



customer guide

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what is homes?

homes is a new service designed to simplify the way in which you can apply for a home in the Bradford District.

As there are not enough housing association homes available we have set up a wider housing options service to help you find a home that is right for you. These include:

- housing association rented homes
- good standard affordable privately rented homes
- shared home ownership options

homes has been designed to improve the way you can access information about housing options, allowing you to view available properties from your own computer at www.openmoves.co.uk

If you prefer, you can visit any of our access points where you can browse the website and view the homes available or speak to a member of staff. You can find a full list of the access points at the end of this guide.

If you are unable to use or access the website you are welcome to call in at one of our access points or call our dedicated housing options helpline on **0845 141 6666** and speak to an advisor who will be more than happy to assist you (please press 3 housing application from the options menu).

- the housing options helpline is open:
Monday – Thursday from: 8.30am – 5.00pm and Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm

who can apply?

Anyone who has been accepted onto the homes housing register is able to use the service. To apply, applicants should be over 18 years of age. However, in certain circumstances and, subject to a housing options interview and assessment, applicants aged 16 to 18 may be able to apply.

If you are moving into your first independent home we may set you up with a tenancy support plan and help you with certain things like contacting the gas and electric suppliers or completing housing benefit forms. This additional support will give you a great chance to make your tenancy a success.

to register and look for your new home simply:

- fill in the online registration form at:
www.openmoves.co.uk or
ring our housing options helpline on **0845 141 6666** and **press 3** housing applications from the options menu

You should be aware that before you can start bidding for a home, you will be required to provide proof of identification and your circumstances. Don't delay. The sooner you can provide these the sooner you can start bidding for a home.

who cannot use the service?

You cannot use this service if you have not completed an application form and been accepted onto the Housing Register.

There are also some people who will not by law be eligible to join the Housing Register. These are:

- certain people who are subject to Immigration Control under the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act
- certain people from abroad who are not subject to immigration control but who are not habitually resident in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland
- people (including members of their household) who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant.

how will my application be assessed?

We will use the information that you provide to us on your application form to assess your level of priority.

It may be necessary to visit you at home to check the information.

If it is relevant and you allow us to do so, we will talk to your social worker, doctor, occupational therapist or carer to get more information about your needs.

After your application has been assessed you will be placed in one of four priority bands as explained below.

applying for a home

what kind of checks will be carried out?

They may include references from a current or previous landlord, confirmation that the property details you have given are correct. Any previous or current rent arrears, property damage and anti social behaviour will also be looked into.

Before you are offered a property you will be asked to provide further documents to support your application. We will tell you what documents to provide and when to provide them.

All documents provided must be originals, up to date and valid.

If you do not fill in the application form properly it will be returned to you. The date it is accepted from will be the date the fully completed form is received.

If you do not provide us with the documents required your application may be accepted onto the Housing Register but will not be awarded any priority. Once the documents are received your application will be assessed and placed in the appropriate band from the date the documents are received.

Documents can be taken into any open moves or other Incommunities housing office for verification.

You should be aware that any details provided will be shared with other housing associations on the open moves scheme.

(Incommunities is registered to do this under the Data Protection Act 1998. A copy of the Incommunities registration is held for inspection at our head office address Incommunities, Trust House, 5 New Augustus Street, Bradford, BD1 5LL)

how do we prioritise your needs?

Following assessment of your application, you will be placed in one of the following priority bands –

- band A: urgent need
- band B: high need
- band C: medium need
- band D: general need

Details of each band are given below:

band A: urgent need

- people who are homeless and owed the 'full duty' as defined by s193 Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and/or people who are threatened with homelessness and owed a duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) should they become homeless
- Housing Association tenants who are under-occupying flats & maisonettes suitable for children in high demand areas or houses by one or more bedrooms. (Properties vacated through this initiative will be allocated to customers in Band A and Band B)
- clients "bed blocking" in hospital requiring urgent discharge (bed blocking is where a client is occupying a hospital bed that they no longer need, but cannot be discharged home due to unsuitability of their present accommodation)

band B: high need

- people who need to move on complex medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability (including adapted or ground floor housing which will be dealt with by the open moves able living team)
- people who are overcrowded by two or more bedrooms
- applicants fleeing domestic violence as per district-wide protocol
- young people leaving care and children assessed by Social Services as in need or at risk (where housing is a factor)

band C: medium need

- other homeless – homeless under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) but not owed the 'full duty'
- people who are overcrowded by one bed, or who are occupying unsanitary and unsatisfactory housing conditions
- people residing in an insecure tenancy that is coming to an end
- people leaving supported accommodation
- assessed disability/health needs
- people who need to move to a particular locality in the district where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others. This includes the need to move a specific location (for example to gain employment, or to give or receive evidenced care)

band D: general need

- all customers who do not meet the above criteria

prioritising your needs

how will I know which band I am in?

Once the housing options team or able living have assessed your current circumstances, they will write to you to confirm the band you have been placed in.

what is a 'bid'?

This is the way that you register your interest in an available property.

Please use your bid wisely as you are only allowed 2 bids on each cycle.

hint: The time you bid for a property during the cycle has no effect on your final bid position, so don't rush in at the beginning of the cycle when it's likely our helpline and website will be very busy with enquiries. Please take your time to assess what choices of properties are available and remember that it may be better to place your bid towards the end of the cycle when you will have a better idea of your bidding position.

how will the vacant properties be allocated?

Due to the shortage of social housing to rent in Bradford, we aim to ensure that the homes that are available are offered to those in the greatest housing need and that we continue to offer choice.

Vacant properties will be allocated through two routes:

1) The housing need route

Preference will be given in the following order:

- band A: urgent need
- band B: high need
- band C: medium need
- band D: general need

Waiting time on the register will be taken into account when determining priority between customers in the same band

75% of available properties will be advertised through this route

2) The waiting time route -

Preference will be given to customers who have waited the longest.

25% of properties will be advertised through this route

These Percentages are reviewed on an annual basis.

how will I know what properties are available?

Visit our website: www.openmoves.co.uk and select the 'homes' tab.

We also publish a weekly newsletter giving full details of available properties for those customers who do not have access to a computer.

You can pick up the newsletter from any of our access points.

what is a property cycle?

Properties are advertised on a weekly basis. This period of advertising is called a 'cycle.' A new cycle starts every Wednesday at (12.01am) and finishes the following Monday evening (11.59pm).

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

If you see a property you like and want to bid, you can do this in a number of different ways.

You can log in to your application on your own computer or by visiting any one of our access points.

If you prefer you can contact the open moves helpline on: **0845 141 6666** and press 3 housing application from the options menu, where a member of staff will place your bid for you.

I have children. How many bedrooms are they entitled to?

A standard number of bedrooms are allocated to each household in accordance with its age/sex/marital status composition and the relationship of the members to one another.

A separate bedroom is allocated to:

- each married or cohabiting couple
- any other person aged 21 or over
- each pair of adolescents aged 1 - 20 of the same gender
- each pair of children under 8 regardless of gender
- adolescent's aged 9 – 20 of different gender will qualify for their own bedroom

Households including a pregnancy will be allowed to bid for appropriately sized properties in anticipation of their future needs.

Foster carers: Long term foster carers are eligible to bid for properties to reflect their future needs. Relevant evidence on the placement of foster children must be provided before the extra bedroom/s entitlement can be awarded.

how will I know if a property is suitable for me?

Properties shown on the website have a description including the number of bedrooms, minimum age requirements, special features and the weekly rent.

Each property will feature a lettings criterion (e.g. the minimum and maximum number of occupants) and also state whether children or pets are allowed to ensure that the property is allocated appropriately.

do positions change during the cycle?

Yes. Please remember that once you have bid for a property, the position you hold may change as the cycle end approaches. For example, someone else in a higher priority band or with more waiting time may bid at a later date in the cycle and be placed above you.

how long will I have to wait for a reply to my bids?

Once the cycle has ended, the property will normally be offered to the person at the top of the bidding list.

If you are a successful bidder and you are short listed for a property you will be asked to provide evidence to verify the details you have given. If the details you have provided are incorrect, we will not be able to make you an offer.

about our properties

what if I don't hear anything from homes?

If you don't hear anything a week after the cycle has ended, you should assume you have not been successful and should try again on the following cycle

if I am offered a property, can I view it before making up my mind?

You will only be asked to view the inside of the property if your bid has been successful. This may include you if you are one of the top 10 bidders. You are welcome to view properties from the outside and it is often a good idea to have a look around the area to see the local amenities.

what if I don't like the property when I view it?

If you view the property and decide it is not suitable for you, you will remain on the waiting list and be able to bid for other properties in the future.

Please note – you will only be allowed to refuse 3 reasonable offers of accommodation. If you reach this maximum your application will be suspended for 12 months.

If you have been assessed as urgent in Band A because you have been accepted as homeless, only one reasonable offer of accommodation will be made. If this offer is refused, you will be placed in Band C and allowed a maximum of 2 further refusals of reasonable offers.

Please note that if you are in temporary accommodation you may be asked to leave.

what if I am homeless or I am threatened with homelessness?

If you are looking for a home because you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, we will deal with your case under homelessness law.

The law says that in some circumstances we have a duty to provide assistance for people who are homeless. open moves homes fulfils this role on behalf of Bradford District Council.

In the first instance every effort will be made to help you avoid becoming homeless – this could involve working with your current landlord, parents, relatives or friends etc to enable you to stay in your current home.

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, you can contact the housing options team to arrange an appointment.

what if I am disabled or my reason for applying is due to ill health?

Some people have particular housing needs because of a medical condition or a disability. If you have such needs your application details will be considered and if applicable you will be referred to the able living team.

able living will assess your requirements for specialised accommodation and ensure you obtain a property suitable for your needs.

If you would like to talk to someone about your particular needs you can contact able living at able.living@openmoves.co.uk or by calling the helpline: **0845 141 6666** to speak to an adviser.

the decisions made by us

what if I am not happy with a decision you make?

We aim to make all decisions in accordance with the stated policy. However, if you feel that we have made the wrong decision, you can ask for it to be looked at again. Before asking for a review it may help you to contact our helpline about a decision we have made. Please contact us at enquiries@openmoves.co.uk or by calling: **0845 141 6666** to speak to an adviser.

If, after the initial telephone contact, you still feel your matter has not been dealt with to your satisfaction, you may make a written request detailing the nature of your appeal within 21 days of being informed of the decision.

An officer senior to the one who made the original decision will carry out the review within 28 days from the date the request is received.

If you have a complaint about the service you can pick up one of our complaints leaflets from any open moves or Incommunities housing office reception.

Any matters relating to a homelessness decision are separate to this and are subject to a statutory review under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Any appeal relating to this should be made within 21 days of the receipt of the notification of the decision.

Please contact a member of our helpline at enquiries@openmoves.co.uk or by calling: **0845 141 6666** if you require further information.

what if I am currently suspended from applying for open moves or housing association accommodation?

If you have been suspended from the open moves or any other housing association waiting lists, you will not be eligible to bid for properties through the open moves scheme. However, if you contact us or the housing association that has suspended you and arrange to repay any outstanding debts, or resolve any other outstanding issues that have caused your suspension, we will review your situation and you may be allowed to bid for properties.

If you want your suspension reviewed, you should write to the Strategic Housing Needs Manager within 28 days of the date of the suspension, giving full details of why you think the decision is wrong and supplying any additional information which you feel may help your case.

You will be notified of the review decision within 10 working days.

how can I change the details on my application?

You will not be able to change any details of your application form yourself once it has been submitted.

If you wish to make a change please contact the helpline at enquiries@openmoves.co.uk or by calling: **0845 141 6666**.

how do I renew my application?

You need to update your details and any changes to your housing circumstances every year. Make a note of your registration date and renew your application by contacting the helpline at enquiries@openmoves.co.uk or by calling: **0845 141 6666**

help! I've forgotten my username or password

You must contact the helpline at enquiries@openmoves.co.uk or by calling: **0845 141 6666** and speak to one of our housing options advisors who will be happy to assist you.

Please do not re-register as you will only be creating a duplicate application with a new registration date which will place you in a lower bidding position.

how will I know what has happened to the properties advertised?

You can find results of all the previous cycles on the open moves website and in the weekly newsletter, including how many people applied for a property and confirmation of their membership date and banding.

This will give you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and how long you would generally have to wait. You may then decide to look for other types of property or areas where you may not have to wait as long to be re-housed.

You can find this information on the website and in the newsletter.

what if my home is too big for me?

able living can help you move to a smaller more suitable property in your chosen area and in some circumstances we will help you with the cost of moving, decorating and carpeting. For more information visit the website: www.openmoves.co.uk and click on the 'able living' tab. If you prefer you can contact able living on: **0845 141 6666** and speak to our housing solutions officer.

how do I rent a garage?

Garages are advertised on the open moves website. You can apply directly through the site or you may contact your local housing office.

If you prefer you may contact the helpline on **0845 141 6666**.

I am already a Housing Association tenant, how do I swap my home with another tenant? (sometimes called a mutual exchange)

You can see all mutual exchange adverts by visiting www.openmoveshomes.co.uk and following the links for homeswap.

You will need to log into your open moves account and click on 'my mutual exchange'. If you are not already registered, you can do so by visiting www.openmoveshomes.co.uk. If you do not have access to the internet, you may visit your local housing office or if you prefer, visit one of the access points shown at the end of this guide.

Please Note: It will not be necessary to complete a housing application form but we will need details of your current home and requirements.

*access point locations

access point location	address	contact telephone	kiosk / PC
Accent Yorkshire Ltd	Jeremy Downs House, Senior Way, Bradford, BD5 0QB	01274 733 660	1 kiosk
BDirect One Stop Shop	Centenary Court, Foster Square Bradford, BD1 4DB	01274 431 010	2 kiosks
Café West	Wanstead Crescent, Bradford BD15 7PA	01274 488 499	1 kiosk
Ilkley Town Hall	Town Hall, Station Rd, Ilkley LS29 8HB	01943 436 212	1 disabled kiosk
Incommunities aire-wharfe	6-14 Devonshire St, Keighley BD21 2DG	0845 166 0100	1 kiosk & 2 PC's
Incommunities east	Dudley Hill Business Centre, Knowles Lane, BD4 9SW	01274 257 200	2 kiosks & 1 PC
Incommunities shipley	The Old School Wrose Brow Road BD18 2NT	01274 257 300	2 kiosks
Incommunities west city	Commerce House, 24 Kirkgate, Bradford, BD1 1QL	01274 254 700	2 kiosk
Keyhouse Project (Bradford)	Cavell House, Eldon Place, Bradford, BD1 3AY	01274 728 954	1 PC
Keyhouse Project (Keighley)	130 North Street, Keighley, BD21 3AD	01535 211 311	1 PC
Manningham Housing Association	Manor Row, Bradford BD1 4QE	01274 771 144	1 kiosk & 1PC
Manningham One Stop Shop	Carlisle Road, Manningham, BD8 8AB	01274 432 111	1 kiosk & 1 PC
open moves	city house, 21-27 Cheapside, Bradford, BD1 4HR	0845 141 8167	2 kiosks
Shipley Information Centre	2A Wellcroft, Shipley, BD18 3QH	01274 437 016	1 PC
Shipley Town Hall	Kirkgate, Shipley, BD18 3EJ	01274 437 211	1 kiosk & 1 PC

*Alternatively, you may visit any Bradford Council Library.

For information on the homes customer guide in any other format including large print, audio CD/tape, Braille or translated into another language please telephone 01274 254321

بۆ دستهبهرکردنی زانیاری لهسهر بژاردهكانی بهكریگرتنی مۆلك له فۆرماتهكانی تردا بریتی له چاپی گهوره، CD دهنگدار/شریت، هێلی برهیل یان وهرگێرانی بۆ سههر زمانهكانی تر به ژماره تلهفونی 01274 254321 پهیوهندی بکهن

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کسی دیگر شکل بشمول چهپانی کے بڑے حروف، آڈیو، / CD ٹیپ، بریل یا کسی اور زبان میں ترجمہ شدہ شکل میں کرایہ داری کے اختیارات اور گھر کی ملکیت سے متعلق معلومات کے لئے براہ کرم 01274 254321 پر ٹیلیفون کریں

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www.openmoves.co.uk

tel: 0845 141 6666

