

Borders Choice Homes Guide



Welcome to Borders Choice Homes

Homehunt Scotland Common Housing Register

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Borders Choice Homes

Welcome to Homehunt Scotland Common Housing Register

BHA Homes and Eildon Housing Association two major landlords in the Scottish Borders, together with Cairn Housing Association, a national housing provider and Scottish Borders Council, have joined with other Scottish social landlords to introduce Homehunt Scotland.

Homehunt Scotland is a Choice Based Lettings partnership, which has been designed to give you improved access to affordable rented properties across Scotland. All of the partners share the same housing register and you will be able to apply for all properties advertised by the Homehunt Partners. By offering more choice we hope to create more settled communities and give you more say in where you are housed. This is a simple and straightforward way of letting homes.


Anyone aged 16 or over can register. All you need to do is complete an application form, which can be completed online, downloaded from the Homehunt website or requested from BHA Homes or Eildon Housing Association.

Borders Choice Homes properties available for rent are advertised each week in the Berwickshire News, Berwick Advertiser, Southern Reporter, at landlords' offices, on freephone 0800 587 4868 and online at www.homehunt.info

Generally more than one person applies for a vacant house or flat, so there are some simple rules to help us decide who should receive the first offer of the property. Borders Choice Homes allocates in the Scottish Borders area.

We hope you like this approach to letting properties.

Happy homehunting!



Helen Forsyth
Chief Executive
BHA Homes



Nile Istephan
Chief Executive
Eildon Housing Association

How to Register

You need to register with us before you can apply for a property. The simplest way is to apply online at www.homehunt.info

Registration can also be completed at BHA Homes or Eildon Housing Association offices. Or you can contact us to have an application posted to you.

You will be asked every year to review your registration and confirm you wish to remain registered.

Once you are registered, depending on your circumstances, you may qualify for priority. The online system will suggest priority forms for completion which you can complete along with your registration. However priority will not be assessed until the registration process is complete.

The priority assessment process will take longer if you request contact by mail as we will post the appropriate priority forms for you to complete and return.

Applying for Properties

When you have a live registration you can apply for any advertised property as long as the property is suitable e.g. it would not result in overcrowding or there are no restrictions on who can apply stated in the advertisement such as, sheltered housing which is normally reserved for those of retirement age and above.

All available properties are advertised online at www.homehunt.info and you can place your bid by logging into your registration. You can also do this in person at any landlord office or by telephone **but you must do this before the closing date and time specified in the advert.** If you have priority this will be recognised automatically if the property you are registering interest in meets your priority needs.

You can bid for as many advertised properties as you wish at any one time. However, if you qualify for more than one offer at the same time we will assume that the property you bid for first is your first choice, and so on. If you qualify for an offer on one property we will disregard any later applications you have made.

If there are no suitable properties advertised or perhaps it is not a convenient time to move there is no need to bid. However if you have Priority and you don't bid for suitable properties you risk losing your priority.

Offers of Property

Borders Choice Homes will normally contact the successful applicant within 3 working days of the closing date. If you do not hear from us within this timescale you have probably been unsuccessful on this occasion and you should keep on applying for properties which suit your needs.

Once the closing date and time has been reached everyone who applied for each advertised property will be considered and an offer will normally be made according to the following steps:

1. The applicant/s who would make 'best use' of the property – for example, by using disabled adaptations or by using all the available bedrooms will be considered first.
2. If there is more than one applicant who would make 'best use' of the property we will offer it to the person with the highest level of priority.
3. If there is more than one person with the same level of priority then the offer will go to the person who has been in priority need longest. (Date of priority award)
4. If there is more than one applicant with the same level and date of priority - or if there is more than one applicant applying and no-one with priority, then the offer will go to the person who registered with Borders Choice Homes first.

There are some exceptional circumstances when this may not apply – if you would like more information about this please ask for a full copy of the relevant landlord's policy.

When you are provisionally offered a property by Borders Choice Homes your registration will be placed on hold. We will request references at this point. While you are considering the offer you will be unable to bid for any other vacancies. If you do not contact the relevant landlord within three working days of the provisional offer we will assume that you wish to refuse the offer. You are requested to complete and return the appropriate page of the provisional offer to the relevant landlord whether you are refusing or accepting.

You will be able to view the property before signing a tenancy agreement.

If you refuse two offers without having a reasonable cause, your registration will be suspended and you will not be able to apply for properties for a period of six months.

Applying for Priority

Priority is awarded to registered applicants who have a ‘significant housing need.’ This means that the majority of applicants won’t actually be eligible for priority and we expect to offer many of our properties to people without this.

Priority is given in the following areas, at either Gold, Silver or Bronze level. The table below shows which levels may be awarded:

Priority Level			
Priority Type	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Homelessness	✓		✓
Health Assessment	✓	✓	✓
Overcrowding		✓	✓
Under-Occupancy		✓	
Unsuitable Housing		✓	✓
Specific Need to be in a Community			✓

Priority is awarded for six months. If you are awarded priority and do not bid for all suitable properties advertised which meet your needs, at the end of the six months your priority will be removed. If no suitable properties have been advertised, or you have applied for all suitable properties but were unsuccessful, your priority will be automatically renewed.

Silver priority for under-occupation has no expiry date and so will remain active until you are housed whether it is used for every suitable property or not.

How to Apply for Priority

If you fall into one of the following groups, you can apply for priority to be awarded to your registration.

- Are you **homeless**, about to become homeless within 56 days or experiencing harassment including domestic violence which prevents you from returning to your home? Or, are you having to leave your current home due to relationship breakdown or other valid reason preventing you continuing to live there?
- Is your **health** affected by your current housing situation?
- Is your accommodation **overcrowded** - do you need a bigger property?
- If you are a tenant of BHA Homes, Eildon or Scottish Borders Housing Associations or Waverley Housing and you are **under-occupying** your current home, ie is it too big for you and you are not using all the bedrooms?
- Is your **property unsuitable** because of its condition or lack of amenities or for any other reason?
- Is there a reason why you need to reside within a **specific community**, eg to provide care or support to someone?

Please complete the relevant priority application form online by logging into your homehunt registration, or request relevant priority forms from either BHA Homes or Eildon Housing Association and you can return it by post or in person to either landlord’s office.

If you are about to become homeless, contact Scottish Borders Council Homelessness Department. (01896 661 385)

Priority Awards

If you are awarded Priority it may only apply for a specific area or areas or to a particular type of property, eg ground floor. In some cases you can decide your priority limits but certain limits are decided by Borders Choice Homes, or by Scottish Borders Council who assess Homelessness. See tables below.

Your priority will only be valid for properties that meet your pass limits. You can still apply for properties which do not meet your pass limits, however, your priority will not be recognised. Pass limits include areas, property features and property types.

Please only complete the priority application forms which you think you may qualify for. There is no need to fill in any details or return any of the other priority forms if these do not apply to your circumstances.

You can only qualify for priority from one priority group. If you think that you qualify for priority in more than one group please complete all the forms that apply and we will award the highest level of priority.

Who can limit priority in towns/villages/areas				
Priority Area	Applicant	Borders Choice Homes	Scottish Borders Council	Applicant 2 nd
Homelessness		✓	✓	✓
Health Assessment		✓		✓
Overcrowding	✓			
Under-Occupancy	✓			
Unsuitable Housing	✓			
Specific need to be in a Community		✓		

Who can limit priority to property features		
Priority feature	Applicant	Borders Choice Homes
Property Type (e.g. bungalow, flat, house etc.)		✓
Ground Floor Accommodation	✓	✓
Wheelchair Access	✓	✓
Fully Wheelchair adapted	✓	✓
Level Access Shower		✓
Walk in shower (cubicle)		✓
Sheltered Housing	✓	✓

Assessment and Timeframes

We will aim to assess all priority applications within 10 working days from receipt of all required information.

When Priority is not awarded

If you decide to move and the move worsens your housing circumstances, you may not be awarded priority for these circumstances for six months even if you would normally qualify for this in your new home.

Suspensions

We may suspend an application from receiving an offer of housing in certain circumstances

Examples of when registrations are suspended include:

- If you or anyone to be housed with you has outstanding rent arrears of more than one month or any tenancy related debt, eg rechargeable repairs relating to a current or previous tenancy with any landlord. Suspension will remain in place until you advise that debt has been reduced to under one month rent charge or have maintained a repayment arrangement for at least 3 months. References will then be sought to confirm this information.
- If you or anyone to be housed with you has been evicted for anti-social behaviour or been the subject of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order or Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour, we will make enquiries to ensure that such behaviour has ceased and is unlikely to re-occur.
- In instances where Risk assessment is required registrations may be 'suspended' until the appropriate risk assessment is completed.
- Where you or anyone to be housed with you is identified as requiring support but this is refused or until support is in place as required for you or anyone to be housed with you, for the purposes of sustaining the tenancy.
- For refusal of two reasonable offers of accommodation.
- Unacceptable behaviour towards staff

If you would like more information on the above, please contact us about your registration.

False Information

If you intentionally give false or misleading information in an attempt to secure an offer of property we will immediately withdraw any priority you have, and suspend your registration for six months. If a tenancy has started, we will immediately take steps to recover the property.

Lettings Feedback

A Lettings Feedback Report is available at www.homehunt.info This gives information on how many bids there were for a vacancy and whether the successful applicant had priority. This gives everyone some idea of the demand for different properties and may help you to make realistic choices about where you want to live.

Where to go Homehunting

Our adverts appear weekly at www.homehunt.info in the Southern Reporter, Berwickshire News and Berwick Advertiser, BHA Homes and Eildon Housing Association websites and offices and on our freephone number 0800 587 4868.

Finally, if you need any help or advice at any time or you have any comments you would like to make, please contact any Borders Choice Homes landlord's office or Email: [BCH@eildon.org.uk](mailto: BCH@eildon.org.uk)

 <p>EILDON HOUSING Caring, Committed, Connected, Creative</p>	 <p>bha homes</p>
<p>Eildon Housing Association The Weaving Shed Ettrick Mill Dunsdale Road Selkirk TD7 5EB Tel. 03000 200 217 www.eildon.org.uk</p>	<p>BHA Homes 55 Newtown Street, Duns TD11 3AU Tel. 01361 884000</p> <p>38 Church Street, Eyemouth TD14 5DH Tel. 01890 750888 www.bhagroup.org.uk</p>



Borders Choice Homes will produce **HAPPY TO TRANSLATE** this information on request in,
Large Print and Community Languages.
To find out more, please telephone 03000 200 217.

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MOŻEMY PRZETŁUMACZYĆ

乐意翻译

Privacy Statement

We are committed to respecting and protecting your privacy. This privacy statement sets out how we process any personal data about you that we collect. Please read this carefully to understand our views and practices relating to your personal data and how we will treat it.

Who are we, and how will we use your personal data?

Homehunt Partners consisting of BHA Homes, Eildon Housing Association, Castlehill Housing Association, Tenants First Housing Co-operative, East Lothian Housing Association, Homes for Life, Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association, Ochilview Housing Association, and Link Housing Association, hereafter known as Homehunt Partners, are registered data controllers within the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. Homehunt is the operating name for our choice based lettings system facility that is provided by Housing Partners and we operate IT systems which process personal data for customers of the partner landlords. In this privacy statement, the Partners are referred to together as “we” or “us”. Please note that references in this privacy statement to personal data also include any sensitive personal data, as detailed in paragraph [2]. The information given in your Registration form, Priority Pass, and any additional information that you provide, together with any information that your lead landlord obtains about you from a third party will be held and used in accordance with the Terms of Use of the Homehunt website. We will not disclose any information about you without your consent unless we are required by law to do so. We may share information about you with other landlords who are not Homehunt Partners.

We will: collect only as much personal data as we need to *manage your registration*, and meet our obligations to provide information to other authorities and agencies; only keep your personal data for as long as we need it to provide you with services and to supply statistical reports; keep your personal data secure at all times and destroy it when we no longer need it.

What personal data will we hold about you?

By completing the registration form you are giving your consent to processing your data, including sensitive personal data. Sensitive personal data includes information about your racial or ethnic origin, your health, religious belief, sexual preference, committed or alleged offences including court proceedings and sentencing. Only sensitive personal data that is relevant to your housing application will be processed. You have the right to see and obtain a copy of any personal information that is stored about you on this website and have inaccuracies corrected.

2.1 When you become a tenant or occupant we shall keep personal data about you which was collected when you registered for housing and when you were being considered for a vacant property. Information about you and your household will be kept for as long as you are a tenant with one of the housing partners, and may be kept for some time after.

2.2 We may also receive personal data about you from other people or organisations. This may come from someone you asked or authorised to provide personal data and in some cases it will be provided to us in confidence.

2.3 Some of the information we ask you for is defined as sensitive personal data. Two types of sensitive personal data, if applicable to you, would be processed by us for the following purposes:

Information about your racial or ethnic origin is processed for equalities monitoring. Any statistical or research reports will not personally identify you.

Information about your physical or mental health is processed to help us to provide you with the most suitable services throughout your relationship with us.

Information about alleged or proven offences by you or members of your household, or related court cases, may be processed by us if it appears relevant to the management or sustainment of your tenancy.

2.4 Other categories of sensitive personal data are unlikely to be relevant to your relationship with us. We would not expect to process these without seeking further consent from you.

2.5 If you ask us not to process some or all sensitive personal data, or any other categories of information, the services which we are able to provide may be restricted.

2.6 You will not personally be identified in any reports making use of statistical information.

3 Your Rights

Where practicable we try to make it clear what personal data we are receiving and processing about you. Any personal data you give us on paper forms or on line will be incorporated into your records. You have a right to ask us for copies of the personal data we hold, excluding certain statutory restrictions for example where a third party can be identified from that information. If you find factual errors in our records of your personal data you can ask us to correct them.

4 Complaints and appeals

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our handling of your personal data you may raise a formal complaint with us, and you may also seek assistance from the Information Commissioner’s Office.

5 Updates

If we change the way in which we use your personal data, we will update you. We will also highlight any updates on our website.