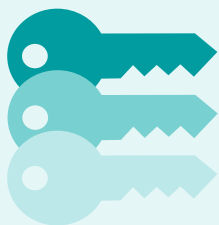


A new way of finding a home to rent

November 2003



Homeselect
Great Yarmouth Lettings Partnership

About Homeselect



Homeselect is a new way people can apply for borough council and housing association homes in Great Yarmouth. It lets you apply for a home of your choice instead of having to wait for an offer which somebody else thinks is suitable.

Homeselect is run by Great Yarmouth Borough Council in partnership with Broadland, Cotman, Guinness, Orbit, Orwell, Suffolk Heritage and Wherry Housing Associations.

Applicants for housing now only need to join one lettings scheme for council and housing association properties in the borough. Virtually all council and housing association housing in the borough will be let through the Homeselect scheme.

People applying for housing will be placed in one of three bands, according to their housing need.

Homes becoming available will be advertised each fortnight in the **Great Yarmouth Advertiser**, on our special property hotline, **846140** and on our website at **www.homeselect.org.uk**, giving details of each property and who will be eligible for them.

Registered applicants will then be able to apply for a property of their choice.

How do I apply?

- If you're already on the housing register or transfer list you'll automatically be registered with **Homeselect**. If you are a new applicant, you'll need to fill in the form to join the register. When you do, we'll work out your housing need and place you in one of 3 needs bands: gold, silver or bronze.
- When you join the scheme, we'll tell you which band you are in, give you your Homeselect registration number, and tell you your application date.

Application date

The length of time you've been registered is important if more than one person applies for an advertised home.

- Normally the “application date” will be the day we receive your application.
- However, if you're accepted as homeless, the date will be the day the council made its decision.
- If you have to move, say because your tenancy comes to an end through no fault of your own, then the original date will still apply.
- If you have an “emergency card”, the application date will be the day it was issued.

What if my circumstances change?

- If you move home while registered with Homeselect, you'll need to complete a new form so that we can look again at your housing need.
- If your circumstances change, perhaps because you have a baby, your medical condition gets worse, or you're about to become homeless, then you'll need to fill in a new form.
- If this means you move to a higher band, then your “application date” will be the date we receive your new form. If you move to a lower band, then the original date will still apply.

What sort of home can I apply for?

The type of home you can apply for will be based on the number of people living with you.

- For example, if you're a couple or live on your own, you can normally only be considered for a 1 bedroomed home
- If you have a child, 2 children under 10, or 2 older children of the same sex, you can apply for 2 bedroomed homes
- If you have 2 or 3 children, you can apply for 3 bedroomed homes

These are just examples, and your family's circumstances might mean you can be offered a different size home.

We will tell you when you register what types of homes you can apply for. (There is a map in this pack which shows where housing association and council properties are located. More information is available on our website).

- Some properties are designated for older people, for example sheltered housing (sometimes called “warden service”). A separate booklet tells you what's provided in sheltered housing and about the different schemes in the borough.
- Some properties have special features which make them more suitable for people with a disability or mobility problem. The ad will give details of any special features, and our letter symbols are there to help advise people with mobility problems as to whether the property is suitable for their needs (see separate leaflet). Properties of this kind are likely to be reserved or prioritised for people with a disability.
- Some developments may have “no pets” or other special rules

The ads will give you all the essential information you need. More information about the location and amenities in the area is on our website.

How do I contact Homeselect ?



Ring 846140

- to find out about properties available or to apply for a property
- to get more information about the scheme and your application

Or

- Check our website at www.homeselect.org.uk



1

Do I need to move?

Remember, only a small minority of applicants, mostly people with high needs, can be rehoused each year. And moving house is a disruptive process.

Whether you're a home-owner, a private tenant, council or housing association tenant, we may well be able to assist you to stay put by improving your situation.

Or we can provide information about other ways of securing a move. See the leaflet on **Housing Options**.

Studying the feedback on each advertisement for available properties will help you assess availability. We also provide up-to-date information about the numbers of properties in each main area of the borough and vacancies in the last year, on our website. This should help you weigh up your options.

2

Apply to go on the Homeselect register

You've considered your options and want to apply to the scheme.

Provided you are 16 or over** you can apply. However, there are some exclusions from the scheme. See section, "Who can be excluded from the scheme?".

Complete the application form carefully, following the detailed notes. If you have a health or mobility problem which is made worse by your current housing, or which we need to know about to ensure we offer you a suitable home, complete the medical form enclosed with this pack too.

***Note if you're under 18 when you are offered housing, we may apply conditions for example, we may require a guarantor and/or ask you to accept a support package.*

3

Confirmation

The Homeselect team at the Council will assess your application. You will be sent a letter confirming you are registered.

It will tell you

- The priority band you're in (see the guide to the 3 bands overleaf)
- Your application date
- The size/type of home you can apply for
- Your Homeselect registration number

Keep this confirmation letter handy. You'll need the information to find a home.

You will no longer need to re-register your application every year.

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Find a home

Each fortnight, homes are advertised in the property section of the Great Yarmouth Advertiser. Details can also be picked up from council and housing association offices. You can also find out what's available by visiting the Homeselect website, www.homeselect.org.uk or you can call our property hotline on 846140.

5

Applying for a home

When you see a home you like in your band or a lower one and you meet all specified requirements you have **7 days to apply**

- By phoning Homeselect on 846140. You will be able to record your bid or speak directly to one of our staff. You can ring at any time - the service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year - but try to avoid busy times like mornings.

Remember you have 7 days to bid and bidding early will make no difference!

- By using the website: www.homeselect.org.uk
- By calling in at our offices at the Town Hall, Greyfriars House, Gorleston Area Housing Office or the South Yarmouth Area Housing Office

When you bid have these details with you:

- Your name and current address
- Your Homeselect registration number
- The reference number of the property you are interested in

You can bid for up to 2 properties each fortnight.

6

Selection

If there is more than one eligible applicant for an advertised home, we select the one in the highest band, who has been registered the longest and who meets all the specified requirements.

7

Offer

If your application is selected, a housing officer will visit you to check the details of your application and make sure there are no problems, before making an offer.

8

Feedback

In each fortnightly advertisement, we will also print details of how many people applied for previously advertised properties and the date successful applicants registered to join the scheme. **This information will help you decide where you have the best chance of being rehoused and help you consider if you should look at other housing options.**



What happens if I have a medical problem or disability?

- You will need to fill in the medical and welfare form in the application pack. This asks you about your medical condition and any special needs, why your current home makes your condition worse, and why you want to move.
- With your permission, we may need to ask your social worker, health specialist or another professional who knows about you and your condition to fill in a special circumstances assessment form.

We may arrange for an occupational therapist or a housing officer to visit you to assess your needs in more detail. We'll let you know if this is necessary.
- Your application will then be assessed for possible medical or welfare priority. Our decision will be based on your condition, the effect of your current housing on your health and how your condition might be helped if you move to another home.
- We'll tell you the decision in writing and if you've been placed in another band. If you disagree with the panel's decision and can provide more information, you can ask it to look at your case again.

My home is in poor condition what should I do?

- The **Homeselect** application form will ask you about the condition of your present home. If you're a private tenant or home owner and tell us it is in poor condition, we'll arrange for an expert, usually an environmental health officer or housing officer, to come and inspect your home. They will decide if the problem can be resolved, or what priority, if any, we should give. This could affect the band you're put in.

What if I don't agree with the band I'm put in?

- If when we write to you about your banding you don't agree, you can appeal. You have 21 days to tell us why you think we are wrong and to give us any more information that might help your appeal.

Who can be excluded from the scheme?

- Asylum seekers and some groups of people subject to immigration control under Asylum and Immigration law are not legally entitled to apply to the scheme. We will need to look into your circumstances if you appear to come into one of these groups
- We may also exclude an applicant from the scheme if we are satisfied that they or a member of their household are guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour (for example, serious anti-social behaviour) which makes them unsuitable as tenants.
- Unacceptable behaviour- for example, an applicant deliberately worsening their housing circumstances or breaching tenancy conditions- may alternatively result in our reducing the priority of an applicant. We may require them to meet certain conditions before they are offered a property under the scheme, though they will be able to remain on the **Homeselect** register.
- Where we exclude or impose a penalty on an applicant, we will let them know in writing. They will be able to appeal against that decision.

Homeselect - Banding



Homeselect is a simple and clear way of finding a home for rent either from the borough council or housing associations in Great Yarmouth.

It's designed to give applicants a choice where they live and ensure that those in the greatest need are given the highest priority.

Homeselect uses a banding system - **gold, silver and bronze** - to identify need, with those in the gold band being given the highest priority and those in the bronze the lowest.

The following details on the next few pages show what we take into account in deciding which band an application is placed.



Gold band



- You have been accepted as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness and in priority need by the borough council*
- You are severely overcrowded (your family needs at least 2 more bedrooms than now) and you are in long-term accommodation
- You're a council or housing association tenant with 2 or more spare bedrooms and willing to move into a smaller home
- You're suffering from serious harassment, violence, or threat of violence
- You are assessed as having high medical or welfare needs
- You live in the private sector and have severe disrepair/poor condition problems which can't be remedied
- You're assessed as needing to move on urgently from hostel accommodation with a support package (silver band could instead be awarded)
- You're in hospital ready to be discharged but your home is assessed as being quite unsuitable and unable to be adapted
- You live in the private sector, identified as having medium disrepair/poor conditions which can't be resolved AND medium medical/welfare priority

**Homeless applicants will normally receive this level of priority for a maximum of 6 months, after which it will be reviewed.*



Silver band



- You have been accepted as unintentionally homeless by the borough council but not in priority need; you're threatened with homelessness for no fault of your own
- You are overcrowded (your family needs an extra bedroom or you have regular access to a child/children not permanently living with you)
- You share kitchen **and** bathroom facilities with non-family (eg as lodgers or in long-term bedsit type accommodation)
- You're a council or housing tenant with 1 bedroom spare and willing to move to smaller accommodation
- You live in the private sector and have disrepair/poor condition problems which can't be resolved
- You are assessed as having medium medical/welfare needs**
- You're in exceptional financial hardship making it difficult for you to maintain your home
- You live outside the borough but have proven need to live here for work/support purposes to avoid hardship
- You have 2 or more children living with you, at least 1 under 7, and live above the ground floor

***If 2 people in your family have medium medical/welfare priority, we will assess whether higher priority overall should be awarded.*



Bronze band

- You live in a property which is adequate for your family in terms of size and facilities
- You have a local connection but have no proven need to move into the borough
- You have no local connection **and** no proven need to move into the borough
- You are an owner occupier and have sufficient resources to assist yourselves (high medical/welfare or disrepair problems or a need for specialist housing may override this)

Emergency card

Sometimes applicants find themselves living in such severe living conditions that they have to move urgently. In these circumstances, an emergency card may be issued.

- This will only be given in exceptional circumstances on the basis of substantial evidence.
- Emergency cards will normally only be granted for 3 months.
- If they haven't been used in that time and suitable properties have been advertised, we will review your emergency status.