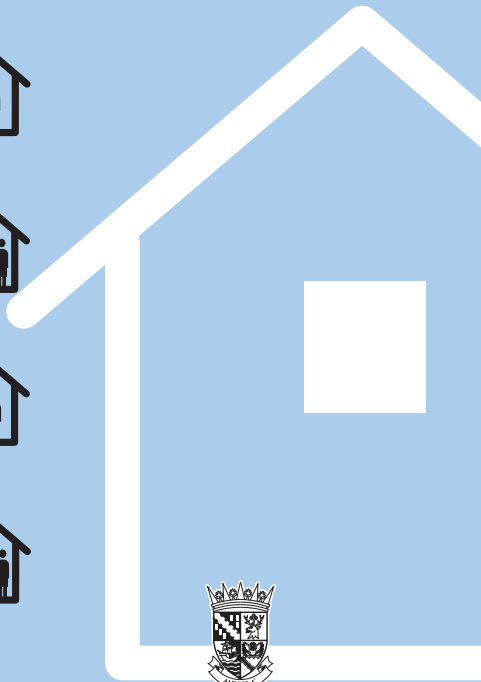


HOMESPOT

INFORMATION BOOKLET



Falkirk Council
Corporate & Neighbourhood Services

What is Homespot?

Homespot is Falkirk Council's Choice Based way of letting houses. Houses available for let are advertised and you can decide which houses you wish to be considered for.

We advertise our vacant properties every week. You can look at the list of adverts on the Council's website at www.falkirk.gov.uk or in the Homespot newsletter that is available throughout the Council area i.e. at the Accommodation Resource Centre (ARC), Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops, local supported accommodation projects, libraries and in housing association partners' offices. There is also a free phone service (0800 678 3091). This is an answer machine service where you can leave a message and a member of staff will phone you back.

If you see a property that you like you can "bid" for it. A bid lets us know you are interested in a particular property and would like to be considered for it. It does not mean you will have to part with any money.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

How do I register with Homespot?

You can get a registration form from the ARC or one of our Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops. A list of contact details is given at the end of this booklet.

If you need help to fill in the registration form staff from the ARC or Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops will be happy to assist.

To help us get you registered as quickly as possible you should make sure that you answer all the relevant questions on the form.

When you have filled in your registration form you should return it to the ARC or Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops.

How is my application assessed?

We will use the information you give us to decide whether you are a Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter (see section below) and you will be placed in one of four "Bands". A Band is a way of describing the priority for housing which you have been awarded. The Band you are placed in depends on your level of housing need. You may be placed in Band 4 when you first register until we have carried out a full assessment of your housing need. If an assessment is needed this should be done within 28 days of registration.

Within each Band applications are placed in date order.

If your circumstances change at any time, you must tell us as it may affect the Band in which you are placed and the type of properties you can be considered for.

What are Home Seekers, Home Movers and Home Starters?

You are a **Home Seeker** if you are considered homeless in terms of homeless legislation. We aim to let 50% of our vacant houses to Home Seekers.

You are a **Home Mover** if you are a tenant of Falkirk Council or a tenant of a Housing Association or a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) living in the Council area. We aim to let 25% of our vacant houses to Home Movers.

All other applicants are **Home Starters**. This includes applicants that have been assessed as threatened with homelessness within the next two months.

What priority will I have for housing?

There are four levels of priority for housing which we refer to as “Bands”. Band One (the highest level of priority), Band Two, Band Three and Band Four (the lowest level of priority). You will be placed in one of these Bands depending on your level of housing need. The Bands are explained below:-

Band One

You will be placed in Band One if any of the following apply:

- you are a Home Seeker who is unintentionally homeless and in priority need in terms of homelessness legislation. This includes applicants living in supported accommodation who are ready for more independent living;
- you have been assessed as threatened with homelessness within the next two months;
- you are leaving the Armed Forces;
- you have been “looked after and accommodated” by Falkirk Council and are leaving your care placement;

- your home is causing significant problems due to your medical condition or disability and you are unable to access or use essential facilities such as the bathroom, bedroom or cooking facilities, or you cannot get in or out of your home, or you cannot be discharged from hospital because your home is not suitable for you;
- you are overcrowded and two or more bedrooms are needed to meet your needs (see “What size of house will I be considered for?”);
- you live in a one bedroom property and you have two children under the age of 8 years sharing a bedroom with you;
- you have two teenage children of different genders sharing a bedroom;
- you are a Home Mover living in a house that is too big for your needs;
- you live in a house which lacks standard amenities e.g. a fixed bath or shower with a satisfactory hot and cold water supply;
- you need to be re-housed as a result of regeneration or redevelopment within the Falkirk Council area;
- you are a Home Mover and together with another Home Mover wish to move to a bigger house so that you can live as a family unit. Priority will only be awarded if neither house is big enough for both households to live in and overcrowding will result from both parties living together in their current properties;
- you have exceptional housing needs and a multi-agency case conference has recommended that you need to move.

Band Two

You will be placed in Band Two if any of the following apply:

- you are a Home Seeker who is unintentionally homeless but with no priority need in terms of homeless legislation;
- you are a Home Starter living in the Falkirk Council area with no security of tenure i.e. you do not have a tenancy agreement for your accommodation;

- you are sharing facilities with another household and you are overcrowded (see “What size of house will I be considered for?”);
- you are overcrowded and one more bedroom is needed to meet your needs (see “What size of house will I be considered for?”);
- you are living in a bed-sit;
- you need to move for a social need e.g. to give/receive support.

Band Three

You will be placed in Band Three if any of the following apply:

- you have children under the age of 10 and live in a tenement flat with no access to a shared garden or your own garden;
- you have parental responsibilities for a child whose main home is elsewhere;
- your independence is limited because you have a medical condition or disability and your current housing is not suitable;
- you have a local connection to the Falkirk Council area e.g. family reasons or employment;
- you are a Home Starter living in a house that is too big for your needs;
- you are living in the private sector and have a short assured tenancy agreement;
- you are sharing facilities with another household.

Band Four

You will be placed in Band Four if you do not have any of the housing needs listed above.

We will tell you your Band date, which is the date you were awarded your particular band. If you are Home Seeker with Band One priority, the date of award of priority will be the date you first contacted us to let us know that you are homeless. For all other applicants, the date of award of priority is the date the relevant assessment was completed or 28 days after the date of application for priority, whichever is sooner.

If your circumstances change, this may also result in a change in the Band of priority you have been awarded. If your Band of priority changes then the date of award of priority will also change.

What if I have more than one housing need?

You will be awarded only one level of priority. If you have more than one housing need, you will be awarded priority for your highest ranked need.

If you think that the priority you have been awarded does not reflect your needs, you can ask us to review your circumstances by using the Appeals Process. A separate leaflet about the Allocations Appeal Process is available.

Secondary Housing Needs - some applicants may have a secondary housing need which restricts the type of property they can be considered for. For example, an applicant may have a Band 1 priority for overcrowding and a medical recommendation for ground floor housing. This obviously limits the type of houses they can be considered for which will restrict their choice. In an attempt to help these applicants get more suitable housing, any relevant medical recommendation will be taken into account when bids are being ranked.

What choices do I have?

The aim of choice based lettings is to give you more choice over where you want to live and the type of house you want to live in.

When you register you will be asked which allocation area you would prefer to live in. There are ten allocation areas across the Council area and you can choose as many of these as you like. The allocation areas are:-

- Bo'ness
- Bonnybridge / Banknock
- Braes
- Dawson
- Denny
- Falkirk Central
- Falkirk East
- Falkirk West
- Grangemouth
- Larbert / Stenhousemuir

A map showing the towns and villages covered by each allocation area is included in the Application Form which is available from the ARC and Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops. You can also download this from the Council's web site www.falkirk.gov.uk.

What type of house can I apply for?

We have a range of different types of houses that you can apply for. When we advertise a property we will say what applicant group will be given preference when bids are being considered i.e. Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter.

If you have been awarded Band 1 or Band 3 priority because your home is unsuitable for you due to a medical condition or disability this may include a recommendation of the type of property that will be suitable for you. We will not consider you for any houses that do not match this recommendation, even if you bid for them. For example, if the recommendation is for ground floor housing, you will not be successful if you bid for a house with internal stairs.

If you feel that your health has improved and the recommendation is no longer relevant, you should tell us about this and we will review the priority and any recommendation. This may involve an Occupational Therapist or a Housing Visitor visiting you at home. A review may not remove restrictions on the type of house you can be offered.

What size of house can I apply for?

We want to make the best use of our housing stock and to do this we have Household Size Criteria as follows:-

- Couples are expected to share a room. Couples and single applicants will be considered for properties with 1 or 2 bedrooms.
- Each household member over 8 years of age can have their own bedroom. Priority for overcrowding will not be awarded where two children under 8 years of age of either sex share a room which is larger than 110 square feet (10 square metres).
- If you have two children of the same sex aged 8 years or over they can share a bedroom if you wish.
- If you will wish to move to a house the same size as the one you live in just now, we will not consider any overcrowding priority you may have.
- Due to the lack of larger houses with three or four bedrooms, you can be considered for a property that is smaller than you need if it will still reduce overcrowding.

We recognise that some households may need a home that is bigger than the household size criteria allows e.g. an additional room may be needed because of a medical condition. Any professional recommendation for additional rooms will be taken into account in deciding what house size you qualify for.

Based on the household size criteria above you will only be able to bid for properties that meet the needs of your household.

Property sequencing process

In order to meet our target of allocating 50% of available properties to Home Seekers, 25% of properties to Home Movers and the remaining 25% of properties to Home Starters we have an automatic sequencing process for vacant properties.

This process takes into account the allocation area the property is in, the size of the property, the property type and the date the property became void.

There are ten Allocation Areas and these are listed on page 6. Within each Allocation Area, properties are grouped into the following sizes:

- bedsit - 2 bedrooms
- 3 bedrooms
- 4 bedrooms or more

Within each Allocation Area and property size, properties are grouped into the following types:

- House / Bungalow
- Four-in-a Block
- Flat / Maisonettes / Multi Storey Flat

Properties are then sorted by the date they became void and sequenced separately for Home Seekers, Starters and Movers.

Property type has been taken into account from 13 April 2011 (Cycle 49) and this is a rolling process which means that wherever we end one sequencing cycle the next one starts.

Housing with Care properties Level 3 and properties that have been designed or previously adapted for applicants with particular needs are not sequenced. See the section "Will all houses be advertised?" below.

Will all houses be advertised?

We will let most of our houses through Homespot including properties that have had adaptations carried out to them.

Adapted Properties - adapted properties will be advertised for "ALL" applicant groups. The advert will say what facility or adaptation is in the property e.g. level access shower, external

ramp or fully adapted or accessible kitchen. Preference will be given to applicants that need the facility or adaptation.

The following properties will not be advertised:

- housing with Care level 1 and 2 i.e. housing for older people who are physically frail and need care and support services at home (see separate leaflet on Housing with Care);
- if we need to use a property for temporary accommodation as a result of an emergency situation or to discharge our statutory duty in terms of homeless legislation;
- if a property would meet the needs of an applicant with particular needs e.g. someone who cannot leave hospital because their own home is unsuitable then we may re-house another applicant to allow their property to be let to the applicant with particular needs.

These properties will be “matched” to applicants on the housing register following a full assessment of their particular needs.

How long will the advertising cycle last?

Properties are advertised every week. The cycle opens at 12 noon on a Wednesday and closes at 12 noon 7 days later. All adverts clearly state the closing date for bids to be made.

What information will be included in an advert?

We aim to make sure that adverts have enough information to help you make an informed decision about whether or not the property is right for you.

An advert will include the following information:

- the address of property;
- the property type e.g. house, flat, multi-storey flat;
- the number of bedrooms;
- the type of heating;

- the weekly rent;
- which applicant group will be given preference i.e. Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter or All (for adapted properties);
- any additional qualifying criteria;
- the date and time that bidding for the property closes;
- a photograph of the property.

What do I do if I see a property I like?

When you see a property you are interested in, you should bid for it. You can do this in a number of ways:

- online through our website at www.falkirk.gov.uk;
- by contacting one of our Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops or ARC;
- by filling in and returning a bidding coupon;
- by phoning 0800 678 3091 (free phone).

If you want to bid for a property you must make sure that we receive your bid before the closing date and time stated in the advert.

How many properties can I bid for?

You can bid for as many properties as you like in any advertising cycle.

However, if you intend to bid for more than one property, you should enter your bids in order of preference starting with your preferred property. This is very important because if you bid successfully for more than one property we will assume that the property you bid for first is your first choice, and so on, in the order you chose to bid. If your first bid is successful, we will not consider any later bids you have made, so the order in which you bid is very important.

What help and support will I get?

Our staff will help you use Homespot until you get familiar with bidding for properties. We can continue to help you if you have particular problems using Homespot.

How do you decide which bid is successful?

It does not matter whether you make your bid on the first day or the last day of the advertising cycle. Once bidding has closed, everyone who has made a bid for a property will be considered. We will prepare a short-list of suitable applicants who:

- meet the criteria in the advert i.e. Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter and any additional qualifying criteria;
- would make “best use” of the property – for example would use all the bedrooms and;
- are not suspended for any reason and;
- have a recommendation for a property type which matches the property advertised (where applicable).

The short listed applicants will be ranked in order of their level of priority. If there is more than one applicant with the same level of priority, the property will be offered to the applicant that has had that priority longest. For applicants in Band Four, this will be their date of application.

What will happen if there are no bids from the preferred applicant group?

If there are no bids for a property from the preferred applicant group stated in the advert, other bids will be considered in the order of Home Seeker, Home Mover and Home Starter. These bids will be short listed and ranked as explained above.

How will I know if I am to be offered a property?

If your bid is successful, you will normally be contacted within 7 days. If you are not available when we try to contact you a letter or card will be left at the address you have given on your application asking you to contact us urgently. It is very important that you respond quickly. If we do not hear from you within 48 hours it will be considered that you are refusing a potential offer of housing which means that the offer will count as one of your offers of housing. Your application will also be suspended for 28 days and if you do not contact us within the 28 days, to let us know that you are still interested in housing, your application will be cancelled.

If you have not heard from us within 14 working days of the closing date, it is unlikely that you have been successful on that occasion and you should keep bidding for properties which suit your needs.

What happens if I refuse a property?

We hope that if your bid is successful you will accept the property you are offered. However, if you decide to refuse the offer the following would apply:

- If you are a Home Seeker in Band One, we will make you an offer of housing outwith Homespot to discharge our statutory duties (see “What is Time Limited Priority for Home Seekers?”).
- If you are a Home Seeker in Band Two and you refuse two properties, you will move from a Home Seeker to a Home Starter. Your priority for homelessness will be removed and your housing situation will be re-assessed.
- If you are a Home Mover or Home Starter and refuse 2 properties you will lose any priority for housing need and move to Band Four. After 12 months you can ask to have your situation re-assessed.

You have a right to appeal this decision.

What is time limited priority for Home Seekers?

If you are a Home Seeker, you have been awarded a high level of priority to reflect your urgent need for housing. As such, we expect you to bid for all properties which meet your household needs.

We also expect you to register with Link Housing Association's HomeHunt scheme and we may nominate you for any suitable vacancies which local housing associations (RSLs) may have.

We will monitor the bids you make and if you do not bid for suitable properties within three months of being placed in Band One, we will make you an offer of housing outwith Homespot. We will try to offer you a property in the areas you have chosen but this will depend on the availability of properties. This offer of housing will discharge our duty to you in terms of homeless legislation.

This arrangement to offer you a property outwith Homespot will also apply if:-

- you successfully bid for a property and then refuse it;
- you do not bid for suitable properties advertised by Link Housing Association through their HomeHunt scheme;
- you refuse a property offered under nomination arrangements.

If you refuse an offer of housing that we make to you outwith Homespot, your applicant group will change from "Home Seeker" to "Home Starter". Your priority for homelessness will be removed and your housing situation will be reassessed. If you are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, you will have to leave this.

If, during the three month period, there have been no suitable properties advertised or your bids have been unsuccessful, you will continue to be a Home Seeker in Band One. We will continue to monitor your application to make sure you are bidding for properties which meet your household needs. If you are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, you can continue to live there.

How will I find out about which properties have been let?

We will publish information about properties that have been let in previous advertising cycles. We will tell you the number of applicants that bid for the property, the Band and the Band date of the successful applicant. We will not publish personal information about the successful applicants, such as name and address.

This information will be available on our website at www.falkirk.gov.uk and at our Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops, ARC, local libraries and in local housing association offices.

We hope that this feedback will give you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and how long you would normally have to wait. You can then decide whether to look for other types of properties or areas where you may not have to wait as long.

Contact List for Housing Associations with Houses in the Falkirk Council Area

Abbeyfield Society (Falkirk) Ltd

Thornville, 32 Ladysmill
Falkirk FK2 9AU
Tel: 01324 634357
www.scotland-abbeyfield.com

Ark Housing Association

The Priory, Canaan Lane
Edinburgh EH10 4SG
Tel: 0131 447 9027
Email: admin@arkha.org.uk

Barony Housing Association

2 Earls Court, Roseland Hall
Earls Gate Park
Grangemouth FK3 8ZE
Tel: 01324 881800
Email: info@baronyha.org.uk
www.baronyha.org.uk

Bield Housing Association

7 Eagle Street
Glasgow G4 9XA
Tel: 0141 270 7200
Email: info@bield.co.uk
www.bield.co.uk

Cairn Housing Association

15 North Claremont Street
Glasgow G3 7NR
Tel: 0141 353 1944
Email: enquires@cairnha.com
www.cairnha.com

Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association

1 Hay Avenue
Edinburgh EH16 4RW
Tel: 0131 657 0600
www.castlerockedinvar.co.uk

Hanover Housing Association

95 McDonald Road
Edinburgh EH7 4NS
Tel: 0131 557 0598
Email: admin@hsha.org.uk
www.hsha.org.uk

Horizon Housing Association

Leving House, Fairbairn Place
Livingston EH54 6TN
Tel: 01506 424140
Email: email@horizonhousing.org
www.horizonhousing.org

Key Housing Association

Savoy Tower, 77 Renfrew Street
Glasgow G2 3BZ
Tel: 0141 342 1890
Email: info@keyhousing.org
www.keyhousing.org

Kingdom Housing Association

Saltire Centre, Pentland Court
Glenrothes, Fife KY6 2DA
Tel: 01592 631 661
Email: kingdom@kingdomhousing.org.uk
www.kingdomhousing.org.uk

Link Housing Association

Watling House
Callendar Business Park
Falkirk FK1 1XR
Tel: 0845 140 0100
Email: csc@linkhalted.co.uk
www.linkhousing.co.uk

Loretto Housing Association

69 Burnside Terrace
Camelon, Falkirk FK1 4EF
Tel: 01324 671229
Head Office:
Lipton House, 2nd Floor
170 Crown Street
Glasgow G5 9XB
Tel: 0141 420 7950
Email: headoffice@lorettoha.co.uk
www.lorettoha.co.uk

Margaret Blackwood H.A.

646 Argyle Street, Anderston
Glasgow G3 8UF
Tel: 0141 227 97
Email: info@mbha.org.uk
www.mbha.org.uk

Paragon Housing Association

Invergrange House, Station Road
Grangemouth FK3 8DG
Tel: 01324 664966
Email: enquiries@paragonha.org.uk
www.paragonha.org.uk

Penumbra

Norton Park, 57 Albion Road
Edinburgh EH7 5QY
Tel: 0131 475 2380
Email: enquiries@penumbra.org.uk
www.penumbra.org.uk

Scottish Veterans**Garden City Association**

New Haig House,
Logie Green Road
Edinburgh EH7 4HQ
Tel: 0131 557 1188
Email: Scottish Veterans
www.housesforheroes.org.uk

Weslo Housing Management

15 North Street
Bo'ness EH51 0AQ
Tel: 01506 639100
Email: enquires@weslohm.co.uk
www.weslo-housing.org

**West of Scotland
Housing Association**

Cowlairs Office
252 Keppochhill Road, Springburn
Glasgow G21 1HG
Tel: 0844 892 0321
Email: info@westcot.co.uk
www.westscot.co.uk

YMCA

122 Scotland Street
Glasgow G5 8LS
Tel: 0141 429 6266
www.ypeople.org.uk

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme**Cyrenians**

1 Paterson Tower, Seaton Place
Falkirk FK1 1JT
Tel: 01324 633413
Email: SmartMoveFK@cyrenians.org.uk



Accommodation Resource Centre / Neighbourhood Offices / One Stop Shops

Accommodation Resource Centre

21-25 High Street
Falkirk FK1 1ES
Freephone: 0800 587 4440

Tel: 01324 503600
Fax: 01324 503601
E-mail: arc@falkirk.gov.uk

Denny One Stop Shop

Carronbank House
Carronbank Crescent
Denny FK6 6GA

Tel: 01324 504050
Fax: 01324 504051
E-mail: housing.denny@falkirk.gov.uk

Bo'ness One Stop Shop

24 East Pier Street
Bo'ness EH51 9AB

Tel: 01506 778899
Fax: 01506 778900
E-mail: housing.boiness@falkirk.gov.uk

Grangemouth One Stop Shop

5 York Lane
Grangemouth FK3 8BD

Tel: 01324 504550
Fax: 01324 504551
E-mail: housing.grangemouth@falkirk.gov.uk

Falkirk One Stop Shop

Callendar Square
Falkirk FK1 1ZF

Tel: 01324 506868
Fax: 01324 506881
E-mail: housing.falkirk@falkirk.gov.uk

Stenhousemuir One Stop Shop

398 Main Street
Stenhousemuir FK5 3JR

Tel: 01324 503340
Fax: 01324 503341
E-mail: housing.stenhousemuir@falkirk.gov.uk

Camelon One Stop Shop

256 Main Street
Camelon, Falkirk FK1 4DY

Tel: 01324 503640
Fax: 01324 503641
E-mail: housing.camelon@falkirk.gov.uk

Dawson Centre

David's Loan
Falkirk FK2 7RG

Tel: 01324 501450
Fax: 01324 501451
E-mail: housing.dawson@falkirk.gov.uk

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, large print or audio tape please contact one of our Neighbourhood Offices or One Stop Shops.

Arabic

إذا كنت تحتاج لهذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بريل، احرف مكبرة أو اشرطة كاسيت، نرجوا منك الاتصال بمركز الإسكان أو واحد من نيبرهود أوفيسيز/ون سنوب شوپس. هناك قائمة بارقام الهواتف و العناوين متوفرة في نهاية هذا الكتيب.

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دوسری زبان، بریل، بڑے حروف یا آڈیو ٹیپ میں درکار ہیں تو براہ کرم ہماری آفیسز میں سہارا ہمارے کسی بھی نمبر ہوڈ آفسز اور اسٹاپ شاؤپس سے رابطہ کریں۔ رابطہ کرنے کے لیے ایڈریس لسٹ اور ٹیلی فون نمبر اس کتابچے کے اختتام پر درج ہیں۔

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਬ੍ਰਿਥਾ ਵਰਕੇ ਐਂਡ ਮੈਮੋਰੈਂਡਮ ਟੀਮੋਰਮ ਸੈਟਰ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Chinese

如果你希望獲得此份表格的其他語言譯本，凸字印刷，大號字體或錄音帶，請與 Accommodation Resource Centre 或 Neighbourhood Offices/ One Stop Shops 聯絡。在這本小冊子的末頁有一份聯絡地址和電話號碼。

Lithuanian

Jeigu jūs norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją kita kalba, Brailio šriftu, stambiu šriftu ar įgarsinta, prašome susisiekti su vienu iš mūsų Apylinkių ofisų/Filialų.

Polish

Jeżeli chciałbyś/chciałabyś uzyskać owe informacje w języku innym aniżeli język angielski, w języku Braille'a, w DUŻYM FORMACIE lub zapisane na kasetach audio skontaktuj się z jedną z Naszych placówek.