



# Gateway to Homechoice

## An easy-read guide



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# What is in this guide?



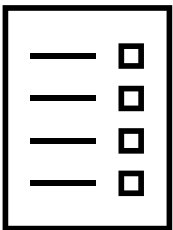
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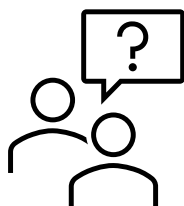
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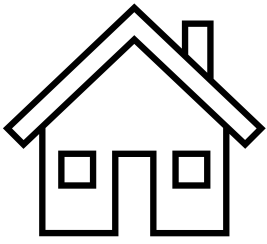
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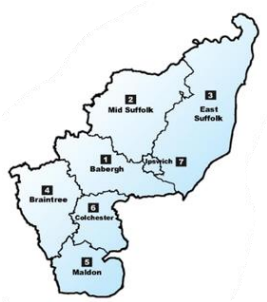
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# What is Gateway to Homechoice?



Gateway to Homechoice is a **Choice-based lettings** system which advertises **social housing** properties that are available.



You can apply for social homes across the seven local authority areas, including Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Maldon and Mid Suffolk.



Apply once to see properties across all areas covered by Gateway to Homechoice.



**Blue Words**

The words in **blue** are ones we think need to be explained.

We explain what **blue** words mean.

**Social housing** is housing provided by councils or housing associations, where rent is lower and you can usually stay for a long time.

**Choice-based lettings** is how social housing is offered. Instead of waiting on a list, you can see what is available and choose the ones you like.

# How to apply



## 1. Go to the Website

Visit [gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk](http://gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk)


If you do not have internet access, please call 0333 016 2000 to request help.



## 2. Create an Account

If this is your first time using the website click “Register”

Fill in your name, date of birth, address, and contact details

 Register

## 3. Make a note of your login reference number.

Remember to keep your details safe and only share with someone you trust.

  
Login reference:

## 4. You can now fill out an application form for housing.

Click on “Apply for Social Housing”



## 5. Complete the Application

Each page will ask questions about you and where you live. For example: who lives with you or why you want to move.

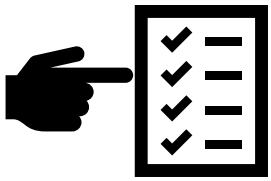


## 6. Answer all questions on each page until you reach end.

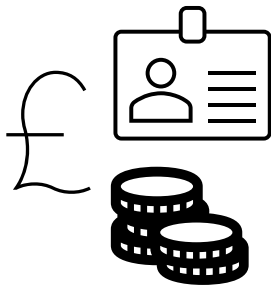
Click on “Submit Form”

 Submit Form ▶

# What you need to supply



**1. You will need to provide copies of documents about you.**



**2. Supply proof of identity (ID)**

For example: Passport, Driving Licence, Blue Badge, Bus Pass or Citizen Card.

**3. Supply proof of the money you get.**

For example: Benefits, Wages or Pension



**4. You may get a letter or email asking you to complete some forms for your application or provide bank statements.**

The forms may ask for more details about your housing history, medical needs or to gain your agreement.

Bank statements help us to check your name and details. If asked, please send full bank statements for the last 3 months.



**5. Send the information to Gateway to Homechoice so your application can be looked at.**

**ID** is short for identification. It means proof of who you are. Documents are papers or files that hold important information, often used as proof or record.

# How to send information

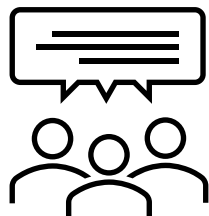


## Send information by using one of the below:

1. By post to : Gateway to Homechoice, East Suffolk Council, Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, NR33 0EQ



2. Upload copies to your online application using “Upload/Review documents”.



3. Bring documents to the Customer Services team. For more information, visit:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/contact-us>



Please send copies of your important documents. Do not send original documents like your ID as we cannot return them safely. If you are offered a home, we will ask to see the originals.



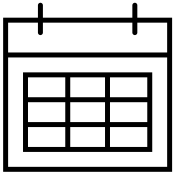
Wait for your application to be looked by the team. You will then be given a **Banding**.

A **banding** is a way to show how urgent your need for housing is. There are five bands from A-E.

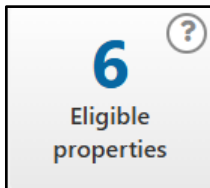
# How to apply for properties



Once you have been given a Band, you can start applying for homes.



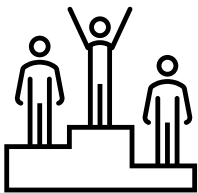
Each week, new homes are listed. You can choose up to 2 homes to **bid** on. Properties are listed every Thursday morning and bidding closes just before midnight the following Wednesday.



Your account will show all **eligible** properties across all areas in the scheme. Use the search tool to select your chosen area.



You will be told if you need to bid twice each week. You can cancel or change your bids during the week.



Your position is based on your band and your **effective date**. Your position will change during the week but it does not matter when you place your bids each week.

Applying for homes is called **bidding**. Bidding means you are saying “I’m interested” in a property.

**Eligible** means you meet the rules and are allowed to bid on these homes.

Your **effective date** is the date which your band applies from.

# Property Adverts



A property **advert** tells you about the property. Each advert includes useful details to help you decide if it's right for you, such as:

- The landlord's name.
- Location and property type.
- The size of the property.
- Rent amount and key features.



Adverts may also include a photo of the property or information about the area.

If there are special criteria such as age or **local connection**, these will be included in the advert.



Adverts will also tell you if the home has any **mobility adaptations** or changes and if it is suitable for people who need help to move around.

A **Landlord** is someone who owns a property and allows another person to pay money to live in it

**Local Connection** means you have a link to a place through living there, close family, or work.

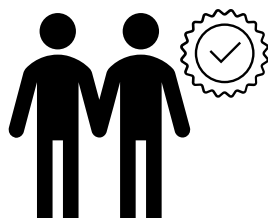
**Mobility Adaptations** are changes to your home that help you move around safely and to stay independent.

# Placing a Bid on a property

## You can place your bids either by:



Logging into your Gateway to Homechoice account on the website:  
[www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk](http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk) and viewing the properties you can bid on.



You can ask a trusted person to place bids on your behalf such as a family member, friend or support worker.



Calling the automated bidding line on 0845 270 0724. You will need your **login reference** number and the **property ID number** for the property you wish to bid on.



Calling East Suffolk Council Customer Services Team on 0333 016 2000 and a member of the team will be able to assist with your bids.

Your **login reference** is your account number.

The **property ID number** can be found at the top of the advert for each property and will look like this.

**Property Details - Reference 133471**



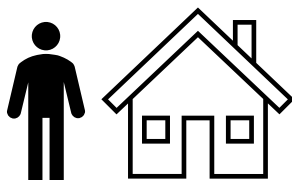
**1 bed flat in Felixstowe**

# Being offered a property

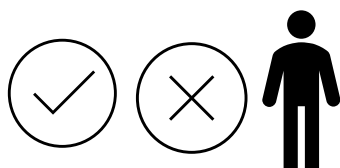
## If you are offered a property:



You will be contacted by the council or housing provider. They will tell you the address and details of the property.



You may be invited to view it. Sometimes this is in person, or the landlord may send photos and videos.



You will need to decide if you want the property. Usually, you will need to say yes or no within 48 hours. If you say no, you can bid on other homes.



If you say yes, the process to move in begins:

- You will sign a **tenancy agreement**.
- A date to move in will be given.
- Be prepared to cover moving costs and rent upfront.
- Most landlords require **rent** when the tenancy is signed.

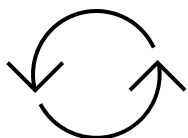
A **tenancy** is a legal agreement between a landlord (who owns the property) and a tenant (the person who rents it). It gives the tenant the right to live in the property, in exchange for paying rent.

**Rent** is the money you pay to your landlord to live in your home.



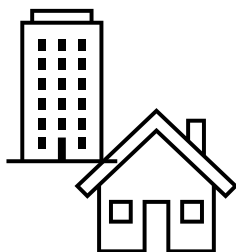
## Who can use Gateway to Homechoice?

Anyone can apply if they are aged 16 or over.



## Can I update my application?

Yes. Log in and update your details if anything changes (like your address or family size) or call 0333 016 2000 for help.



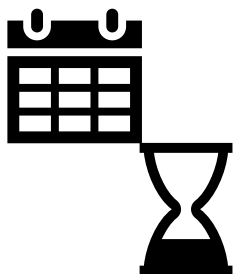
## What kind of Homes are listed?

- Council properties
- Housing association properties
- Sheltered housing for older people
- Adapted homes for people with disabilities



## What does “bidding” mean?

It means showing interest in a home. You are saying “I’d like to be considered.”

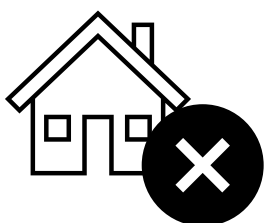


## How long will I wait for a home?

It depends on:

- Your band
- The type of home you need
- How often you bid and how many other people are bidding

Some people wait months, others wait years.



## What if I’m homeless or at risk?

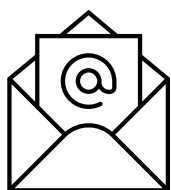
Contact your local council’s housing needs team right away. They may offer extra help or emergency housing. Call 0333 016 2000.

# Help and Support



Visit our website for more information and answers to questions.

[www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk](http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk)



Email your questions to:

[homechoice@eastsoffolk.gov.uk](mailto:homechoice@eastsoffolk.gov.uk)



Contact the Gateway

Team by calling 0333 016 2000 where you can speak to an advisor. Opening hours: 9am - 5pm Monday - Friday.



Speak to the Customer Services Team at the Council's Customer Service Points.



Write to us at: Gateway to Homechoice  
East Suffolk Council Riverside, 4 Canning Road  
Lowestoft, NR33 0EQ



Call the Housing Needs Team for help if you may become homeless: 0333 016 2000.



If You Are at Risk of Harm:

Remember if you are in immediate danger, call 999 for the emergency services.

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Gateway to Homechoice is the social housing scheme where council and housing association homes are advertised, and people can apply for them through one shared system.

This easy read guide includes clear words, short sentences, and helpful pictures or symbols. It explains information in a simple format so it is easier to understand.

