



House Letting

Letting Houses

This leaflet outlines briefly what we do when letting (allocating) houses to those on the housing and transfer waiting lists. We have also produced guidance covering our lettings policy.

To Apply for a House

Anyone who is aged sixteen or over can apply for housing in Orkney, by completing a form, and we will put their name on our housing list. This process allows you to be registered as seeking housing with both Orkney Islands Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd. If you would prefer you can select to be considered by only one housing provider, though this may limit your options. Information about our housing list is available at the following locations:

- Customer Services, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall.
- The Council's website: www.orkney.gov.uk
- Warehouse Buildings, Ferry Road, Stromness.

There are certain rules that we must follow when letting our houses. For example, we cannot take account of someone's income, if they are an owner occupier or if they have rent arrears of a month or less. There are also circumstances that we cannot take into account when letting houses. Please refer to our lettings policy for further details.

We seek to promote equality by ensuring that information about our lettings policy is available on request in different languages and in other formats such as in large print, audio format or Braille.

Housing Need

The main aim of our house letting policy is to meet the housing needs of applicants. We aim to meet housing need by taking account of an individual's circumstances for example by (a) meeting minimum standards and (b) meeting applicants' choice.

Meeting Minimum Standards

When letting houses, we must give reasonable preference to people who:

- Occupy houses below the tolerable standard.
- Are overcrowded (in law) or have large families.
- Are living in unsatisfactory housing.
- Are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The tolerable standard is a legal standard that houses must meet. For example, houses should be substantially free from penetrating damp and have internal facilities for washing such as hot and cold water supplies.

Details of this standard are given in our lettings policy.

Meeting Applicants' Choice

We have a system for letting our houses that allows applicants on our housing list to select up to four areas of their choice.

We emphasise two points about choice. The first point is that applicants may not receive houses in the area of their choice if housing is not available for let. The second point is that, although applicants may exercise choice in selecting areas, we must legally give reasonable preference to the above groups.

Priority Pass System

When we receive your application we will assess it in relation to housing need as detailed in our policy. If you do not already live in Orkney, a priority pass will only be given if you can demonstrate a clear need to live in the area. For example, to give or receive support. Each application will only receive one priority pass. Where your situation is such that you may qualify under two categories, the award will reflect the highest priority you would qualify for. Where an applicant would qualify for 3 or more priority passes at the same level, this will be upgraded to the level of pass above. Where an applicant would qualify for 2 priority passes at the same level, this would qualify for a mid-way point between that priority pass and the one above.

Our waiting list will be ranked by the level of priority passes followed by date order of housing application. The priority passes are Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze with Platinum being the highest and Bronze being the lowest priority pass.

Transfers

If the current council house you are living in does not meet your needs, for example, for medical reasons, then you can apply for a transfer to another of our houses. After considering your circumstances, you will go on our transfer list. If you wish to move to a smaller property and are already a Council tenant, you may be eligible for financial assistance under our removal grant scheme, for further details please contact our Housing Management Section.

To help our tenants who might wish to move to different parts of the country, we also take part in the Homeswapper scheme.

Tenant Consultation

We consult with tenants and tenants' groups in the development and review of this policy. This includes providing tenants and applicants with information on how we are performing in practice.

For example, we produce regular information in our newsletter on numbers of houses let and groups to which houses are let. We also produce information on how effectively we manage empty houses (or "voids").

Managing Empty Houses

We have developed a separate policy called a void management policy; this simply means what we do to manage the letting of our empty houses. The key elements of this policy are now explained below.

Letting Empty Houses

We set time scales for letting empty houses. This is important to meet good practice standards.

For example, we monitor the numbers of houses that are let within bands of time, such as houses let within two to four weeks.

Purpose of Void Policy

The purpose of having a void policy is to ensure that we let houses quickly to:

- Meet people's housing need.
- To maximise income.

Both of these are important to ensure that we provide quality services to our tenants and other service users.

Further Information

Housing application packs are available from Customer Services, Orkney Islands Council and Warehouse Buildings, Stromness.

If you wish to seek further information or make any comments on this leaflet, please contact our Housing Management Section.

Contacts

Housing Management Section

- Housing Services, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856873535.
- Email: allocations@orkney.gov.uk

Homelessness and Advice Section

- Housing Services, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856873535.
- Email: homeless@orkney.gov.uk

Orkney Housing Association Ltd

- 39a Victoria Street, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856875253.
- Email: enquiries@ohal.org.uk

Citizen's Advice Bureau

- Anchor Buildings, Bridge Street, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856875266.

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