Housing Rights

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

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Getting an offer

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

Allocations of housing

If you want to get a social tenancy, you will need to submit an application to the Housing Executive. They will assess your housing situation and award you points for different reasons. Your position on the waiting list will depend on your points total. The more points you have, the higher up the list you will be.

The Housing Executive and registered housing associations use the same waiting list.

Accommodation is usually offered to the person on the waiting list with the most points. But if more than one applicant has the same points, an offer will be made to whoever has been on the list the longest.

When it is your turn:

- You'll get a letter with the offer. The offer should be 'reasonable'. The letter should also tell you how much the rent is.
- After you receive the offer, you can inspect the property and decide whether to accept or reject it.
- If you reject the offer, you will get one more final offer. In all, you can get two reasonable offers of accommodation.

Rejecting two reasonable offers can affect your points total in the future.

What is meant by a 'reasonable' offer

A reasonable offer of accommodation means that it should be suitable and meet your needs.

You’re entitled to certain kinds of accommodation. It’s important to know these details so you can be sure you get what you're entitled to.

These are the criteria for a reasonable offer of accommodation:

Enough bedrooms

The property must have enough bedrooms for your household. There are measurements that determine how many people can use a bedroom.

A room that is:

less than 3.7 square metres

cannot be a bedroom

3.7-6.5 square metres

can be a bedroom for a child under seven

6.5-9.3 square metres

can be a bedroom for:

- one person of any age
- two children of the same sex under 18, or
- any two children under seven

more than 9.3 square metres

can be a bedroom for:

- one person of any age
- two people living as a couple
- two people of the same sex under 18, or
- two children under seven

The bedroom must have enough headroom and space for a bed, a wardrobe and a chest of drawers. If a property has two reception rooms, one of these rooms may be used as a bedroom.

Matches your area of choice

For the offer to be reasonable, the property must be in:

- one of your areas of choice
- an area that meets your needs. For example, you should not need to take more than two buses to get to work or bring your children to school.

Good condition

To be a reasonable offer, the property must be safe for you to live in. A property is not a reasonable offer if it has:

- problems with structural stability
- damp
- no lighting, heating, or running water
- no sink with hot water in the kitchen
- no bath, shower, or toilet
- drains that don't work properly

Checking a property

It’s a good idea to check the property and make sure it is a reasonable offer before you accept. There are some important things to keep in mind when you view a property.

Furniture and decoration

You will need to cover any decorating costs. The Housing Executive or housing association must provide flooring in kitchens and bathrooms. But you will need to

pay for flooring in the other rooms.

These extra items can add up, increasing the cost of getting your home ready to live in.

Condition of the property

Social landlords must make sure the property is safe and in good condition. If you check the property, look for things that are the landlord's responsibility.

It's the landlord's responsibility to ensure that:

- roofs, gutters, windows, doors and external joinery are in good condition and weatherproof
- locks work
- electricity, water, and heating systems are inspected
- heaters and flues are tested
- smoke alarms are tested
- internal doors are in good condition and close
- kitchen units, doors and cupboards fit
- bathroom fittings are complete, clean, and free from cracks

The landlord must also make sure there are no:

- cracked tiles
- mould
- holes in walls or ceilings

If you see any of these problems, write them down and tell your housing officer. You can ask them to confirm, in writing, that they will fix the problems within a reasonable timeframe. It's important to get this in writing, so you can make a complaint if they don't do what they said they would do.

Responding to an offer

After you check a property, you have two to three working days to decide if you want to accept. Applicants with complex needs may get extra time to decide. If you do not respond to the offer in time, the landlord will consider it a rejection.

Turning down an offer

You are entitled to two reasonable offers. If you reject both offers, you will not get another offer for at least 12 months. You will also lose:

- your legal homelessness status and homelessness points
- intimidation points which may have been awarded to you (intimidation points are no longer available since 1 April 2025)

You'll also have to move out of any temporary accommodation that was provided.

You'll get one more offer if you pass the homelessness assessment within those 12 months.

Accepting an offer

To accept a property, you must sign an acceptance slip and include:

- your name
- the address of your new home
- the date your tenancy starts

After you sign the slip, your landlord should give you a:

- copy of the slip (you'll need it for your electricity provider)
- tenant's handbook and information about how to get help to pay rent if you need to apply for benefits

Challenging an offer

You can challenge an offer if you don't think it was reasonable. You should notify your housing officer that you are going to challenge it. Challenging an offer can be tricky. So, speak to one of our advisers if you want help asking for a review.

You can challenge an offer in either of these ways:

1. Legal right to review

   If you are a homeless applicant, you can ask the Housing Executive to review their decision. Usually, you must ask for a review within 40 days of receiving the offer. Talk to your housing officer or one of our advisers if you want to use this option. If the challenge is successful, the offer will be removed and not counted towards your two offers.

2. Formal complaints process

   If you did not pass the homelessness assessment, you can use the formal complaints process. You can submit a complaint to the landlord who made the offer.

Getting a 'multiple' offer

A ‘multiple’ offer is when:

- the Housing Executive or a housing association has a property that has been empty for a while
- they then offer this property to more than one person

This is so the property does not stay empty for a long time.

Many people can be offered the same property. They do not have to have the most points for the area to receive a multiple offer.

This type of offer will only count as one of your two reasonable offers if:

- you say that you want to take the property, and
- you then receive a formal offer of the property

If more than one person wants the property, it will be offered to the person with the most points.

If you receive a multiple offer you can get advice.

Landlord withdraws an offer

In certain situations, social landlords can withdraw an offer. This can happen if you are no longer eligible because of:

- unacceptable behaviour, or
- your immigration status

The Housing Executive and housing associations may withdraw an offer if:

- you do not meet the conditions of the offer letter

- you cannot take up the tenancy within a reasonable period of time
- you, or a member of your household, would be at significant risk in the area
- the landlord made a mistake in offering you the property
- the offer is no longer a 'reasonable' offer

A social landlord will tell you in writing if they decide to withdraw an offer of accommodation. If you do not agree with the decision, you can make a complaint. You have seven days from the date of the decision to withdraw the offer to complain.

More advice

- Check your points
- The waiting list
- Applying for a transfer