

## Housing Advice and Information – Frequently Asked Questions



Question	Answer
<p>What is Boston Homechoice?</p>	<p>Boston Homechoice is a partnership between the council and its housing provider partners.</p> <p>Properties are advertised on a weekly basis through a property magazine (available from Customer Services) advertising displays in our reception area and the Boston Homechoice website <a href="http://www.bostonhomechoice.co.uk">www.bostonhomechoice.co.uk</a></p> <p>The weekly letting cycle normally starts on Friday and ends on the following Friday at 10am, there are exceptions to this where a Friday falls on a Bank Holiday such as Christmas or Easter.</p>
<p>I want to apply for housing – what do I do?</p>	<p>You need to complete a housing application form which can be collected from Customer Services or sent to you together with the Boston Homechoice housing guide. This explains how Boston Homechoice works.</p> <p>The form needs to be completed in <b>full</b> and signed. If it is a joint application both of you need to sign.</p>
<p>What evidence do I need to produce?</p>	<p>When you return the form to us you need to provide evidence of your circumstances as detailed in the sheet enclosed with your application form. The proofs that will be required are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two proofs of address for each applicant - dated within the last 3 months</li> <li>• proof of pregnancy – a copy of the paperwork showing the Expected Delivery Date</li> <li>• National Insurance Number for each applicant</li> <li>• copy of current tenancy agreement (private tenants only)</li> <li>• Tenancy Deposit scheme certificate (if applicable)</li> <li>• copy of Notice to Quit (if applicable)</li> <li>• copy of mortgage statement (for mortgage holders)</li> <li>• copy of passports and/or copy of ID cards will also be required.</li> </ul>
<p>What evidence can I produce if I don't have a permanent address?</p>	<p>Please provide evidence of where your mail is sent to.</p> <p>It is important that you provide your address history over the last five years. You must provide the specific dates that you were resident at each address e.g. January 2011 to March 2012. We will check with your previous Landlords about your tenancy and rent account.</p>
<p>What happens if I have rent arrears?</p>	<p>Any arrears of rent or housing related debt may affect your application with us, including the banding awarded to your application.</p>

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<p>What is a local connection?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must have lived in the borough for at least the last 12 months</li> <li>• Or previously lived in the borough for a continuous 12 months within the last 5 years</li> <li>• Have adult children, siblings or parents living in the borough for at least 5 years</li> <li>• Must work a minimum of 32 hours in the borough continuously for the last 12 months</li> <li>• You are/have served in forces in last 5 years</li> </ul>
<p>How long will it take to process my application?</p>	<p>We aim to initially assess the application within 5 working days of receipt. However this can take longer at certain times due to the high number of applications received.</p> <p>If any information is missing from the application this will delay the assessment. Our Customer Services Team will be pleased to check your application upon request.</p> <p>Please do not enquire about the application whilst it is being processed. We will write to you once the application has been processed and give you information about the band you are in together with your membership number.</p>
<p>How do you assess medical circumstances?</p>	<p>If you feel your current housing is unsuitable to your medical condition then you should discuss this with the Housing Needs team.</p> <p>The council have a self assessment medical form which will be issued to you if necessary. You should complete it in full and return to us. We will, if necessary, submit the request to an Independent Medical Assessor who will consider if any additional priority should be given on medical grounds.</p> <p>Applicants are notified by letter of the outcome.</p>
<p>Do you require letters from GP's or hospitals regarding my medical conditions?</p>	<p>We do not require letters from GP's or hospitals regarding medical conditions</p>
<p>What Band will I be in?</p>	<p>There are four bands within the Boston Homechoice Scheme,:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gold, Silver, Bronze, Copper.</li> <li>• Your application is prioritised during the assessment according to your circumstances and housing need. The Boston Homechoice Guide and website gives more information about banding. Gold band gives the highest priority to applicants with Copper being the lowest.</li> <li>• Your application may have to be placed in the Copper band if we require more information, such as rent references, employment checks, etc</li> <li>• If you have been placed in the Copper band because you have rent arrears in excess of £500 you should notify us as soon as you reduce your debt below this value as it may increase your priority</li> </ul>

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<p>How can I bid for a property once I have my number?</p>	<p>Once we have written to you with your unique number there are plenty of ways in which bids can be placed and these are detailed in the Boston Homechoice Guide and the website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone hotline: 01205 318628</li> <li>• Email - <a href="mailto:bid@bostonhomechoice.co.uk">bid@bostonhomechoice.co.uk</a></li> <li>• In person at our reception or partners reception i.e. Boston Mayflower</li> <li>• Via the Internet by logging onto the Boston Homechoice website</li> <li>• By Coupon - provided with the membership card and available upon request.</li> </ul> <p>Members can choose to place bids on as many properties as they are eligible for in each cycle. For more information on how to place bids, you can watch the short video here: <a href="http://www.boston.gov.uk/housingregister">www.boston.gov.uk/housingregister</a></p>
<p>What do I need to consider before placing bids?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Suitability of the property:</b> the Boston Homechoice magazine gives details of the property. You should make sure it is suitable for your needs and is in an area you wish to live in <i>before</i> you place a bid</li> <li>• <b>Rent in advance:</b> all our housing partners require that you pay up to 1 month's rent in advance regardless of whether you intend to apply for Housing Benefit to help pay the weekly rent. If you do not have enough money to pay rent in advance you are advised not to bid on a property. If you do bid and are offered a property but are then unable to pay the necessary rent in advance, the offer is likely to be withdrawn by the housing provider and you will be deemed to have refused the property.</li> <li>• <b>Refusal of an offer of accommodation:</b> if you refuse a reasonable offer of accommodation, in that the property is suitable to you, then your application will be re-dated to the date the offer was made. This has the effect of moving your application to the bottom of your band and you could wait longer to receive another offer. If you refuse a second offer of accommodation, your application will be suspended and you will not be able to place bids for a 12 month period. After the 12 months your application will be re-dated and your application will move to the bottom of your band. The above process will be applied to further offers made.</li> </ul>
<p>I have difficulty understanding the scheme and bidding, can you help?</p>	<p>For more information on how to place bids, watch the short video on: <a href="http://www.boston.gov.uk/housingregister">www.boston.gov.uk/housingregister</a></p> <p>The Housing Needs team will also be able to assist you. Please contact the team on 01205 314555 / 314557.</p>
<p>How long will I have to wait to be re-housed?</p>	<p>This depends on a number of factors such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the band you are in;</li> <li>• where you wish to be re-housed;</li> <li>• the properties that become available;</li> <li>• the number of bids being placed.</li> </ul> <p>Unfortunately we are not able to give a timeframe of waiting time to anyone. However this should not prevent you from bidding. If you do not place bids you will not be considered for re-housing.</p> <p>New homes are being built in the borough by our partners – for more details see: <a href="http://www.boston.gov.uk/affordablehousing">www.boston.gov.uk/affordablehousing</a></p>

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<p>What happens if I am successful in the bidding process?</p>	<p>You will initially be contacted by the housing provider by telephone. It is therefore <u>vital</u> that we have your correct contact details including an up to date telephone number.</p> <p>If you cannot be contacted within one working day the housing provider will move on to the next successful applicant and your application may be re-dated to the date of the offer.</p>
<p>Can I bid for any property?</p>	<p>It is also important you only place bids for the properties you are eligible to bid for and that meet your family's needs (the property magazine will give you details of eligibility for each property)</p> <p>You should only place bids in areas where you would wish to be re-housed. If you refuse a property your application will be affected. See above: 'What do I need to consider before placing bids?'</p>
<p>What if my circumstances change before I get re housed?</p>	<p>If you have changed your address you will need to complete a new housing application form.</p> <p>If you have a new partner, you will need to complete a new housing application form and provide your partners full details together with the relevant proofs.</p> <p>For other changes, you need to complete a 'Change of circumstances form'. This is available on our website (<a href="http://www.boston.gov.uk/housingregister">www.boston.gov.uk/housingregister</a>) or from our Customer Services Team. Changes you must tell us about include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• change of household make-up;</li> <li>• change of telephone number;</li> <li>• change of employment;</li> <li>• changes to benefits income;</li> <li>• changes to your health that will affect the suitability of accommodation.</li> </ul> <p>If you do not tell us of any changes to your circumstance and you are offered a property the offer may be withdrawn. If we find out your circumstances have changed a third party and we are unable to contact you your application may be cancelled.</p>
<p>What happens if I change address?</p>	<p>You must complete a new registration form and provide evidence of your new address.</p>
<p>When will the change start from?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are placed in a higher band your registration date will be from when the new evidence was provided</li> <li>• If you are placed in a lower band your original registration date remains.</li> </ul>
<p>What type of property can I apply for?</p>	<p>The Homechoice magazine will tell you who is eligible to bid. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three bed house - couple or single parent with two or more children – dependent on the ages of the children</li> <li>• One-bed bungalow - couple or single person over pension credit age or over 50 with assessed medical needs or selected criteria</li> </ul>