

Guide to applying for housing





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Using this guide

We've produced this leaflet to tell you:

- how you can apply to rent one of our homes
- how we assess your application
- how we allocate housing.

About us

Sanctuary is one of the UK's leading providers of housing and associated services, managing around 100,000 units of accommodation across England and Scotland. This includes general rented, retirement living and homeownership accommodation. We reinvest our surplus income into developing services, providing new housing, improving our homes and investing in your neighbourhoods.

Who can apply for housing?

Anyone over the age of 16 can apply to join our open waiting lists if they are assessed as being in housing need and meet the criteria of our banding scheme.

You are not eligible for housing if:

- you are not assessed as being in housing need and do not meet our banding criteria
- you are not entitled to hold a tenancy due to your immigration status
- you have been evicted for breach of tenancy by a local authority, housing association, other registered provider or private landlord
- we consider you pose a threat to a local community because you have been convicted of offences like drug dealing, violent or abusive behaviour towards others (including Sanctuary staff), racially motivated attacks or hate crimes.

We may suspend or cancel applications in the following cases:

- you have broken any of your tenancy obligations
- you or any member of your household is the subject of an antisocial behaviour order or an injunction on grounds of antisocial behaviour
- you have a previous or current debt with a landlord and have made no plans to repay the debt
- you have previously abandoned a property
- you have given false or misleading information on your application
- if you refuse reasonable offers of accommodation.

How do I apply?

There are several ways to apply for one of our homes.

Direct application

You can apply to us direct by calling our Customer Service Centre, or we can send an application form out to you.

Once we've received your application, we will write to you confirming your lettings band and housing area you are eligible for. Please note – not all waiting lists will be open for applications. For more information visit www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk

Transfers

If you are already a resident and need to move, we may be able to transfer you to another home if we assess you as being in housing need. We will contact you to discuss your housing choices in more detail.

Make sure you refer to the housing choices detailed in this guide which you may find useful.

Completing an application form – this applies to both direct applications and transfers

When you complete an application form either in writing or over the phone, please answer the questions as fully as possible. This is because we use the information provided to put you into a specific lettings band. You may need to provide proof of what you have told us.

Nominations from a local authority

If you are already on the housing list of a local authority, they may nominate you for one of our homes. We will still need to check your details before we can offer you a home.

Choice based lettings

We are signed up to many choice based lettings schemes across the country and you may be eligible to apply through this route.

In most areas you need to apply direct to the choice based lettings scheme which will assess your entitlement to join. Once registered, you can bid and express an interest in homes advertised.

Mutual exchanges

If you currently live with us and want to move to another home, why not consider swapping with another Sanctuary, local authority, or housing association resident? If you want to exchange, you must tell us first – we need to give written permission before the exchange can go ahead.

If you can't find someone to exchange your home with, you can register online at www.homeswapper.co.uk This is an online service, connecting you to other residents who want a mutual exchange.

Homeswapper will alert you when a suitable match has been found by text or email. You can also search the site yourself to find a match. There are also other exchange sites that you may want to use, depending on where you want to move to.

Referral agencies

We accept referrals from many agencies who support people with specific housing needs. We can also help those living in supported accommodation to move into a home which allows them to live independently.

External websites

We regularly advertise our properties on external websites, for example Gumtree, Rightmove and Zoopla.



How are homes allocated?

We assign you a lettings band based on your housing need. When allocating homes we look at each band in turn, starting with the band with people in the most housing need.

Within each band we would choose the applicant who has been on the waiting list the longest.

Lettings bands

From the information you provide, we will put your application in one of the following bands:

Band A – will only be awarded:

- in exceptional cases where an inability to move will lead to significant and/or imminent harm to the applicant or a member of their household.

You will need to provide evidence to support your application.

Band B – will be awarded if you need to move because:

- you are suffering from domestic abuse
- you are suffering from harassment (including racial harassment)
- you are under occupying a social housing property by two or more bedrooms
- you are overcrowded and need two or more extra bedrooms
- you are ready to move on from supported housing into independent accommodation
- you occupy a bedsit or studio, with one or more children living with you
- you or a member of your household have a medical condition or disability caused or made worse by your current housing. It will only improve by a move to alternative accommodation.

You may need to provide evidence to support your application.

Band C – will be awarded if you need to move because:

- you have received 28 days notice where you live
- your home is being repossessed
- you are suffering serious antisocial behaviour and moving will ease this
- you are under occupying a social housing property by one bedroom
- you are overcrowded and need one extra bedroom

- the accommodation you currently live in is unsuitable for your needs, for example household not living together or property needs adapting to your needs
- you are a nondependent household member over the age of 18 living in a Sanctuary home. You must be overcrowded and have lived there for the last three years or more to qualify for this.
- you are over 55 and want to move to older retirement living accommodation
- you need to access specialist education, a permanent job or support services because of a disability, because of your age or other welfare related reasons.

You may need to provide evidence to support your application.





Being offered a home

Before we consider you, we will check the details you have provided. We may visit you and seek further details.

It's important we make the best use of our homes, so we use the following to work out how many bedrooms you need:

- one bedroom for every adult couple
- one bedroom for any other person age 16 or over
- one bedroom for any two children under 16 of the same sex
- one bedroom for any two children aged under 10, regardless of sex
- one bedroom for any extra child under 16.

We would not normally give homes to people who would then become overcrowded or would be under occupying. We may consider granting an extra room in the following cases:

- a household member needs to sleep in a room alone because of a medical condition
- you need an extra room for medical equipment
- you need an extra room for an overnight carer
- you need an extra room for the purpose of foster care.

If we offer you a home, we will invite you to view the property. You can then decide if you would like to accept. If you refuse a reasonable offer, we may reconsider your application.

Tenancy sign up – what happens next?

1. When you've accepted an offer and the home is ready for you to move into, you will need to sign a tenancy agreement.
2. If you are eligible for housing related benefit, please tell the local authority straight away.
3. The full rent amount will be payable on the day the tenancy agreement is signed and every Monday thereafter, so that your account is always one week in advance. This applies even if you plan on claiming housing related benefits.
4. We will ask you to set up a direct debit to pay your rent.

Reviewing applications

We review applications regularly and we will contact you by letter to confirm your current housing needs.

We do this to make sure the information we hold about you is up-to-date – your circumstances could have changed since you applied or updated your registration.

You can also contact us yourself to let us know about any changes to your situation and housing needs.

If you don't respond to a review request within 28 days, we will cancel your application.



How you can review your application decision

If you feel that we have not dealt with your application fairly or you aren't happy with our decision, please raise this with the member of staff who has been dealing with you.

If you are not satisfied with the result, you have the right to ask for a further review.



Other services we provide

Shared ownership

Shared ownership allows people, who couldn't otherwise afford to do so, to buy a share of their home. Shares start at 25% and you can increase this over time, and if you can afford to do so eventually becoming an outright homeowner.

If you are a Sanctuary resident and interested in buying your home on a shared ownership basis, please contact us.

For details of ownership options available in your area, visit www.homebuyagents.org.uk Sanctuary also advertises any new shared ownership homes on this website.

You can also contact our Homeownership team by emailing contactus@sanctuary-housing.co.uk or by calling **0800 916 1444** (landline) or **0300 123 3516** (mobile) for more details.

Retirement living

We aim our retirement living homes at those aged 55 years or over, who have the ability to live independently, but who would benefit from extra support.

We have designed these homes with older people in mind, with many social activities on offer.

We aim to provide residents with peace of mind and security. This includes links to a call centre, providing help in an emergency 24 hours a day.

Private retirement and leasehold schemes

We also offer owner occupation for the over 60s through our private retirement and leasehold schemes.

Care

Sanctuary Care provides older people with a range of high quality care and support, including specialist dementia, nursing and residential care.

We have more than 50 care homes across England and our dedicated team is committed to providing the highest standards of care, whilst promoting dignity and independence.

Extra Care

Sanctuary runs Extra Care schemes across England that provide care and support, predominantly to the over 55s to support them in living independently.

Residents have their own private apartment within one of our schemes and as their needs increase over time, so too can the level of care and support we provide.

This leaflet can be translated into other languages, large print and Braille or recorded on to an audio CD. Please contact your local office for details.

Sanctuary Housing

Hindle House, Trinity Way, Adderbury, Banbury, OX17 3DZ

0800 131 3348 (landline) **0300 123 3511** (mobile)

contactus@sanctuary-housing.co.uk

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