

Wirralhomes

Affordable rented accommodation in Wirral



Information leaflet



Registration

Wirralhomes is a Partnership of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in the Wirral area who have agreed an allocations policy for letting their housing stock in the Borough.

The policy is based on advertising available vacancies each week and people applying for suitable properties which they are interested in.

HOW CAN I RENT A PROPERTY THROUGH WIRRALHOMES?

Only people who are registered with Wirralhomes can apply for vacancies.

HOW DO I REGISTER ON THE WIRRALHOMES DATABASE?

You can register at any Council One Stop Shop, Wirral Partnership Homes Area Housing Offices or by telephoning Wirralhomes on 0151 691 8040. Alternatively, we can post an application form to you or you may download an application form from the Wirralhomes website. You will receive a Wirralhomes Reference Number and a registration date.

CAN ANYONE REGISTER ON THE DATABASE?

Most people over the age of 16 years can register with Wirralhomes.

However you may not qualify if you are subject to immigration control - please contact the Wirralhomes team or a One Stop Shop advisor for more information.

Applicants with a history of anti-social behaviour may be suspended from registering with Wirralhomes or being offered a property.

Applicants with rent arrears can register on the database but may not be offered a property until they have made and kept to an arrangement to pay off their arrears.

DO I NEED TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE WIRRALHOMES TEAM?

It is important that you tell Wirralhomes of any changes in your circumstances. If you do not we may cancel your application.

We will ask you to renew your registration each year and send you a renewal letter and a reminder asking you to return a response slip. If you do not respond, we will cancel your application and you will not be eligible to apply for vacancies.

WHO WILL YOU DISCUSS MY APPLICATION WITH?

Your personal details will be used according to the Data Protection Act 1998. When you register with Wirralhomes you give permission

for the Wirralhomes partners to contact some organisations including the Department of Works and Pensions and Housing Benefit.

You will need to give written permission if you want your representative, for example a relative or advisor, to discuss your application on your behalf.

Wirralhomes Landlords

The Wirralhomes database is a register of applicants who wish to apply for social housing advertised in the Wirralhomes scheme.

The Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who are partners in the scheme are:

- Arena Housing Association
- Beechwood & Ballantyne Community Housing Association
- Cosmopolitan Housing Association
- Leasowe Community Homes
- LHT (Rodney Housing Division)
- Plus Dane Group
- Regenda First (Maritime Housing Association)
- Riverside Housing
- Venture Housing Association
- Wirral Methodist Housing Association
- Wirral Partnership Homes

Urgent Need status

WHAT IF I NEED TO MOVE URGENTLY?

Some applicants may need to move urgently. We will assess your application and you may be awarded an 'Urgent Need status' which will give priority over other applicants for many advertised vacancies. Sometimes, applicants in very urgent need are awarded 2 Urgent Need statuses. This is known as Multiple Urgent Need status.

The categories of urgent need are listed below:

- Applicants who are living in a property which is statutorily **'Overcrowded'**. This takes into account the number and age of permanent household members and the number and size of rooms in the property.
- Applicants who are living in a property which is considered to be **'Unfit'** for occupation by the Council's Environmental Health Department.
- Applicants with severe **'Medical'** problems or **'Disability'** need where their current housing is adversely affecting their health and where a move to a more suitable property would substantially alleviate the medical problems or disability needs. Those with mobility problems who require adapted accommodation will be registered on the Disabled Persons' Housing Register.
- Applicants who are suffering from **'Violence or Harassment'**, which has been investigated and supported by their landlord, the Council's Anti-social Behaviour Team, the Police or other appropriate agency. Applicants who are tenants of a property owned by a partner RSL (Registered Social Landlord) should report the incidents to their own landlord who will investigate according to their own harassment policy.
- Applicants who need to move for special hardship or **'Welfare'** reasons as agreed by the Wirralhomes team.

- Applicants who are living in a property owned by a partner RSL and are **'Underoccupying'** that property by 2 or more bedrooms which are not being used.
- Applicants living in a **'Clearance'** area in the Wirral in a property owned by a RSL, privately owned or rented. Residents from clearance areas will be awarded a **'Clearance Priority'** which is the equivalent of a single Urgent Need status for rehousing in the whole borough and Multiple Urgent Need status for rehousing within approximately 2 miles of where they are currently living.

HOW MANY APPLICANTS HAVE URGENT NEED STATUS?

We only award an Urgent Need status after serious consideration and carrying out checks. Normally about 6% of Wirralhomes applicants have an Urgent Need status.

HOW LONG IS AN URGENT NEED STATUS AWARDED FOR?

If an Urgent Need status is awarded, this is for a period of 6 months. During the 6 months it is the responsibility of the applicant to take reasonable steps to seek rehousing by expressing interest in at least one property per month if suitable properties are available. The Urgent Need status will be extended for a further 6 months provided the applicant has been applying for suitable vacancies. Urgent Need statuses will end if two reasonable offers are made and refused.

DOES AN URGENT NEED STATUS GIVE ME PRIORITY FOR A PARTICULAR AREA?

Not normally. Most applicants with Urgent Need status must be prepared to consider a wide range of areas as there are a very limited number of vacancies.

Similarly, you need to consider a choice of property types, for example if you are awarded an Urgent Need status on medical grounds for a move to level accommodation, this would include ground floor flats, flats with a lift or a bungalow.

There are very few available vacancies and, if you restrict the area and type of property that you are willing to consider, we may not be able to help you. You must also fit the lettings criteria for the vacancy.

WILL MY URGENT NEED STATUS BE AFFECTED IF I MOVE OR MY CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE?

Yes. Your Urgent Need status will end if you move to another property or your circumstances change. You may apply again for an Urgent Need status which will be considered taking into account your new situation. For example, if you have an Urgent Need status due to overcrowding and move to a larger property or a member of the household leaves, your Urgent Need status will end.

Your circumstances will be checked before an offer of accommodation is made so it is important that you tell us about any changes.

Advertised vacancies

WHERE WILL THE WIRRALHOMES PROPERTIES BE ADVERTISED?

You will be able to see the Wirralhomes advert each week in the following places:

- Participating Registered Social Landlord offices
- Council One Stop Shops
- Internet (www.wirralhomes.net)
- All Wirral libraries
- Citizens Advice Bureau Offices
- Other community facilities for example Millennium Centre, Leasowe.

WHAT INFORMATION ABOUT THE VACANCIES IS PROVIDED?

The advert includes a photograph of the property (or similar property), a description of the type and size of the property and the key features, for example double glazing or central heating. It will also specify the lettings criteria for the property including family size and/or age group.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR VACANCIES?

You can apply for the vacancies in the following ways:

- Call in to any Council One Stop Shop or Wirral Partnership Homes Area Housing Office
- Phone the Wirralhomes hotline or answerphone on 0151 691 8040
- Send an email to xxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxmk

Please read the property details carefully and check that you fit the lettings criteria before you apply.

WHAT INFORMATION WILL I NEED TO PROVIDE?

You need to provide:

- Wirralhomes reference number
- Name and address
- Contact telephone number

CAN I APPLY FOR ANY VACANCY?

The properties are advertised in 2 groups:

- Group 1: Any applicant may apply but applicants with Urgent Need status are given priority.
- Group 2: Any applicant may apply but applicants are considered in order of date of registration and any Urgent Need status is not taken into account. Some vacancies may give preference to a landlord's existing tenants who have a good tenancy history.

Two thirds of all properties are advertised in Group 1. One third are advertised in Group 2.

Before you apply for a property, please read the advert carefully to make sure the property and area are suitable and your household fits the lettings criteria in the advert.

You may apply for a maximum of 2 properties each week, not including 'Readily Available' properties.

Please note that the closing date for receiving expressions of interest is normally **Tuesday at 2pm** each week.

ARE ALL VACANCIES ADVERTISED?

Not all. Partner RSLs may allocate some vacancies to tenants who need an urgent management move, for example due to serious repairs, fire or flood, or for homeless applicants who have been accepted by Wirral Council and owed a duty under the current Homelessness legislation.

WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF RECEIVING AN OFFER?

There are only a limited number of properties available, and therefore you should be flexible and realistic in your expectations when applying for vacancies. Normally, there are between 12,000 and 18,000 applicants registered on the Wirralhomes database some of whom have been registered for over 15 years. On average, only 25 vacancies are advertised each week and there is considerable demand for all properties, particularly family accommodation. Most applicants will have a considerable wait before receiving an offer and unfortunately we will not be able to help everybody. You should also consider other options, for example renting privately.

More information is included in the Wirralhomes 'Availability of accommodation' leaflet which can be obtained from any Council One Stop Shop or by contacting the Wirralhomes Team on 0151 691 8040 or xxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxuk.

The information is also displayed on the Wirralhomes website at www.wirralhomes.net.

WHAT ARE 'READILY AVAILABLE' PROPERTIES?

There are normally some vacancies, mainly flats which are not in high demand. These are included on the Wirralhomes website and displayed at the Council One Stop Shops and partner RSL offices. These properties are let on a 'first come, first served' basis and interested applicants should contact the landlord direct.

WHAT IF I NEED HELP TO APPLY FOR PROPERTIES?

The Wirralhomes team and the One Stop Shop advisors are here to help you. An advisor from the Wirralhomes Team will apply for vacancies on your behalf if you have difficulty in accessing the advert, for example if you have a disability, learning difficulties or you are in hospital.

Please phone or email the Wirralhomes Team or call in at any One Stop Shop if you need more advice about the Wirralhomes scheme or help to express interest in advertised properties.

Offers of a property

WHO WILL BE OFFERED A PARTICULAR PROPERTY?

This will depend on which group was specified in the advertisement:

- Group 1: Any applicants with Multiple Urgent Need status or Urgent Need status will be considered first. If there are no applicants with Urgent Need status the property will normally be offered to the applicant who has been registered on the Wirralhomes database for the longest period of time.
- Group 2: The property will normally be offered to the applicant who has been registered on the Wirralhomes database for the longest period of time.

Before an offer is made, the landlord will check your application.

WHAT KIND OF CHECKS WILL BE MADE?

This could include references from a current or a previous landlord, confirmation of who you are, who lives with you and who wants to move home with you. Any previous or current rent arrears, property damage or anti-social behaviour will also be taken into consideration. You may also be asked by the landlord to give your permission for checks to be made with the Police or other relevant organisations. If you have been awarded an Urgent Need status, checks will be made to ensure that your circumstances have not changed.

WILL I BE CONTACTED IF I HAVE APPLIED FOR A VACANCY?

The landlord advertising the property will contact you only if you have been successful and are being considered for a vacancy. Therefore it will help greatly if you can supply a contact phone number.

IF I AM OFFERED THE VACANCY, WILL I BE ABLE TO VIEW IT BEFORE MAKING UP MY MIND?

Yes, you will be given an opportunity to view the property and if you like it, you will need to sign the tenancy agreement and a date will then be set for you to start the tenancy. If you accept the offer, your registration on the Wirralhomes database will be cancelled. You will need to reapply if you wish to move again.

WHAT IF I REFUSE AN OFFER?

If you view the property and decide it is not for you, don't worry. You will be able to express interest in other properties in the future. However, please let the landlord know as soon as possible if you are refusing a property. If we note a number of refusals, we will review your application and may ask you about the refusals you have made.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF A PROPERTY HAS BEEN LET?

Details of vacancies from previous weeks are contained on the Wirralhomes website and are displayed at the Council One Stop Shops and partner RSL offices. The information includes the registration date of the successful applicant and whether they had an Urgent Need status. You should use this information to help you decide which vacancies to apply for. For example you can see the number of people interested in properties in a certain area, or you can compare your date of registration with those of successful applicants.

Suspension or limited application

An applicant who has a history of serious anti-social behaviour and/or breaches of tenancy may be suspended from registering with Wirralhomes. This will suspend their access to accommodation owned by the RSLs who are partners within the Wirralhomes scheme.

The decision to suspend an applicant from registering with Wirralhomes is taken by the Wirralhomes team and is based on the individual circumstances of an applicant. The following issues will be taken into account:

- Anti-social behaviour or immoral or illegal activities
- Assault or threatening behaviour
- Damage to property owned by any RSL or Council
- Rent arrears
- Discriminatory behaviour

In less serious cases an applicant may register with Wirralhomes but their application may be limited by withholding an Urgent Need status or restricting the registration date.

For more information please contact the Wirralhomes team or download an information sheet from the website.

Reviews and appeals

Applicants have the right to request a review of how their application has been dealt with. Reviews usually look at 2 main areas of the application process, which are:

- Registration with Wirralhomes
- The selection process for a particular property

HOW DO I REQUEST A REVIEW OF A WIRRALHOMES DECISION?

A request for a review must be made in writing and will be considered in stages according to the Wirralhomes policy. For more information please contact the Wirralhomes Team or download an information sheet from the website.

HOW DO I REQUEST A REVIEW OF A SELECTION PROCESS DECISION?

All requests for a review which relate to any issue about the selection process for a particular property will be dealt with by the respective RSL. You should contact the appropriate RSL directly and ask for your case to be considered through the RSL's complaints procedure.

Special circumstances

WHAT IF I AM HOMELESS?

You can register with Wirralhomes and apply for Wirralhomes properties if you are homeless. However, the Council has legal responsibilities towards certain groups of people who have nowhere to live or whose current accommodation poses an immediate threat. If you need advice about homelessness please telephone the Council's Housing Advice and Homelessness Section on 0151 666 5511 or call into the Conway Centre, Conway Street, Birkenhead.

WHAT IF I NEED HELP APPLYING FOR PROPERTIES?

The Wirralhomes Team are here to help you. Phone the Wirralhomes Hotline on 0151 691 8040 and the staff will be happy to assist you. We can also arrange an interpreter if your first language is not English. Information can be provided in large print for those with sight difficulties or you may simply need a few questions answering.

WHAT IF I HAVE A DISABILITY AND NEED AN ADAPTED PROPERTY?

You should ask for an assessment of Urgent Need status due to medical grounds or disability. If an Urgent Need status is awarded and it has been confirmed that you need to move to an adapted property, you will be registered on the Disabled Persons' Housing Register. Normally, your occupational therapist and other support workers will be contacted. You will be given advice and help to apply for adapted vacancies which are included in the Wirralhomes advert. The aim of the Disabled Persons' Housing Register is to make best use of the few adapted vacancies which become available.

WHAT IF I LIVE OUTSIDE THE WIRRAL AREA?

Applicants living outside of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral may register with Wirralhomes and apply for advertised vacancies. However, award of Urgent Need status will depend upon their personal circumstances and local connections, for example the availability of support in the Wirral area.

WHAT OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

There are a limited number of vacancies in social housing and you should also consider other options, for example private tenancy, hostel accommodation, shared ownership schemes, or home ownership. More information on these options is available in the local press or from the Housing Advice Team at the Conway Centre.

Other languages/formats

Arabic

واذا اردتم نسخة من هذا الكتيب في لغة اخرى اوفي شكل آخر
اتصلوا بتلفون رقم المؤفر بادناه

Bengali

এই পত্রিকার অনুলিপি ভিন্ন কোন ভাষায় অথবা অন্য কোন আকারে প্রয়োজন
হলে, অনুগ্রহ করে সরবরাহকৃত টেলিফোন নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন

Chinese

如果你需要這份小冊子在另一種語言或不同的格式，請聯
繫提供的電話號碼

Hindi

“अगर आपको इस दस्तावेज की प्रतिलिपि अन्य भाषा में अथवा भिन्न प्रारूप में चाहिये
तो कृपया उपलब्ध टेलिफोन नंबर पर संपर्क करें”

Polish

Jesli potrzebujesz te ulotke w innym jezyku lub w innej formie prosze zadzwonic na
zalaczony numer.

Punjabi

“ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ
ਉੱਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ

Somali

“ Haddaad rabtid nuqul ee warqadaan oo luqad kale ku qoran ama qaab kale,
fadlan la xiriir lambarka taleefon lagu siiye.

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس کتابچے کا ترجمہ کسی اور زبان میں یا کتابچہ کسی اور طرز
میں درکار ہے تو فراہم کردہ ٹیلیفون نمبر پر رجوع کریں۔

**If you would like to receive this document in large text, braille,
or on tape, please contact Wirralhomes on 0151 691 8040.**

Wirralhomes

**Department of Regeneration
Wallasey Town Hall
Brighton Street
Wallasey CH44 8ED**

**Telephone 0151 691 8040
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx.uk
Website: www.wirralhomes.net**