

## Getting an offer

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

When it is your turn on the waiting list, you'll get an offer for a permanent accommodation. This is when the Housing Executive or a housing association (meaning, social landlords) offer you different properties.

You'll get a letter with the offer. The letter should include one 'reasonable' offer of accommodation. The letter should also include the cost of rent for the property. After you get the offer, you can check the property and decide if you want to accept or reject it.

If you reject the offer, you will get one more offer – for a total of two reasonable offers of accommodation. Rejecting both offers can affect your number of points in the future.

You'll get two reasonable offers of accommodation if you:

- apply for social housing from 30 January 2023, or
- applied before 30 January 2023 but have not had any reasonable offers yet

## What a 'reasonable' offer of accommodation means

You're entitled to certain kinds of accommodation. It's important to know these details so you can be sure you get what you should. A reasonable offer of accommodation means that the property the social landlord is offering you, is suitable and meets your needs.

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 room for a bed, wardrobe and 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**

To be a reasonable offer, 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**

You do not have to, but 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 need to cover any costs for decorating the home to your liking. For example, the Housing Executive or housing association must provide flooring in kitchens and bathrooms. For other rooms, you will need to pay for flooring.

These extra items can add up and increase how much you need to spend to get 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 for their commitment, in writing, to fix the problems within a reasonable amount of time.

## **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

You'll also have to move out of any temporary accommodation the Housing Executive provides.

You'll get one more offer if you pass the homelessness assessment again within 12 months after rejecting both offers.

## **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

If you do not think a property counts as a reasonable offer, you can challenge the offer. You have 40 days to do this. The offer will count as one of your two reasonable offers unless the challenge is successful, and the offer is removed.

Challenging an offer can be tricky. Speak to one of our advisers or your housing officer if you want help asking for a review. You can challenge an offer in either of these ways:

### 1. Legal right to review

You can ask the Housing Executive to review their decision if you passed the homelessness assessment. The review process can be complicated. 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.

### 2. Formal complaints process

If you did not pass the homelessness assessment, [use the formal complaints process](#). You can submit a complaint to the landlord that made the offer.

## Getting a 'multiple' offer

A 'multiple' offer is when the Housing Executive or a housing association offers a property to more than one tenant. Your offer letter will say if it is a multiple offer.

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

- you tell the landlord that you want to take the property, and
- the landlord then makes you a formal offer of the property

The landlord must give the property to the tenant who is highest on the waiting list.

## **Changes to the multiple offer process**

If you're an applicant on the waiting list for social housing you are entitled to receive multiple offers. These are typically used when a property has been left empty for some time. If you have homeless points, they do not count towards your two reasonable offers. Originally, the Housing Executive or Housing Association had to wait four weeks and could only issue multiple offers to the 10 highest pointed applicants on the waiting list for the area. The highest pointed applicant who accepted the property would then be made a formal offer.

**Now, the Housing Executive and Housing Associations do not have to wait four weeks before issuing multi offers. They can contact as many applicants as they need to secure a new tenant meaning this process should occur faster and there should be less properties left empty.**

If you receive a multiple offer or expression of interest and are not sure of your options, please get in touch with our advice line on 02890245640, or chat online.

## **Landlord withdraws an offer**

In certain situations, social landlords can withdraw an offer. The Housing Executive and housing associations must withdraw an offer 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 write 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](#)