



N.E.S.



Your Guide to Homehunt North East Scotland

Welcome to Homehunt NES - Simply a better way to provide homes.

Homehunt is a quick, easy to use service for people looking for rented housing. It puts property selection into the hands of those who will have to live in the properties while at the same time providing a straightforward system for identifying the successful applicants, and giving reasonable preference to people with significant housing need.

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Registering

You need to register with us before you can apply for a house – but registration is a very quick and easy process. Registration and priority passes can be completed online or at any of our offices.

It is important that you notify us as soon as possible of any changes in your circumstances as they may affect your current application. If you change address or your circumstances change you do not need to re-register, you simply need to log on to the homehunt website, using your unique login and advise us of the changes. Alternatively you can contact our office directly.

Who is not Eligible for Housing

In certain circumstances, registrations will be put 'on hold'. You will not be able to apply for any houses until the 'on hold' status is removed.

As part of the registration process you will be asked to complete several statements to confirm that you are eligible for housing with us (see also False Information) If any criteria are not met then your registration will be put 'on hold' until such time as you can demonstrate to us that the 'on hold' status no longer applies. Examples of when registrations can be put 'on hold' include:

- Rent Arrears, or any other tenancy related debt (which amounts to more than one month's rent) either with Partner Organisations or with another landlord, is outstanding and no agreement to pay them off has been maintained for a minimum of three consecutive months.
- History of anti-social behaviour, criminal activity or illegal drug use or supply – the Partner Organisations must be satisfied that such behaviour has ceased and is unlikely to re-occur.
- In instances where we offer accommodation with housing support provided by other agencies, registrations will be put 'on hold' until a support needs assessment is completed.

If you would like more information about whether or not you are eligible, please contact us in the strictest confidence. If you are not eligible, we will advise what action is required before you can apply through our normal system.

If you abuse or threaten any Partnering Organisation's staff we will immediately withdraw any Priority Passes you may have and your registration will be put 'on hold' for two years.

Priority Passes & How to Apply

As our properties are allocated on 'best use' and level of housing need, it will assist your application if you complete the relevant priority pass forms. This will ensure that your level of housing need is taken into consideration when allocating the advertised empty properties. If you think your current housing situation means that you are entitled to a Priority Pass **you should apply straight away.**

Please note – you cannot apply for a Pass and use it to bid for any properties that are advertised until your application has been assessed and you receive notification of your Priority Pass award.

Applying for a Pass is straightforward (if you require help or advice at any time please ask)

Step One – do you fall into one of the priority groups?

- Are you **Homeless**?
- Are you **threatened with homelessness**?
- Is your **health** affected by your current housing situation?
- Are you **overcrowded**?
- Is your housing in **very poor repair** or does your housing **lack facilities**?
- Are you **under occupying** a social rented property?
- Is there **some other personal reason** why a move is necessary?

Step Two – if your current housing circumstances fits into one of these groups look at the application for priority in that category and read the notes about applying for that Pass. The notes will also tell you what levels of Pass are available.

Step Three – if you feel that you qualify for a Pass, complete the online application (taking care to complete all the sections) and enclose more details and evidence where required

Please Note: You can **qualify** for more than one Priority Pass for your current housing needs. If you think that you qualify for more than one Pass please complete all the priority passes that apply but if you do qualify for more than one Pass we will award only the highest level of Pass to you.

Priority Pass Award

Priority Passes are awarded on three **levels:** Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Gold Passes are valid for six months (with the exception of Gold Priority Passes for Vacating Disabled Adapted Properties which do not expire). If you have chosen to limit your Gold Pass to certain areas or property features and have not applied for one or more properties when you could have within the six months you will lose your Priority Pass. If no

suitable properties have been advertised, or you have applied for suitable properties but were unsuccessful, then the Pass will be renewed for a further six months.

Silver and Bronze Passes have no expiry date so there is no need to limit your areas or property features.

Categories of Pass

There are five **categories** in which a Pass can be awarded. These are shown in the table below. Some qualify for just one level of Pass; others have different levels depending on the circumstances. The table below sets out the categories and levels of Passes available. It also highlights who will make the assessment – either ourselves or another agency on our behalf.

In all cases except homelessness you should apply for the Priority Pass through us, not any other agency. **For homelessness you should contact your local authority as soon as possible as we cannot provide any temporary accommodation.**

Priority Category	Priority Pass Level			Assessment By	
	Gold	Silver	Bronze	hh NES	LA
Housing Circumstances	√	√		√	√
Medical	√	√		√	
Overcrowding/Under occupation	√	√	√	√	
Lacking Facilities		√	√	√	
Personal Circumstances	√	√	√	√	

HhNES – Homehunt North East Scotland

LA = Local Authorities

Limited Passes

If you are awarded a Priority Pass it may be limited to a specific area or areas, or to a type of property by homehunt® NES. In the case of a Gold Overcrowding or a Gold Medical Pass **you** can limit your Pass. The table overleaf shows how Passes can be limited and by whom.

If your Pass is 'limited' it means that it is only valid for properties that meet the 'limited' criteria. You may still apply for properties that do not meet the 'limited' criteria but your pass will not be recognised for that property and you will be classed as a registered applicant with no Priority Pass.

So for example, if your pass was limited to properties in Bridge of Don then you could only use it for properties in that area – but equally in this example your Priority Pass would be renewed if no suitable properties had been advertised in Bridge of Don even if there had been suitable properties in other areas.

If you have been assessed as statutorily homeless, your Priority Pass will only be applicable for properties in your local council area.

Who can limit passes to specific areas			
Priority Type	Applicant	hh NES	LA
Housing Circumstances		√	√
Medical	√	√	
Overcrowding/Under occupation	√		
Lacking Facilities			
Personal Circumstances		√	

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Who can limit passes to property features		
Property Features	Applicant	hh NES
House Type (e.g. bungalow, flat, house, etc)	√	√
Ground Floor Accommodation	√	√
Wheelchair Accessible	√	√
Sheltered Housing		√
Very Sheltered Housing		√
Amenity Housing		√

HhNES – Homehunt North East Scotland

Where Priority Passes Are Not Awarded

If you decide to move from a property that you had the legal right to remain in, to another property in which your housing situation is worse, and you would normally qualify for a Priority Pass, the Pass will not be awarded for a period of two years because you will have deliberately 'worsened your circumstances', unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where this occurs, you will only be entitled to a Pass if you would have received one at your previous address.

Applying For A Home

Once registered you can apply for any property that is advertised, 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. For example, all our sheltered housing is for those who qualify for housing support.

When you see an advert for a property you are interested in, you should apply for it. You can do this online, in person at any of our offices, by phone, or by post – but you must do this before the closing date and time specified in the advert. If you have a Priority Pass, it will be recognised automatically unless as above, limited passes apply.

You can apply 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 applied for first is your first choice**, and so on, in the order you choose to apply. If you qualify for an offer on one house, we will disregard any later

applications you have made, **so the order in which you apply could be very important to you.**

Similarly, if there is nothing you like advertised, or perhaps it is not a convenient time to move, there is no need to apply (although if you have a Gold Priority Pass you risk losing it – see losing Priority Passes). All we ask is that you confirm once a year that you wish to remain registered with us for housing, when we contact you about this.

Sheltered and Very Sheltered housing provides people with independent living and reassurance that assistance is available at any time, day or night. Sheltered and Very Sheltered housing also adds a social element with common rooms, additional services and activities provided in the development.

Tenants First Housing Association and Castlehill Housing Association receive a grant from the local Council to pay for the Housing Support/Warden service, which is provided. All Sheltered and Very Sheltered housing applicants must be assessed as requiring sheltered housing and the housing support service and this must be approved by the relevant local Council.

The local Council calculates if a tenant has to pay for their housing support. Tenants with limited income and savings may be exempt from charges. The local Council will charge those who need to pay. These charges are not included in the property rent/service charge.

Please note if you are applying for Sheltered and Very Sheltered housing you must complete the Medical Priority Pass application form.

If you are applying for Castlehill Housing Association's Shared Ownership properties you must meet the eligibility criteria of age 55 years or over (or disabled) and have insufficient funds to purchase a property outright.

Offers of Property

Once the closing date and time has been reached, a list will be created of everyone who applied for each property. Normally an offer will be made according to the following steps:

1. The applicant who would make 'best use' of the property – for example, by using disabled adaptations, or by using all the available bedrooms.
2. If there is more than one applicant who would make 'best use' of the property, we will consider the person with the highest level Priority Pass. If there is more than one person with the same level of Priority Pass we will consider the person whose Priority Pass was awarded first.

3. If there is more than one person applying and no Priority Passes are used, then we will consider the person who registered with **homehunt NES** first.

(There are some exceptional circumstances when this may not apply – if you would like more information on this please visit our websites at www.castlehillha.co.uk or www.tenantsfirst.com)

Refusing Offers

To minimise random bidding and to ensure that applicants only bid for properties that they want to live in, **the following conditions apply** to applicants who repeatedly and unreasonably refuse properties:

1st refusal – warning letter will be issued

2nd refusal – deferment for 6 months

For details of when a refusal of property counts please contact the homehunt NES office.

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 Pass you have, and your registration will be put 'On Hold' for two years. If a tenancy has started, the landlord may immediately take legal steps to repossess the property.

Losing Priority Passes

If your Priority Pass has an expiry date and you do not apply for suitable properties (i.e. properties that would have been suitable for your needs), unless the advertised property was outside the limits on your Priority Pass, your Priority Pass will be removed.

If you are considered for a property, the details you provide on your application will be checked to confirm they are up to date and correct. If your Priority Pass is removed you may be entitled to appeal. Even if your Priority Pass is removed, you can still apply for properties as a registered applicant.

PLEASE NOTE: Priority Pass assessments are designed to ensure that your current level of housing need is taken into consideration at the point of allocating the properties, **therefore you must keep all details on your application up to date.**

Reporting Allocations

After an offer of property has been accepted, we will publish details of how the allocation was made in the next edition of our newsletter. A copy of the latest newsletter is available online or at either of the Partnering Landlord's office.

The Newsletter gives everyone some idea of the demand for different properties and can help you make choices about where you want to live – for example, is it more important to be housed sooner and go for properties that are in lower demand, or can you wait for the 'perfect' property to come along? Homehunt NES allows **you** to make that choice, rather than have someone make it for you.

Where To Go Homehunting

Our available properties can be viewed online at www.homehunt.info where you can log into your homehunt account and apply for properties you are interested in. We also publish details every second Tuesday in the Press & Journal (in the 'Your Homes' pull out supplement) and Partnering Landlords' offices, or you can listen to recorded information about our available properties on 01224 628101.

If you require any help or advice please contact us at the addresses below:

Tenants First Housing Association
2 Donside Village Square, Aberdeen, AB24 2PL. Tel: 01224 283500

Castlehill Housing Association
4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT. Tel: 01224 625822

Making a Formal Complaint

If you are unhappy with the service you have received from homehunt NES, and would like to make a formal complaint please contact us for a copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure.