Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/points-and-waiting-list/waiting-list

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The waiting list

This information is for people in Northern Ireland applying for social housing.

In Northern Ireland, everyone wanting a social tenancy is placed on the same waiting list. The Housing Executive manages the waiting list. It is used by them and the registered housing associations to make housing offers.

The Housing Executive has information on how to apply to be on the waiting list.

An applicant's position on the waiting list depends on their points total. People with more points will be higher on the list. There is a range of points that can be awarded. The points you get will depend on your individual housing situation.

When it is your turn on the list, you will get an offer of a permanent home. There are ways you can improve your chances of getting an offer.

There is currently a shortage of homes. Some people can spend a long time on the waiting list waiting for an offer of a permanent home. This can be the case even if you pass the homelessness assessment.

Update your application once a year

To stay on the list, you must update your application once a year. You should receive a letter asking you to do so. If you do not reply to this letter, the Housing Executive will remove you from the waiting list. It’s important to keep your details up to date. If your needs or situation changes, your points can change as well.

Improve your chances while on the waiting list

1. Change your areas of choice

You can increase your chances of getting an offer by changing your areas of choice. Contact the Housing Executive and ask about areas:

- with a higher turnover rate
- with less demand
- that need fewer points to get an offer

2. Look into housing for specific groups of people

Some housing associations have housing for specific groups of people. For example, older people or young families.
Contact the ones that provide housing for your specific needs.

If you are over 55, you may be able to apply for Independent Living accommodation. You can search by council area to find what schemes are available.

Some housing associations show current vacancies on their websites. Contact the association if there is a home you like.

Remember, all housing providers must follow the rules of the selection scheme.

3. Check if you can qualify for Special Acquisition of Dwellings (SAD)

SAD is when the Housing Executive buys a home for someone with very complex needs. They may do this when there is no other suitable housing.

You need all the following to qualify for SAD. You must have:

- passed the homelessness assessment or have intimidation points (intimidation points are no longer available since 1 April 2025)
- been on the waiting list for a long time
- complex needs points
- not received any suitable offers

The Housing Executive should try every other rehousing option before using SAD. This includes:

- checking existing social or private housing
- adapting an existing social or private rental to meet your needs
- checking if new developments in your areas can add a home to meet your needs

Contact your housing officer if you think this is an option for you.

Special Acquisition of Dwellings is only used in very specific cases. If you think you have a good case or any questions, start a chat with one of our advisers.