is included in the Finding a Home service.

Tamworth Borough Council want to make best use of its stock to help meet housing needs. If you are accepted under the incentive to move scheme then this will usually mean you are placed in band 1. This is in recognition that you are giving up a larger family home to move into flatted, sheltered or bungalow accommodation. Further details of our incentive to move scheme, including details about adapted properties and chain lets, can be found in the Allocation Policy which is available on our website and can be posted out to you on request, see contact details on page 18)

Mutual Exchanges will continue to the use Homeswapper service

A mutual exchange or swapping properties represents for most tenants the best chance of moving. As a tenant you can exchange your property with any other Local Authority tenant or Housing Association tenant. This is not confined to Tamworth but anywhere in the Country.

The Estate Management team will be able to advise you further. (See contact details on page 18)

Details of how to use the Homeswapper service can again be found on our website and the exchange register is also available to view at Marmion House reception.

Private rented.

Over the next 12/18 months Tamworth Borough Council will be exploring ways to allow certain private landlords to advertise their properties through the Finding A Home service. More details will be provided as the scheme is extended.

Shared Ownership.

The nominations arrangements with Registered Social Landlords is currently under review and we will be working hard with local providers to link them up to choice, both through Tamworth's finding a home scheme and the sub regional UCHOOSE scheme.

Housing Associations.

At the point that the Finding A Home scheme is launched, the nominations for housing association rented properties will be done directly as was the case under the previous allocations policy. The Finding A Home Scheme will be extended to include housing association properties as soon as it is practicable to do so.

Investment in Affordable homes.

Please view our housing and health strategy to look at the plans for developing outcomes for customers in this area. The strategy is available via the Tamworth Borough Council website. (www.tamworth.gov.uk)

Adaptations.

If you would prefer not to move home, but are looking to do so because you or a member of your household require adaptations to allow you to manage your illness or disability, you may like to consider having adaptations done to your current home. Further information can be obtained from the Estate Management team if your current home is owned by Tamworth Borough Council, your housing association or the Housing Advice Team if you are a private tenant or owner occupier. (See contact details on Page 18)

Handyman services.

A Handyman service is available for older people or disabled people regardless of where they live, to help people maintain their home and independence. A Handyman will undertake jobs such as helping with putting up a shelf; curtain rails; fitting a key safe or simple repairs to furniture. This is a charged service and you will be advised what you need to pay by the handyman who visits your home to assess the work you would like carried out.

For further information call free phone 0800 587 1460 or email haiinfo@aol.com.

This service is supported and funded by Staffordshire Supporting People and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue service

Frequently asked Questions

1. What if I am not used to using a computer?

You can ask your family, friends, children and support workers, etc to help you. If you do not have a computer you can visit a library or use the portals available at Marmion House reception.

2. What if I need help?

When you apply for housing we will aim to tailor our service provision to meet your housing needs. If you are in band 1 or Band 1+ we will be supporting you to bid. Equally if you are vulnerable or have specific requirements then we will ensure you have the same access to the service and the same opportunity as others. In some circumstances, including homelessness, this may include staff or a third party making a proxy bid on your behalf. Anyone can make a proxy bid for you but they will need to know your application number in order to place the bid.

Staff will be available to help you complete an application form and to express an interest in properties either over the telephone or by visiting us at Marmion House. If you want to speak to someone privately in person Housing Advice offer a 'drop in service' on a Wednesday morning for help with housing application forms and general queries. Please be aware that these sessions are on a first come first served basis and can get busy.

For applicants who need detailed housing advice appointments can be made for every day except Wednesday. Please book an appointment with the Housing Advice team (see contact details on page 18)

3. Is there a restriction to the number of expressions of interest I can make?

Yes, applicants can bid on up to 3 properties per week, any applicants making more than 3 expressions of interest will be discounted. If you want to withdraw an expression of interest please contact the Housing Advice team who will be able to do this on your behalf (see contact details on page 18). The reason we have restricted bids is to ensure we can properly understand housing needs and requirements and you really think about where you want to live.

4. What if I do not accept the property I have expressed an interest in?

Applicants can decline offers without penalty except:

- Applicants owed a statutory duty as specified under Band 1+ where a reasonable refusal will lead to a review, although not necessarily a removal of the priority.
- Applicants who are homeless as specified under Band 1 and Band 2
- Applicants in Band 1+, declining offers may lead Tamworth Borough Council to conclude that Band 1+ status is no longer justified.

Applicants need to express their interest in properties they are interested in or to ask Tamworth Borough Council or someone else to do this on their behalf.

5. What if I am not happy with any decision made about my Finding a Home application?

A request for a review of your priority banding should be made within 28 days of the decision being made. You should provide supporting evidence if necessary and explain why you require a review of the original decision. An independent senior officer from Tamworth Borough Council will carry out reviews.

6. How long will I have to wait for rehousing?

By looking at our housing stock and comparing this to the allocation results, which shows you the type of property, location, how often it comes available as well as the band of the successful applicant will give you an indication of how long you may have to wait. This information may help you to decide to change the home you're interested in moving to.

7. Are accessible properties advertised for people with disabilities?

Yes, any vacant property with adaptations will be advertised on the scheme and people with disabilities will be given preferences for this type of accommodation.

8. Is sheltered housing included in the Finding a Home service?

Yes, all vacant sheltered properties will be advertised on the scheme, you will need to have completed a needs & risk assessment to ensure a move to sheltered housing is the right move for you before you can be offered a property.

9. Is extra care housing included in the Finding a Home service?

Extra Care is a local lettings plan within the Tamworth Borough Council Finding a Home allocation scheme. The council hold the waiting list and through a joint allocations panel manage these lettings. To apply use the Council's housing application form and depending on your circumstances you may be offered an assessment for extra care housing (further details are available on our website, as well as in Marmion House reception and again can be posted out to you on request).

Tamworth Borough Council Finding a Home

Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire. B79 7BZ
website; www.findingahometamworth.co.uk

Housing Advice;

Tel: 01827 709459 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

Fax: 01827 709376

Email: Housingadvice@tamworth.gov.uk

Voids and Allocations Team

Tel: 01827 709520 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

Email: voidsandallocationsteam@tamworth.gov.uk

Estate Management Team

Tel: 01827 709491 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

Fax: 01827 709376

Email: EstateManagementTeam@tamworth.gov.uk

Homeswapper

This scheme allows you to register for a mutual exchange in Tamworth and other parts of the country on line at www.homeswapper.co.uk. This is a free service to all Tamworth Borough Council tenants; other landlords may not offer this service free of charge.

Another site to look at is: www.ukhomeswap.co.uk

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the service of an interpreter, please contact us on 01827 709709

Cantonese

如果您覺得用自己的語言和我們交談比較容易，請找一個會說英語的朋友或親戚致電我們，電話是：0800 183 0454。我們可以安排翻譯人員與您聯繫，討論您需要的翻譯服務。

Greek

Αν προτιμάτε να μιλήσετε στη γλώσσα σας ζητήστε από έναν φίλο ή συγγενή σας να επικοινωνήσει στο 0800 183 0454. Μπορούμε να σας κανονίσουμε έναν διερμηνέα.

Gujarati

જો તમને અમારી સાથે તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં વાતચીત કરવી સરળ થાવતી હોય તો અંગ્રેજી બોલી શકતા એક મિત્ર અથવા સગાને ફોનો કે તેઓ 0800 183 0454 ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક સાથે. અમે એક ઇન્ટરપ્રિટરની વ્યવસ્થા કરી શકીશું કે જેથી તમને જરૂરી ભાષાંતર વિષે ચર્ચા કરી શકાય.

Mandarin

如果您认为以自己的母语与我们交谈更简单的话，请让一位讲英语的朋友或亲属与 0800 183 0454 联系。我们可以安排一个翻译人员与您联系，讨论所需的翻译事宜。

Polish

Jeśli łatwiej Ci będzie rozmawiać z nami we własnym języku, poproś tego z krewnych lub przyjaciół, który włada językiem angielskim, by skontaktował się z nami pod numerem 0800 183 0454. Możemy skierować do Ciebie tłumacza, który omówi z Tobą, jakiego rodzaju tłumaczeń będziesz potrzebować.

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਅਸਾਨ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਮਿਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਰਿਸ਼ਤੇਦਾਰ ਨੂੰ 0800 183 0454 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਆਖੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਈ ਵਿਵਸਥਾ ਕਰ ਸਕਾਂਗੇ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਤਹਜ਼ੀਬ ਦੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੇਗਾ।

Urdu

اگر آپ ہم سے اپنی زبان میں بات کرنے میں آسانی محسوس کرتے ہیں تو براہ کرم بولنے والے ایک دوست یا رشتہ دار سے فون نمبر 0800 183 0454 پر رابطہ کرنے کے لئے کہیں۔ ہم آپ کے لئے ایک مترجم کا بندوبست کر سکتے ہیں جو آپ کی توجہ کی ضرورت پر بات چیت کرنے کے لئے آپ سے رابطہ کرے۔

Tamworth
Borough Council

Tamworth Borough Council
Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire. B79 7BZ
Tel: 01827 709709
www.findingahometamworth.co.uk