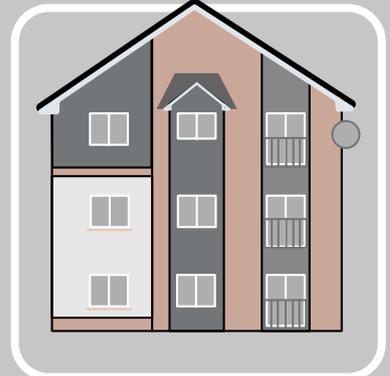
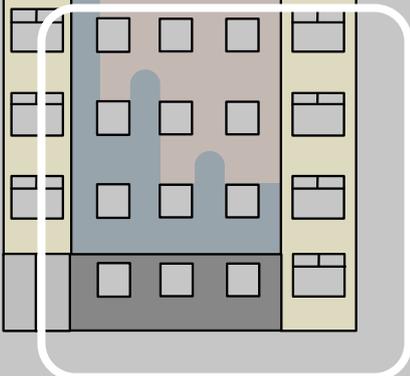
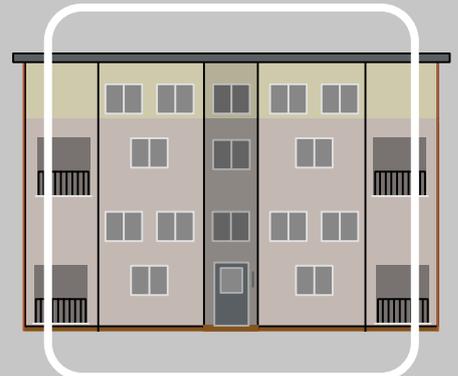
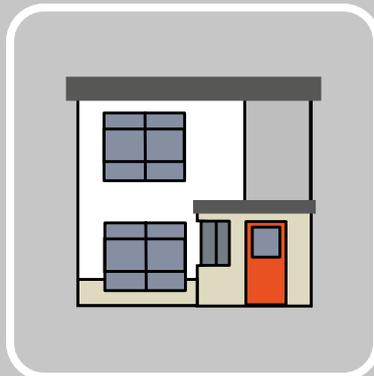
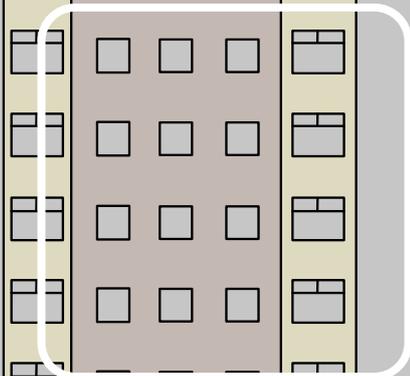
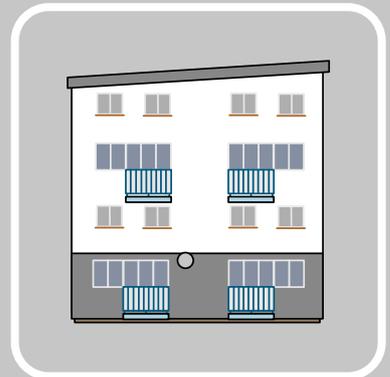
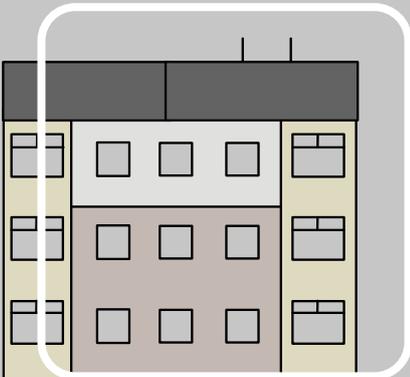


# Housing Allocations Policy



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# Summary of Changes from 1 October 2020

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The following changes to our Allocations Policy are summarised below

- 1. Local Letting Initiative: High Flats** – We have reduced the age restriction of lets for the high flats to 50 years old
- 2. Local Letting Initiative: New Builds** - We have removed restrictions applied to new houses. This means that Home Seekers, Starters and Movers can apply for new build homes, in line with the quota systems.
- 3. Under Occupancy** – We have changed the banding of Band 1's for under-occupation to the same as overcrowding. Band 1 will now be applied where a person is under-occupying by two or more bedrooms.

In addition, we have changed when an applicant can make a further application to move when first allocated a house. Once someone has been allocated a house, they cannot apply for a move within 12 months, unless there is a significant change of circumstance that changes their housing need. This means if an applicant accepts a house that is too large for their current needs, they cannot immediately then apply for a move and be prioritised due to under occupancy.

- 4. Time limiting Priority** – If an applicant is not bidding for properties regularly, we may reduce the banding of their application. For Home Movers and Home Starters with Band 1 or 2 priorities, this be considered if they have not bid for any properties in three months (from date of priority banding).

Once an applicant had been determined as at risk of having priority removed, a housing interview will take place to review the circumstances, including the availability of appropriate housing. If it has been determined that priority will be removed, the applicant would be moved to Band 4. This is the same as our policy for Home Seekers.

For applicants with Band 3 or 4 priority, their application will be cancelled after 12 months of no bidding activity. Their removal from the housing list does not mean they will not be able to re-apply, but does mean that any 'waiting time' advantage will be lost. The length of time a person has been on the list only matters if two applicants of equal housing need apply for the same house.

- 5. Home Seeker Category Offers** – We have reduced the number of offers of housing to Home Seekers from two to one. This offer will be made in one of these ways:

1. An applicant who is actively bidding being offered a house through the choice-based lettings system.
2. An applicant being offered a direct match after three months of no bidding activity.

Before a direct match is made, there will be a review meeting to determine the reasons for non-bidding e.g. lack of appropriate housing.

- 6. Housing Debt and Allocations** – If an applicant has housing debt, we will suspend their housing application. They will be required to keep to a payment plan to address this debt for three months, before being considered for re-housing.

- 7. Letting Quotas** - We have changed the quota for letting properties to 45% for Home Seekers, 27.5% for Home Starters and 27.5% for Home Movers. This will help us to fulfil obligations under Scottish Government's Rapid Rehousing policies to tackle homelessness. These quotas will be reviewed 24 months after amendment, to ensure they continue to meet the needs of applicants.

These changes were all consulted on in early 2020, through our Allocations Consultation.

# 1. Introduction and Policy Context

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This policy outlines Falkirk Council's key aims, objectives and processes in relation to the allocation of its housing stock.

## **Local and National Strategic Context**

"The Council will be focused on improving the lives of our citizens and communities. Our ambition is for everyone, but as a Council we have a particular responsibility for those who are disadvantaged or excluded."

This Allocations Policy supports the Council's wider corporate strategy as outlined in Falkirk Council's Corporate Plan 2017- 2022 "our area, our council, our services". Key priorities include:

- Support the most vulnerable in our area and make sure that we provide support and assistance where it is needed most.
- Be ambitious and aspirational for all our people and communities.
- Reduce the impact of poverty on families.
- Improve the neighbourhoods and estates our citizens live in.
- Promote stronger, more self-reliant communities.

As a result, "our area will be a fairer and more equal place to live"

The Council has also produced and adopted a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, as required by Scottish Government, in response to its November 2018, 'Ending Homelessness Together' action plan. This has introduced a new planning framework for local authorities and their partners from April 2019 to March 2024 to "Build a Scotland, where people are treated with fairness, dignity and respect, there is no place for homelessness or rough sleeping".

## **Policy Statement**

Falkirk Council provides a range of good quality affordable housing to help meet the needs of local people, including those with specific needs. The Allocations Policy aims to make best use of the Council's housing stock and to develop and maintain sustainable communities.

As our Housing needs list continues to show that demand outstrips supply, we need to ensure that we are making the best use of our properties and meeting the requirements of our applicants who are in the most housing need. We need to ensure that our allocations policy provides the greatest opportunity for applicants to find suitable rehousing as quickly as possible

To do this, the Council prioritises the differing needs of applicants and operates a choice based letting system where applicants can bid for the properties advertised and bids received are ranked according to applicant priority and date priority was awarded.

## Policy Principles

The following principles underpin Falkirk Council's approach to allocating its houses:

**Legality** - the Council strives to ensure that the Allocations Policy reflects the legal framework and good practice.

**Consistency** - the Council applies the Allocations Policy in a consistent manner in dealing with all applicants and the way we allocate properties.

**Openness** - the Council will be open and honest with you explaining why we do things whenever we can. We will provide explanatory leaflets on the Allocations Policy and information on the operation and outcomes of the Allocations process.

**Responsiveness** - the Council aims to have a policy which is capable of responding to a wide range of complex individual needs and circumstances and which embodies an appeals process.

**Local Co-operation** - the Council works with other housing providers in the area to best meet housing needs in the Falkirk Council area.

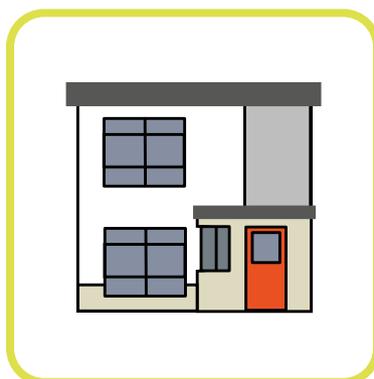
**Confidentiality** - the Council is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 and is duty bound to comply with the conditions set out in this legislation regarding personal information relating to applicants and their households and hold that information securely.

**Equalities** - the Council will respect diversity and promote equality. The Policy does not discriminate between applicants on the grounds of: age, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

## Policy Objectives

The Allocations Policy aims to meet the following key objectives. To:

- be reactive to housing needs in the area and, if possible, to take into account applicants' housing aspirations.
- assess applications for housing in an objective, consistent and fair manner.
- ensure applicants are addressing their housing needs
- promote balanced and sustainable local communities; by "balanced communities" we mean communities that contain a broad range of households from all sections of society.
- make best use of the available housing stock.
- monitor performance and outcomes, and respond to changing patterns of need as they may arise by reviewing the Allocations Policy of the Council on a regular basis, at least every three years.
- inform the Council's strategic planning processes.
- ensure that the Allocations Policy and practice is accessible to all applicants by producing information in plain language that is clear and understandable.



## 2. Legal and Regulatory Context

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### Legal Context

We have developed this policy using the good practice available from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Chartered Institute of Housing. This means our policy is fair and gives reasonable preference to applicants in housing need. This policy complies with, and takes account of, the following housing legislation:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003

We also protect your rights by meeting the legal requirements set out in other legislation, including:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- Children Scotland Act 1995
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007

### Reasonable Preference

The Council aims to meet housing need fairly and help secure accommodation for households in the most housing need. We will do this by responding quickly to people in acute and urgent housing need, giving the right priority to people who are in most need of housing, this includes specific groups identified in legislation to whom we must give 'reasonable preference'

These are:

- people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs;
- people who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs; and
- tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord, which the social landlord selecting its tenants considers to be under occupied.

Landlords can take the needs of other groups into account, as well as the reasonable preference groups, and can create other needs groups. However, any other groups being prioritised for allocations must not dominate an allocation policy at the expense of the three reasonable preference groups as detailed above.

All the housing needs and circumstances that we take into account to assess priority are detailed in Section 4 of this policy document.

## Regulatory Context

The Scottish Housing Regulator uses outcomes and standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter to assess the performance of social landlords.

The Council must meet the outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The standards and outcomes are:

Housing Options -

■ Social landlords work together to ensure that:

- people looking for housing can get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them
- tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options at any time.

■ Social landlords ensure that:

- people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

Access to Social Housing -

■ Social landlords will ensure that:

- people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

The policy must also meet the Charter standards in relation to Equalities and Tenancy Sustainment.

## Applying for Housing

Any person sixteen years or over is entitled to apply for housing. However, the right to apply for housing does not mean we will definitely offer you a house. More people apply for housing with Falkirk Council than the number of homes we have available to let

Application forms are most easily available online at [www.Falkirk.gov.uk](http://www.Falkirk.gov.uk). All the Council Hubs have public computer terminals that are free to use. Hub staff are available to give any help or explanation needed. If you want a paper form this can be provided. A contact list of addresses and telephone numbers is provided at the end of this document.

On request, this information can be made available in a variety of formats (other languages, Braille, large print or audio tape)

## Information and Advice

The Council will provide applicants with Housing Options information and advice about their housing application. This may include guidance on the availability of Council housing throughout the Falkirk area or details of alternative accommodation in the area such as housing from other social landlords, the private rented sector and low-cost home ownership. A Housing Options Guide Booklet is available. This provides information about the range of housing options within Falkirk, as well as advice on how to contact other housing providers in both the private and social rented sector.

Staff will be available to provide assistance with completing your application form if you ask for help. Information and advice which recognises your individual needs will also be available to help you make informed choices that maximise your opportunities for housing.

In line with our commitment to make services easily and equally accessible to all housing applicants, we can also provide an interpretation service if you are hearing or visually impaired or if your first language is not English. In addition, we will provide a range of advice leaflets on the Allocations Policy.

The policy is available to view on the Council's website at [www.falkirk.gov.uk](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk) or a copy of the full policy can be made available free of charge on request.

There is also a summary of the policy which is available in the "Your Guide to HomeSpot" Information Booklet.

## **Factors for Consideration**

When assessing your application for housing we will and will not take the following factors into consideration.

### **Factors that are not taken into consideration when applying for housing**

In accordance with legislation, when allocating housing the Council will not take into account:

- whether you live in the Falkirk Council area and how long you have lived there
- any housing debt such as rent arrears or repair charges, that is not owed by applicants
- housing debt that has since been paid
- non-housing debt such as council tax owed either by applicants or another household member
- the age of the applicant provided that the applicant is 16 years of age or over except where we have designed or specifically adapted houses for people of a specific age, for example, Housing with Care
- the income of the applicant and their family
- rent arrears that are less than one month's rent; or you have already arranged a repayment plan and have kept for 13 weeks and you are still keeping to it
- if you are legally separated or divorced
- who you live with at the time you apply for housing

### **Factors that are taken into consideration when applying for housing are:**

- you want to move into the area to seek employment and we are satisfied that this is the case
- you want to move into the area to be near a relative or carer to receive support from or give support to
- you have special social or medical reasons for requiring to be re-housed in the area
- you want to move into the area to escape harassment
- you want to move into the area to escape the risk of domestic violence.
- whether you or anyone that will live with you owns any property which you are entitled/able to live in
- rent arrears that are more than one month's rent and you have not agreed to repay what you owe and haven't made at least three-monthly payments towards the money you owe when you said you would pay.

# 3. Your Housing Application

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This section summarises the key points involved in recording your housing application.

## Receiving an application

All applicants can apply for housing by completing the standard application form. Application forms are available from Hubs, local supported accommodation projects, local libraries and in Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners' offices. Forms can be downloaded from the Council's website at [www.falkirk.gov.uk](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk) or requested from our freephone service.

We will offer applicants help to fill in this form when requested.

On request the application form can be provided in a number of other languages. We can also provide interpreters or signers as appropriate; this service is free.

Once a completed application form has been received by us, we aim to have it processed within 5 working days. As long as all information has been provided, if required, we may request additional information from you to assess your application. If you don't give us all the information we need, this may delay your application.

We aim to complete any further assessment of your circumstances within 28 days of registration. After that we will advise you of the priority you have been awarded.

We will make enquiries about your application when we receive it. The enquiries we make will include where you're living at the time you apply and where you've lived for the five years before your application. We will ask your current or previous landlord for a reference if you've been a tenant at any time in the past five years to find out if:

- you owe any money;
- you have acted in an anti-social manner;
- your landlord has taken any formal action against you to end your tenancy.

You may not be considered for an offer of a house until you can show that you have maintained your current and/or past tenancies in a satisfactory way.

We may suspend your application if we receive an unsatisfactory reference.

## Suspensions from Housing

In some cases, we may suspend your application. We aim to minimise the number of people we suspend and that we do not do so unreasonably. Applicants are told of the decision to suspend their application in writing and are given a clear explanation of the action they need to take to have the suspension lifted.

Applicants are told of their right to appeal against the decision. Suspended applications are regularly reviewed and monitored.

## Grounds for Suspension

The table below outlines the reasons why we might suspend an application. It also states the length of time an application will be suspended and what the applicant must do in order that the suspension is lifted so that their application can be reinstated.

Reason for Suspension	Period of Suspension	Criteria for Ending Suspension
If an applicant has failed to reply to us when we have tried to contact them about their registration.	28 days	Applicants are re-instated if they reply within 28 days. Where applicants do not respond, their registration is cancelled.
If we need to get a reference from your current or previous landlord.	Up to 6 months	When a satisfactory reference is received or, when you can show that you can maintain a tenancy in a satisfactory way, whichever is the sooner.
Current or previous housing debt (rent arrears / rechargeable repairs).	Until a payment arrangement has been made and payments have been maintained for 3 months.	You can ask to be reconsidered for housing when you can show that you have made an arrangement to pay the unpaid debt and have made payments for 3 months in a row and are continuing to make payments.
Clear evidence of antisocial behaviour associated with the occupancy of a house or with local community safety.	Minimum period of 1 year.	You can ask to be reconsidered for housing when you can show that your behaviour has been satisfactory for the last 12 months.
Conviction or eviction related to anti-social behaviour associated with the occupancy of a house or with local community safety.	Minimum period of 2 years	You can ask to be reconsidered for housing when you can show that your behaviour has been satisfactory for the last 24 months.
Your home, including any garden or common close, is in an unsatisfactory condition.	Until we are satisfied that your property/ garden is in an acceptable condition.	You can ask to be considered for housing when you can show that your house/garden is in a satisfactory condition.
Giving false information which gave you an unfair advantage when your application was being assessed.	6 months.	Your registration will be automatically reinstated after 6 months
Asylum seekers	From the date of registration until your rights to a tenancy have been confirmed.	You will be considered for housing when the Home Office have confirmed your rights to remain in the country.

## Applicant Choices

HomeSpot is Falkirk Council's choice-based way of letting properties. Properties available for let are advertised and you can decide which properties you want to be considered for. Applicants are asked to note down on the registration form the allocations areas where they would prefer to live. We will not put any limits on the number of areas that you can choose, however your choices of property type and location may be affected by specific issues or circumstances.

Examples of where your choices could be restricted include:

- if you have a medical recommendation/requirement for a specific type of property;
- if an anti-social behaviour order may prohibit you from accessing an area;
- the availability of the remaining housing stock in the area.

We will provide you with clear information about the stock held by Falkirk Council, so that you can make informed choices when selecting your preferred areas that maximise your opportunities for housing.

## Areas of Housing

Falkirk Council has properties in the following areas:

Bo'ness

Braes

Bonnybridge/Banknock

Dawson

Denny

Falkirk Central

Falkirk East

Falkirk West

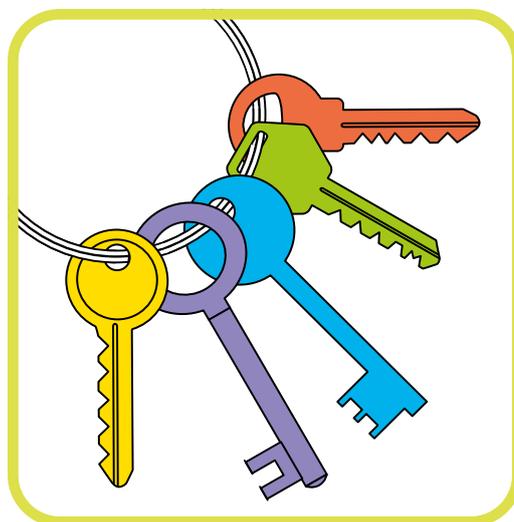
Grangemouth

Larbert/Stenhousemuir

## Review of Applications

Falkirk Council is committed to ensuring that those in most housing need are prioritised. It is therefore important to keep applications up to date. This allows people with the highest housing need, the best chance to resolve their immediate housing problems.

We will review applications on a change of circumstance when requested or if we receive information about your applications.



## 4. Assessment of Needs and Award of Priority

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### Applicant Type

The application form records basic details about the you, your household and their housing circumstances. From this information, will be placed into one of three applicant types:

Home Seekers

- applicants that have been assessed as homeless in terms of homeless legislation

Home Movers

- tenants of Falkirk Council or tenants of an RSL living in the Council area.

Home Starters

- all other applicants.

### Assessment of Priority

Where you have advised that you have particular housing needs, a further assessment may be needed to ensure the correct priority is awarded. This will be done in the following ways

#### Homelessness Assessment

Homelessness is determined by a Homeless Assessment carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation. There is a statutory right of review for applicants who do not agree with an assessment decision.

#### Functional Needs Assessment

If an applicant has applied for housing because their house is unsuitable for them due to a physical medical condition and/or disability, a Functional Needs Assessment will be carried out. A trained Housing Visitor will visit the applicant at home to discuss the problems they are having and look at options for meeting their housing needs. The Housing Visitor may make a recommendation in conjunction with an Occupational Therapist within the NHS or Falkirk Council. Where a recommendation for a specific house type is provided as part of the assessment, the priority awarded to an applicant will be taken into consideration only for bids for housing which match this recommendation.

#### Mental Health

If an applicant has applied for housing because their house is unsuitable for them due to a mental health condition. Their current home has an impact on their mental health and the situation is hindering their treatment and recovery as evidenced by a health professional and/or qualified support worker priority will be awarded.

#### Leaving Care Pathways Plan

This is a recommendation made by Children's Services for applicants who are 'looked after and accommodated' by Falkirk Council and are now leaving their placement and for whom we have a Corporate Parenting responsibility.

#### Public Protection Assessment

Where a recommendation is made by a multi-agency partnership.

#### Exceptional Housing Need

The allocations policy covers the majority of housing situations that an applicant may experience. However, it is recognised that there will be some situations not covered by the policy. Examples where this may apply are:

- traumatic life event making it impossible to continue to live in current property
- extreme neighbour problems where the only solution left is to move one party due to risk
- serious harassment not covered under the current policy
- Extreme situation where the current property is not suitable or adaptable
- Witness Protection

This priority is usually awarded after a multi-agency case conference has taken place and the professionals involved have recommended that a move of house is necessary e.g. at a child protection case conference.

As the award of this priority reflects an urgent need for housing speedily, applicants that are awarded this priority will be directly matched to a property. In making this offer of housing, as far as is possible, the Council will take into account the particular circumstances, the needs of the applicant and their household and the sustainability of the accommodation. Only one reasonable offer will be made and if this is refused then the application will no longer be treated as urgent and will revert to the normal allocations policy. This priority may be time limited for example, if the circumstances of the applicant change the priority may be removed.

These applications are authorised by the Head of Service through delegated powers, to ensure transparency and governance.

### **Social Housing Need**

If an applicant has to move house to provide or receive support to live independently, we may award priority if this can be evidenced, for example if you receive Carers Allowance for looking after them.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

If the applicant has on-going parental responsibilities for children whose principal home is elsewhere, the Council will take reasonable steps to verify the information provided by an applicant. This may include asking the applicant to provide a letter from their solicitor or the child's school or a joint statement completed by both parents where informal arrangements are in place.

### **Unsatisfactory Housing Assessment**

Where an applicant needs to move house due to the property being below tolerable standard this will have to be evidenced by a report from an Environmental Health Officer or Private Sector Housing Officer (details of what is considered as below tolerable standard can be found at Appendix A)

### **Housing Management Assessment**

When an applicant needs to move due to regeneration or redevelopment within the Falkirk Council area the relevant Senior Manager will have to confirm details of the proposals.

### **Security of Tenure Assessment**

If the applicant is living in a property which does not have a secure tenure or lease the applicant will be asked to provide confirmation of the conditions of the terms for their current accommodation. This could be a letter from the original tenant confirming the agreement to reside within their home.

This does not include applicants that live care of relatives, friends or lodgers.

## **Award of Priority**

Following assessment, you are initially awarded one of four Bands of priority depending on your circumstances. The highest level of priority that can be awarded is Band 1 and the lowest level of priority is Band 4. Applicants are awarded only one level of priority based on their most urgent housing need. The bands are as follows:

### **Band 1**

Priority is awarded to the following applicants who have an urgent need to move:

- who are found to be unintentionally homeless following a homeless assessment
- that are assessed to be threatened with homelessness within the next two months following a homeless assessment
- who have been “looked after and accommodated” by Falkirk Council and are leaving their care placement
- who are leaving the Armed Forces and their right to occupy service accommodation is coming to an end and a certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to occupy Service Living Accommodation has been issued
- where a Public Protection case conference has made recommendations regarding accommodation
- who are unable to be discharged safely from hospital because their home is no longer suitable for them
- whose home is causing significant problems due to a physical medical condition or disability
- whose home is causing significant problems due to a mental health condition or disability
- who are living in an overcrowded house where two or more additional bedrooms are required to meet their needs
- who are living in a one-bedroom property and have two children under the age of 8 years sharing a bedroom with them
- who have two teenage children of different genders sharing a bedroom
- who are Falkirk Council tenants or RSL tenants living in the Council's area that are living in a house which is too big for their needs by two or more bedrooms
- living in a house which is assessed as falling below tolerable standards
- who need to be re-housed as a result of regeneration or redevelopment within the Falkirk Council area
- who are currently both social housing tenants within the Falkirk Council area who wish to move so that they can live as a family unit and require a larger property to prevent overcrowding.
- with exceptional housing needs as detailed previously

### **Band 2**

Priority is awarded to the following applicants:

- who are living in a property which does not have a secure tenure or lease, this does not include applicants that live care of relatives, friends or lodgers.
- who are overcrowded where one additional bedroom is required to meet their needs
- living in bed-sit accommodation
- with social housing need such as:
  - the applicant needs to move to give or receive care and support
  - the applicant's accommodation is unsuitable due to severe harassment.

### **Band 3**

Priority is awarded to the following applicants:

- with children under 10 years living in tenement flats with no access to shared or individual gardens
- Joint tenants/owners who have had a relationship breakdown
- who are living in accommodation where their independence is limited due to a physical medical condition or disability
- who wish to move to the Falkirk Council area due to a local connection e.g. employment
- living in a private sector tenancy
- owners living in the Falkirk Council area that are downsizing by two or more bedrooms
- living in the private sector with a short-assured tenancy agreement
- currently sharing amenities with another household with whom they are not applying to be housed

### **Band 4**

Priority is awarded where there is no housing need

### **Time limits**

We are committed to housing you in the quickest time possible and to ensure your housing need is met. Therefore, if you are awarded a Band 1 or Band 2 and have not placed any eligible bids for three months, you will be moved into Band 4. If you think you will have any difficulty managing your application and placing bids, you can ask for help.

If you have been awarded a Band 3 or 4 and have not placed any eligible bids for a period of 12 months your application will be cancelled. We will send a letter to advise you that you are at risk of having your application cancelled. You can request a review of the decision to cancel your application

### **Household Size Rules**

Couples and single applicants will be considered for one- or two-bedroom properties. Couples are expected to share a room. However, it is recognised that there may be circumstances where each individual requires a room of their own e.g. due to a medical condition. Where there is a recommendation for an individual to have their own bedroom, this will be taken into account in determining the house size appropriate for the household's needs.

Each household member over 8 years of age is entitled to a bedroom of their own.

No priority for overcrowding is awarded where two children under 8 of either sex share a double bedroom.

The Council aims to make the best use of its housing stock. In letting properties, the Council will seek to select applicants whose household size makes best use of the property.

We will assess your priority for overcrowding or under occupation from the information you provide on your application form.

### **Priority Date of Award**

Applicants who are assessed as homeless and are awarded Home Seeker status, the award of priority will be from the date of presentation as homeless.

For all other applicants, the date of award of priority is the date we received your application. If there is a subsequent change of circumstance, your priority will be awarded from the date we receive evidence of this change.

# 5. Letting a Property

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## Void (empty) Properties

When a property becomes void it is recorded on the allocations database which indicates if the property is:

- a mainstream property
- adapted and would meet the needs of an applicant with a physical medical condition or disability
- Housing with Care (Sheltered Housing)

(For further information surrounding these categories please refer to Appendix B)

## Sequencing Mainstream Properties

Mainstream properties are assigned for allocation to Home Seekers, Home Movers and Home Starters through an automatic 'sequencing' process. The quotas for each of the applicant groups are:

- Home Seekers 45%
- Home Starters 27.5%
- Home Movers 27.5%

(For further information surrounding these categories please refer to Appendix C)

## Local Lettings Initiatives

The Council may consider the use of local lettings initiatives.

The main aim of a local lettings initiative is to build a strong and sustainable community.

A local lettings plan provides an open and transparent framework which set out any variation to the Allocation Policy needed to take account of and address local needs and circumstances.

## Existing Local Lettings Initiatives

**Block Profiling** - Housing services may consider the profile of the other households living within the block when allocating vacant properties to ensure sustainable communities

**High Flats** - As a result of public consultation carried out, these tenancies will now be allocated to applicants 50 years old and over.

**Low Demand Properties** - Some properties are not seen as popular and can be slower to let such as larger tenement flats with three bedrooms or some properties in outlying areas. If no bids are received for a property it is then advertised for All Groups.

## **Making Bids**

If you wish to be considered for an advertised property, you must make an eligible bid before the closing date. Eligible bids are ones that meet the size rules and are within the applicant group that you have been assessed for. Bids are made by noting interest at our:

- Local Hubs
- through the Council's website
- by phoning a freephone service.

## **Matching Bids for Properties**

Once the bid list closes, a short-list of suitable applicants is prepared. Suitable applicants are those who:

- meet the criteria in the advert
- meet the household size rules for the property
- are not affected by the policy on suspensions
- have a recommendation for a property type which matches the property advertised (where applicable).

For adapted properties the Banding will be based on the Function Needs Assessment award.

If there are no suitable applicants for a particular property, the property will be re-advertised for ALL Groups.

## **Time Limited Priority (Home Seeker Applicants)**

Priority is awarded to Home Seeker applicants to reflect their urgent need for housing. If you are assessed as a Home Seeker you will be expected to bid for properties which meet your household needs, regardless of property type.

To assist Home Seekers to be housed quickly we will nominate to RSL's partners for appropriate vacancies within their stock.

Where a Home Seeker with Band 1 priority has not used the priority reasonably within three months i.e. the Home Seeker has not made bids likely to result in re-housing (including suitable Link properties) a direct match offer of accommodation will be made out with the choice-based lettings scheme.

This offer of accommodation will formally discharge the Council's duty under homelessness legislation. If the Home Seeker refuses the offer made by the Council in discharge of its statutory duties, the Band 1 (homeless) priority will be removed. The Home Seeker will continue to be registered for housing with their application status changing from "Home Seeker" to "Home Starter" and their circumstances being reassessed.

Where the Home Seeker is living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, they will be given immediate notice to leave the temporary accommodation. Any offers of RSL property to a Home Seeker are considered an offer of housing and the above will apply.

Where it has not been possible for Home Seekers to bid for a property within the three-month period because no suitable properties were advertised, their Band 1 priority will continue. If they are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, this will also continue. The application will be continued to be reviewed.

## **Number of Bids**

There is no limit to the number of properties applicants can bid for during each advertising cycle, however they must be eligible both in terms of size and applicant group to place a bid.

## **Offering a Property**

The successful bidder will be contacted when they are to be offered the property they have bid for.

Unsuccessful bidders will not be notified individually. However, information on Allocation Outcomes is available on a monthly basis on the Council's website. This information includes how many applicants bid for the property, the priority of the successful applicant and the date of award of priority.

## Refused Properties

If a Home Mover or Home Starter applicant refuses two properties, they will lose any priority for housing need and move to Band 4.

## Mutual Exchanges

Tenants of Falkirk Council have the right to apply for permission to carry out a mutual exchange with another public sector or Registered Social Landlord tenant. Permission to exchange will not be unreasonably withheld. Permission for an exchange must be received from their landlord

Falkirk Council is registered with HomeSwapper which is a web-based database of social housing tenants looking to exchange homes. Applicants can apply for a mutual exchange on the HomeSwapper website.

## Nominations to Registered Social Landlords

Falkirk Council has nomination arrangements in place with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who have housing stock in the Council's area. These arrangements provide the Council with the right to nominate applicants to vacancies arising within the RSLs housing stock.

## Section 5 Referrals

The Council has Section 5 protocols in place with RSL's in Falkirk, this places a legal requirement on RSL's to house applicants assessed as homeless.

## Exceptions

While this document outlines the policy and method which is used to allocate the majority of the Council's properties, there are exceptions and some properties are allocated out with the choice-based process:

- Housing with Care Level 1 and Level 2 are allocated following a housing and support needs assessment
- When a property is required by the Service to provide temporary accommodation as a result of an emergency situation.
- When a property is identified that would meet the needs of an applicant with particular special needs e.g. someone who cannot leave hospital due to their own home being particularly unsuitable, we may re-house another applicant to allow their property to be let to the applicant with particular needs.
- When there are multi-agency concerns that the offer of a property to an applicant would create an unacceptable risk to either the applicant or the local community, we may refuse to offer a property to that applicant
- When a property is required by the Service to discharge its statutory duty in terms of homelessness legislation.
- When a property is required by the Service to house an applicant that has been awarded priority due to exceptional circumstances.

## 6. Cancellation of Housing Application

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There are a number of situations when your application can be cancelled. This includes:

- When you are successful in your bid for a property
- You accept an offer of housing from another social housing provider
- You move through a mutual exchange
- You buy any property for your principal home
- You become a joint tenant/owner or succeeds to a tenancy
- You have not placed any eligible bids for 12 months
- You have not responded within 28 days to a suspension letter from Falkirk Council regarding your application for housing.

## 7. Complaints

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We aim to provide a high-quality housing allocation, housing advice and information service. However, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your application has been dealt with, you may wish to use Falkirk Council's complaints procedure. Complaints can be made:

- online using the online complaints form
- by emailing [contactcentre@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:contactcentre@falkirk.gov.uk)
- in person at your local Hub
- by phoning 01324 506070
- in writing to the relevant Council Service

You can use the Complaints Procedure to address the following situation:

- delays in responding to enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- Council policy not being followed
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure

# 8. Appeals

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Separate from the Complaints Procedure, there is an Appeals Process within the Allocations Policy to deal with instances where you are dissatisfied about a decision made about your application. You can appeal if you think that:

- the priority you have been awarded does not fully reflect your needs
- your housing application has been unfairly suspended or your application has been cancelled unreasonably
- your priority has been removed unreasonably because you have refused an offer of housing
- the property you have been offered does not match the choices on your application
- you have been offered a property that is in an unacceptable condition
- the Council has unreasonably refused to make an offer of housing.

The timescale for submitting an appeal is up to 21 days from the offer date, suspension/cancellation date, or the removal of priority date. All other appeals can be at any time.

## 9. Quality, Assurance, Performance, Management and Reporting

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We are committed to meeting the outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and monitoring our performance in the services we provide including continuous improvement

We do this by using a quality assurance system and each month check:

- 5% of new registrations processed to ensure the relevant information has been recorded properly.
- 10% of all allocations made to ensure they have been carried out in accordance with this policy.

Additional performance and monitoring information can be found at Appendix D.

# Useful Contacts

# HUBS

## Housing Needs

Freephone: 0800 587 4440  
Tel: 01324 503600  
E-mail: ath@falkirk.gov.uk

## Housing

housingervices@falkirk.gov.uk  
01324 506070

## Central Advice and Support Hub

housingervices@falkirk.gov.uk  
01324 506070

## East Advice and Support Hub

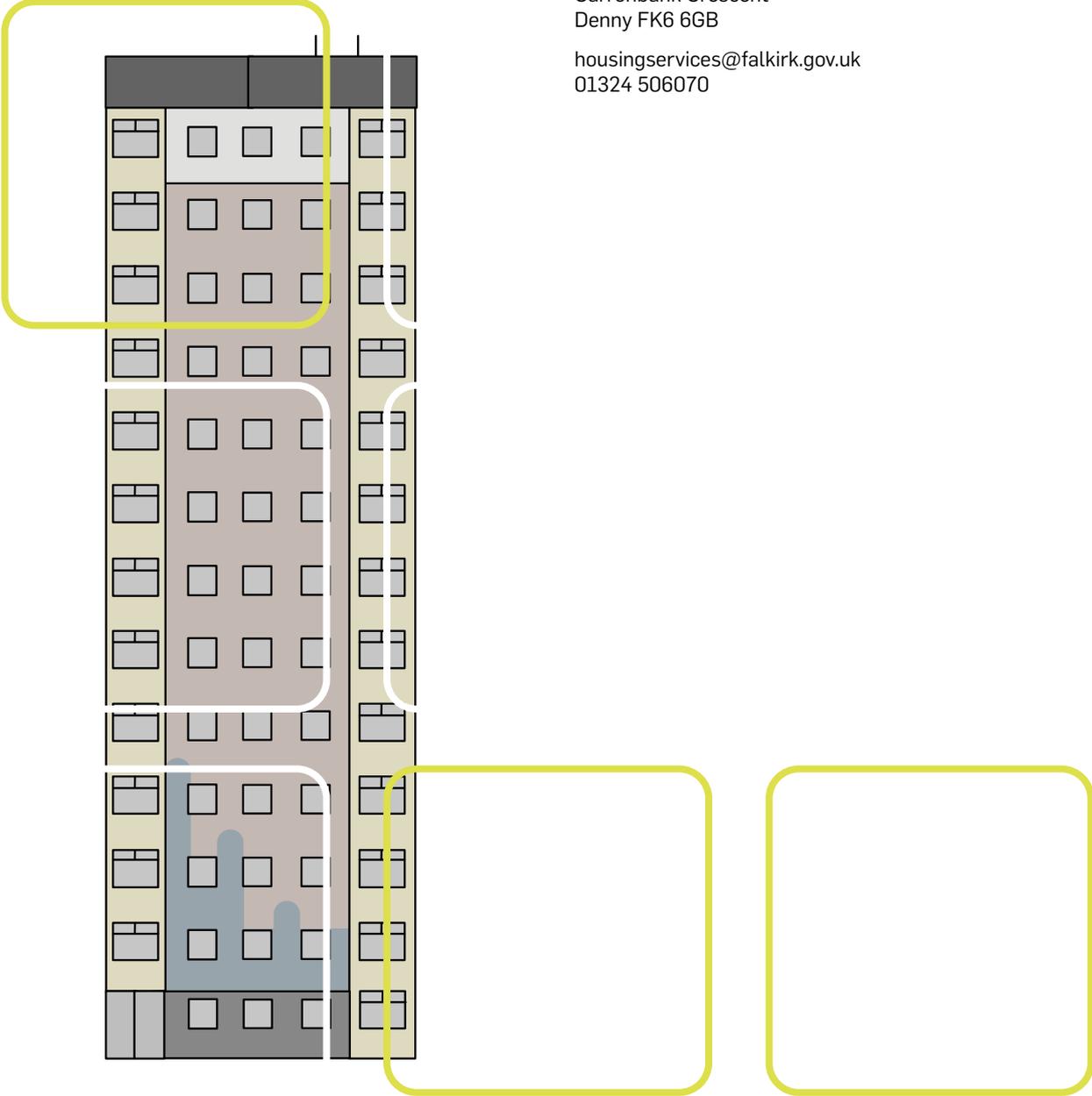
5 York Lane  
Grangemouth FK3 9BD

housingervices@falkirk.gov.uk  
01324 506070

## West Advice and Support Hub

Carronbank House  
Carronbank Crescent  
Denny FK6 6GB

housingervices@falkirk.gov.uk  
01324 506070



# Appendix A

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## Unsatisfactory Housing

A house is considered to be unsatisfactory if it does not meet the following criteria as set out in Section 86 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the

Housing (Scotland) Act 2006:

- is structurally stable
- is substantially free from rising or penetrating damp
- has satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and for heating
- has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water available within the house
- has a sink provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house
- has a water or waterless closet available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house and suitably located within the house has a fixed bath or shower and a wash hand basin, each provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water, suitably located within the house
- has an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water
- has satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food within the house
- has satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings
- in the case of a house having a supply of electricity, comply with the relevant requirements in relation to the electrical installation (i.e. electrical wiring and associated components and fittings) for the purposes of that supply
- has satisfactory thermal insulation.

# Appendix B

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## Advertising Mainstream Properties

To ensure efficiency in managing void turnover and to minimise voids rent loss, properties are advertised as soon as a termination of tenancy is notified. Properties are advertised weekly.

Applicants can only bid for properties that are advertised for the applicant group that they are in. For example, a Home Seeker applicant can only bid for properties that are advertised for Home Seekers. The same applies to Home Movers and Home Starters.

Most properties are let the first time they are advertised however if there are no eligible bids for a property under its advertised applicant group it will be re-advertised for ALL Groups. This means that any applicant group can apply for these properties. Or it will be offered to a Home Seeker applicant that has not been bidding as a direct match.

Properties are advertised on the Council's website through HomeSpot. Applicants are also able to indicate on their registration form if they require particular arrangements to be made to alert them to available properties and opportunities to bid. Such applicants will be supported by an outreach worker and will be routinely notified of any vacancies which may be of interest to them.

## Adapted Properties

An adapted property is one that is suitable for a person with a physical medical condition or disability and has one or more of the following:

- a walk-in shower or wet room
- an external ramp or altered steps
- a fully adapted and accessible kitchen.

The Council aims to allocate properties which are adapted to applicants with a physical medical condition or disability and who have a need for such facilities. This way the council seeks to make the best use of its housing stock and meet the particular needs of some applicants or members of their household.

Where a void property has a ground floor bedroom and bathroom and access that can be ramped, consideration may be given to adapting the property cost effectively where this would meet the needs of applicants on the housing register.

## Allocating Adapted Properties

When an adapted property becomes available for letting, it is advertised through HomeSpot. The advert will say that the property is "Adapted" and what facility or adaptation is in the property. All applicants that have been awarded priority (F) following a Functional Needs Assessment are able to bid for these properties irrespective of whether they are Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter. Preference will be given to applicants that need the particular adaptation in the property.

## Housing with Care

Housing with Care is housing for older people who are physically frail and need care and support services at home. Many Housing with Care properties have been designed or adapted to make living easier for older people. There are three types of Housing with Care:

- Level 1 (formerly called "very sheltered housing") - This is the highest level. Individual flats or houses, with additional features such as a communal lounge and laundry facilities, lifts and CCTV. Meals are also prepared for service users on site and served in a communal dining room
- Level 2 (formerly called "sheltered housing") - Individual flats or houses, with additional features such as a communal lounge and laundry facilities, lifts and CCTV.
- Level 3 (formerly called "amenity housing") - Individual flats or houses.

To qualify for Housing with Care, applicants must normally be aged 60 or over and have support needs. In the case of joint applicants, one person must be aged 60 or over with support needs.

Exceptions can sometimes be made, where a younger applicant suffers from ill health or a disability and they would benefit from the features of the housing or services provided in Housing with Care properties.

## **Assessment of Applicants' Needs for Housing with Care**

When an applicant applies for Housing with Care, an assessment is carried out to determine their care and support needs as well as their housing needs.

The assessment may involve family, carers or other professionals.

The assessment will look at how the applicant manages activities in and out of their home e.g. making a cooked meal, walking around the house, doing laundry and shopping. It will take into account the help the applicant has at home and the social activities they are able to take part in.

The assessment allows applicants to be prioritised according to both their personal and housing needs by taking account of the following:

- the frequency and type of care and support that the applicant needs
- any risk factors that the applicant may face
- the urgency for re-housing
- the applicant's preferences.

## **Allocating Housing with Care**

When a Housing with Care Level 1 or Level 2 property becomes available for letting it is matched to the applicant on the housing register for that property who has the greatest care, support and housing needs, and whose needs match the characteristics of the property and the level of care provision.

When a Housing with Care Level 3 becomes available for let it is advertised through HomeSpot as per mainstream properties.

# Appendix C

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This sequencing 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.

## **Allocation Area:**

Properties are individually sequenced in each of the following areas:

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

## **Property Size:**

With regard to property size these are grouped as follows:

- 0 - 2 bedrooms
- 3 bedrooms
- 4 bedrooms or more

## **Property Type:**

Within each Allocation Area and each house size group, properties are then sequenced again according to property type:

- houses
- four-in-a-block
- flats

## **Groups:**

Within each area, size and type listed above, the sequencing process will then stream properties into the three groups and assign to voids on the basis of:

- Home Seekers 45% (18 out of 40 properties)
- Home Movers 27.5% (11 out of 40 properties)
- Home Starters 27.5% (11 out of 40 properties)

# Appendix D

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We report on:

- Accessing the housing register
- Number of new registrations, including processing within the target timescale of 5 days
- Number of assessments of applicants' needs e.g. medical, homeless, including processing within the 28-day timescale
- Suspensions
- Suspensions from the housing register including grounds for suspension
- Offers and refusals
- The total number of properties allocated
- The total number of bids per property allocated
- Any refusal reasons
- Houses let
- Houses let by applicant type (Home Seekers, Home Movers and Home Starters)
- Houses let by Band of priority (1,2,3 or 4)
- Nominations and Section 5 Referrals to partner RSLs
- The number of applicants re-housed using HomeSwapper i.e. mutual exchanges
- Appeals and complaints
- Number of homeless appeals made including outcomes
- Number of requests for Exceptional Housing Need and outcomes
- Equality information
- Information on the age, disability, ethnic and national origins, race and gender of applicants on the housing register and applicants who make successful bids for properties.



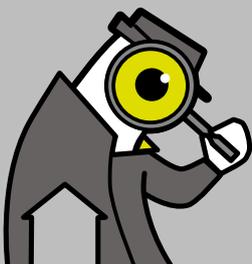
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If you supply personal information to us, you can find out how we handle personal data at [www.falkirk.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/privacy)

Have your say on how your Housing Service is run, or how it could be improved.

To find out more, contact:  
Inspector Tenant on 01324 590796,  
Email [inspector.tenant@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:inspector.tenant@falkirk.gov.uk)  
or visit us at  
[www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant)  
for more information.

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, large print or audio tape please contact Housing Needs Service.  
[www.falkirk.gov.uk/homespot](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/homespot)



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