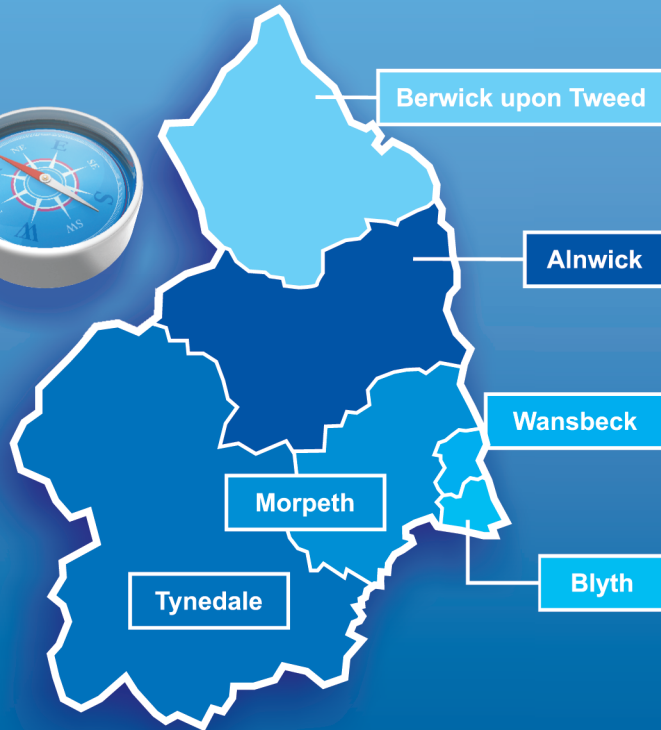




Northumberland

Homefinder

YOUR GUIDE TO THE NORTHUMBERLAND HOMEFINDER LETTING SERVICE



**Castle Morpeth
Housing**

Quality homes,
thriving communities



Milecastle

Quality homes,
thriving communities



Northumberland
Northumberland County Council

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Introduction

Northumberland Homefinder is Northumberland County Council's housing allocations service, delivered in partnership with Berwick Borough Housing, Castle Morpeth Housing, Homes for Northumberland, Milecastle Housing and Wansbeck Homes.

All council owned homes, and homes owned by our partners, will be let through this service. We will also let homes from other housing associations and private landlords and offer homes that are available for shared ownership.

Homes let through Northumberland Homefinder will be let in accordance with our Common Allocation Policy. A copy of this policy is available from the Northumberland County Council website or on request from any of our offices.

Providing services fairly

We aim to ensure that all our customers can use our services regardless of age, race, sex, disability, religion or sexuality.

If you need assistance to use this service our staff can:

- Help you fill in Northumberland Homefinder forms
- Provide information, on request, in different formats
- Take account of any special needs you have

How do I apply?

In order to apply for homes through Northumberland Homefinder first you must apply to join the scheme by completing an application form.

You can obtain an application form from any of our offices, from any council Information Centre or from our website:

www.northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk

Who can apply?

You can apply to join the Housing Register if you are 16 years or over. Although some landlords participating in the scheme might not allocate to applicants under 18 you can still apply to join the register.

Can you refuse my application?

We can refuse to accept your application if:

- You are from abroad and are subject to immigration control
- You or a member of your household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour e.g. being involved in anti-social behaviour or owing rent or your behaviour has resulted in a breach of your tenancy agreement

In some instances we may only reduce your priority. If we refuse your application we will write to you to tell you why.

How will I know if you have accepted my application?

We will write to you to confirm that we have accepted your application. We will provide you with a unique reference number and a personal identification number (PIN). You should keep these details safe as you will need them to apply for properties.

What happens once I have submitted my application?

When you submit your application to join Northumberland Homefinder first we will ensure that you are eligible to join. We may ask you to provide proof of your and any joint applicant's identity.

When applying you must tell us where you have lived in the last 5 years and whether you have any unspent criminal convictions. If you do not provide this information we will not be able to process your application.

If you are living, or have previously lived, in rented accommodation we may check that you have kept to your tenancy conditions, for example that you have paid your rent and have not behaved in an anti-social way.

We will then assess your housing need.

How will my housing need be assessed?

We must give priority to people who are in most housing need. We cannot let our homes on a first come first served basis.

We will award you one of 4 priority need bands depending on your circumstances.

- **Band P** is awarded to applicants in urgent housing need, for example people who are homeless
- **Band 1** is awarded to applicants with a high housing need, for example those with a severe medical condition
- **Band 2** is awarded to applicants with a medium housing need, for example households who are overcrowded
- **Band 3** is awarded to applicants who are currently adequately housed

How will I know what priority band I am in?

When we write to you to confirm we have accepted you onto the register we will tell you the priority band you have been awarded and the reason why we have awarded you this band.

How long will I be in this band?

If you are awarded Band P you will keep this status for a maximum of 3 months. If you are awarded Band P because you are homeless you will be awarded this priority for 4 weeks. This is because we expect you to be able to find a home within this time period.

If you are awarded Bands 1, 2 or 3 you will keep this priority until you are housed or your circumstances change.

What if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change you should contact us and let us know so we can reassess your application.

What if I don't agree with your decision?

If you don't agree with any of our decisions you can request a review. You will need to request a review within 21 days of the decision being made. We will aim to respond to your review request within 8 weeks.

What if I am or may become homeless?

If you are homeless or are threatened with homelessness please contact your local office.

What do I do next?

When we have provided you with a reference number, a PIN and have confirmed your priority band you are ready to start looking for a home.

Where can I find out about homes that are available?

Every week from 00:01 on a Thursday until 23:59 the following Monday we will advertise all of the homes that are available to rent. They will be advertised:

- At www.northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk
- On our automated telephone line 0845 60 66 546
- In our offices
- In Northumberland County Council information centres
- In some public buildings such as Citizens Advice and libraries

Each advert has its own reference number. You will need this property reference number to apply for it.

How do you know I am interested in a property?

To tell us that you are interested in a property you need to “bid”. This is the term we use to describe your expression of interest in a property. Bidding does not involve any money.

How many bids can I place?

You can place up to 3 bids every week.

Demand for our properties is high. You will increase your chances of being rehoused if you are willing to consider a variety of areas where you will live.

We publish information about the priority band and the length of time that successful applicants have waited to be offered a home. Use this “recent lets” information to help you make choices about the properties you bid for. This information is available from our website.

What type of property can I bid for?

The type and size of the property you can bid for depends on the make up of your household. We will allocate 1 bedroom each to:

- A couple
- Any person in the household who is 13 or over
- Two children up to 13 who are the same sex
- Two children under 10 regardless of their sex
- Any unpaired child

We will tell you what type of property you can bid for. You will only be able to bid for the property types you are eligible for.

How do I bid?

To bid for a property you will need your reference number, your PIN and the reference number of the property you are interested in.

You can place bids:

- At www.northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk
- By calling 0845 270 1997
- By texting 0778 148 6959
- At our offices (in person or by telephone)
- In Northumberland County Council information centres
- In some public buildings such as Citizens Advice and libraries

How long do I have to make a bid?

Bids can only be placed during the advertising cycle so you can bid from 00:01 on a Thursday until 23:59 the following Monday.

Bidding using the website

Go to www.northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk and click **Log in/My Account**. You will then need to enter your reference number and PIN.

Use the **Property Search** option to view available properties. You can view all of the available properties by clicking on **Show All** or you can search for a property using specific criteria such as area, or you can view only the properties that you are eligible to apply for.

If you find a property you are interested in and wish to bid, click **Apply Now**. When you have confirmed your bid you will receive a message that confirms your bid has been successfully placed.

Bidding by telephone

To bid by telephone you will need your reference number, PIN and the property reference number.

Call **0845 270 1997** and follow the voice prompts to place your bid.

You will only be able to bid for the properties that you are eligible for.

Calls are charged at local rates. Calls from mobiles may be more depending on your service provider.

Bidding by text

To bid by text you will need your reference number, PIN and the property reference number.

Send a text using the following format:

Your reference number, then a space, then **your PIN** followed by a space and then the **first property reference number** (then if you are bidding for more than one property...) space the **second property reference number**.

Your text should look something like this

500100 01/01/1950 4005

Send your text to **0778 148 6956**. You will receive a text confirming that your bid has been placed.

You will only be able to bid for the properties that you are eligible for.

You can bid for up to 2 properties per text message. SMS charges vary depending on your mobile service provider.

Bidding in person

You can visit, or call, any of our offices to place a bid. You will need your reference number, PIN and the property reference number.

What happens to my bid?

Once the advertising cycle has closed (at 23:59 on a Monday) all bids are sorted into order according to priority band and registration date. This is known as a shortlist.

You can see your shortlist position at any time but please bear in mind that it can change at any time whilst the advertising cycle is still open. Your shortlist position does not guarantee that you will be offered a property as additional criteria may need to be applied.

How will I know if my bid was successful?

If your bid is successful we will contact you. We will aim to contact you within one week of the advertising cycle closing. If we do not contact you, you have not been successful this time. Keep bidding for homes until we contact you.

What are my chances of success?

There are many more applicants than homes available so you may have to wait before you are successful in your search for a home.

What happens when we offer you a home?

First we will ask you to confirm that your circumstances have not changed since you submitted your application. We need to ensure that you are still eligible for the property you have bid for.

If we said in the advert that special criteria should be met, such as having a local connection to a particular area, we will check this with you.

If you are currently a tenant we will ask your landlord for references. We will not be able to offer you a home if you owe any rent or if you have a history of anti-social behaviour.

Can I view the property before I decide if I want it?

If we make you an offer we will invite you to view the property. Once you have seen it we will ask you to make your decision by the end of the next working day.

If you decide to accept it we will explain the tenancy conditions to you and ask you to sign a tenancy agreement.

You can refuse the property if it is not suitable, just let us know why. You can then carry on bidding for other homes.

We can withdraw an offer if we believe that your circumstances are different to those initially declared on your application form.

Can I keep bidding once I have found a home?

No. Once you have accepted an offer we will cancel your application for housing. If you want to move in the future you will need to submit a new application.

Other Housing Options

There are other housing options such as private rented properties and housing association properties. We can give you advice about your options.

Housing Advice

We can also offer housing advice. Please contact your local office if you need housing advice or visit the Housing section of Northumberland County Council's website at:
www.northumberland.gov.uk

Citizens Advice is also able to advise you on a range of issues such as possession proceedings, housing benefit and illegal eviction.

Our promise to you

We are committed to providing excellent services. We aim to:

- Write to you within 3 weeks of receiving your application to let you know if we have accepted it
- Return your call by the next working day if no-one is available to talk to you when you contact us
- Respond to any written correspondence within 10 days
- Let you know the outcome of any review within 8 weeks
- Make offers, where possible, within 5 working days of the advertising cycle ending.

Improving our service

If you are not satisfied with our service, or wish to make a complaint, please contact your local office. We also welcome any suggestions on how to improve our service.

Your guide to the Northumberland Homefinder letting service

For more information, please contact us at:

Berwick Borough Housing*
Unit 1, Windmill Way North
Ramparts Business Park
Berwick upon Tweed TD15 1TA
Tel: 0800 046 1451



Castle Morpeth Housing
1st Floor, Owen House
Sanderson Arcade
Morpeth NE61 1NS
Tel: 0845 117 0020

**Castle Morpeth
Housing**

Quality homes,
thriving communities

Homes for Northumberland (Blyth)
Civic Centre, Renwick Road,
Blyth NE24 2BX Tel: 01670 542242



Homes for Northumberland (Alnwick)
1 Clayport Street, Alnwick
NE66 1LA (by post) or
1 Greenwell Lane, Alnwick
NE66 2HT (in person)
Tel: 0800 046 1431



Milecastle Housing*
Beaufront Park, Anick Road
Hexham NE46 4TU
Tel: 01434 611400

Milecastle

Quality homes,
thriving communities

**Northumberland County Council
Housing Options Team (Berwick)
Council Offices, Wallace Green,
Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1ED
Tel: 01289 301833**

NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

**Northumberland County Council
Housing Options Team (Tynedale)
Hadrian House, Hexham
Northumberland, NE46 3NH
Tel: 01434 652338**

NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

**Wansbeck Homes
Front Street West
Bedlington NE22 5TU
Tel: 0844 800 3800**

 **WANSBECK**
HOMES

*If you are a tenant of Milecastle Housing or Berwick Borough Housing and have a query about your application please contact them directly.

Other Housing Providers

- Cheviot Homes 0844 800 3800
- Guinness Northern Counties 0845 605 9000
- Home Group 0845 606 3031
- Housing 21 0845 607 0272
- Johnnie Johnson Housing 0845 604 1095
- Riverside North East 0845 111 0000
- Places for People 0800 432 0002
- Nomad E5 0191 268 4800
- Railway Housing Association 01325 482125
- Two Castles Housing Association 01228 541161

We can provide this information in alternative formats and languages. If you would like information in another format or language, please contact one of our offices.

Arabic	يمكننا تقديم هذه المعلومات بتنسيقات ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بتنسيق أو لغة أخرى، برجاء الاتصال بمكاتبنا
Bengali	আমরা এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফরম্যাট ও ভাষায় প্রদান করতে পারি। আপনি যদি এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফরম্যাট বা ভাষায় পোতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের যে কোনো একটি অফিসে যোগাযোগ করুন
Chinese (simplified)	我们可以提供此资料的其它格式和语言版本。如果您希望获取其它格式或语言版本，请与我们的任一办事处联系。
Chinese (traditional)	我們備有此資訊的其它格式和語言版本。若您需要其它格式或語言版本，請聯絡我們的辦事處。
Hindi	हम यह जानकारी वैकल्पिक फॉर्मेटों और भाषाओं में मुहैया करा सकते हैं। अगर आप अन्य फॉर्मेट या भाषा में जानकारी चाहते हैं तो कृपया हमारे कार्यालयों में से किसी एक में संपर्क करें
Polish	Możemy udostępnić Państwu te informacje na różnych nośnikach i w różnych językach. Gdyby chcieli Państwo otrzymać informacje na innym nośniku lub w innym języku prosimy skontaktować się z jednym z naszych biur.
Portuguese	Podemos disponibilizar esta informação em formatos e línguas alternativas. Se gostasse de receber informação noutro formato ou língua, por favor contacte um dos nossos escritórios
Punjabi	ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਦਲਵੇਂ ਫਾਰਮੈਟਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਪਸੰਦ ਕਰੋਗੇ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਦਫਤਰਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਇਕ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ
Slovak	Môžeme poskytnúť tieto informácie v ďalších formátoch a jazykoch. Ak budete chcieť informácie v iných formátoch a jazykoch, prosím, kontaktujte jednu z našich kancelárií.
Turkish	Bu bilgileri başka formatlarda ve dillerde sağlayabilmekteyiz. Bilgiyi başka bir formatta veya dilde almak isterseniz, lütfen ofislerimizden biriyle irtibat kurunuz.
Urdu	ہم یہ معلومات متبادل شکلوں اور زبانوں میں فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر شکل یا زبان میں مطلوب ہو تو، براہ کرم ہمارے کسی دفتر سے رابطہ کریں

