

# A guide to the Housing Register



## **This leaflet explains:**

- Who can apply for Council Housing in South Holland
- How applications are processed
- How priority is assessed
- Important factors that may affect your priority
- How properties are allocated
- Choice
- Rights to advice, information and reviews on decisions
- Other housing options

# A guide to the Housing Register



## Language Line

We subscribe to Language line, a telephone interpretation service to help us in communicating with customers who do not speak English as a first language. If you require further assistance, or information in another language, please contact us.

نحن مشتركون مع لانغويج لاين (Language line)، وهي خدمة الترجمة الفورية عبر الهاتف لمساعدتنا على التحدث مع الزبائن الذين لا يتكلمون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أولى. يرجى الاتصال بنا إذا اردت المزيد من المساعدة أو المعلومات بلغة أخرى.

Arabic

我们使用语言线 (Language line) 公司的电话翻译服务, 帮助我们与英语不是母语的顾客沟通。如果你需要更多协助, 或需要此信息的另一种语言版本, 请与我们联系。

Mandarin

W celu komunikowania się z klientami, których jęz. ojczysty nie jest jęz. angielskim korzystamy z usług tłumaczenia przez telefon Language Line. Prosimy o kontaktowanie się z nami w celu uzyskania pomocy lub informacji w innym języku.

Polish

Temos uma assinatura com a Language Line, um serviço de interpretação por telefone que nos permite comunicar com os nossos clientes cuja língua materna não é o inglês. Se necessitar de informação ou de assistência noutra língua deve contactar-nos.

Portuguese

Наша организация является пользователем услуг компании Language line. Language line оказывает услуги телефонного перевода для общения с лицами, не владеющими английским языком. Если вам нужна дополнительная информация об этих услугах или если вы хотите получить информацию на другом языке, просим сообщить нам об этом.

Russian

## Introduction to the Lettings Policy

### 1. Introduction

**This document summarises how South Holland District Council (The Council) allocates permanent homes to people included on the Housing Register. A copy of the full detailed scheme can be made available on request.**

If you need urgent help because you are worried about losing your home, please telephone us to make an appointment to see a Housing Needs and Advice Officer or call in at the Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding. Our Housing Needs and Homelessness Unit may be able to give you advice and assistance to prevent you from losing your home and can signpost you to other agencies who may be able to offer you help and support.

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. Our aim is to make sure that people applying for housing are treated fairly and sensitively and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, colour ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexuality or marital status.

## Who can apply?

### 2. Who can apply for housing in South Holland?

- All applications will be considered as long as they are made in the correct way.
- The law (Housing Act 1996) stops us from allocating homes to persons from abroad. We ask for specific information on the Housing Application Form in order to check whether someone is not eligible on these grounds. If we can't consider you for accommodation we will advise you in writing, confirming the reasons for the decision.
- With the exception of those persons excluded by law, see paragraph 2b, all applicants over the age of 16 will be considered eligible to go on to the Housing Register.



How to  
join the  
register

## 3. How to join the Housing Register

The starting point is to complete a Housing Application Form, available from South Holland District Council Offices or the Council's web site: [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk). It is important that you complete the form in full so that we can deal with your application promptly. You are legally obliged to give us accurate information on your housing application. If you give us false or misleading information you could be fined up to £5000. We also reserve the right to remove you from the Housing Register and you will be notified of this decision.

If you have difficulty completing an application form please contact us for help, advice and assistance.

How  
applications  
are  
processed

## 4. How applications are processed

When we receive your application form we will check to see if you are eligible to join the Housing Register. You may need to provide supporting information to enable us to assess and confirm your circumstances. There is a list of the supporting information in Section 10 on the Housing Application Form. Once we have received all of the necessary information we will process your application within 10 working days.

**Important Note:**

If the Medical Advisor makes a particular recommendation for rehousing, any additional medical priority awarded will only apply to the specific property type and / or area specified.

How will  
my priority  
be  
assessed?

## 5. How will my priority be assessed?

The Council operates a points based scheme to reflect housing need and priority for allocation. We award points against a range of housing need indicators. The law states that we must give reasonable preference to households in certain housing circumstances. The points scheme allows us to achieve this in a fair and consistent way. Details of the groups who fall into the reasonable preference categories are available on request.

How is my  
application  
pointed?

## 6. How is my application pointed?

The list below provides a guide to the points scheme:

- **Mixed sex overcrowding**

This applies where any child aged five years or more is forced to share a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex aged 10 or more, this excludes persons living together as a couple, because there is no other bedroom available in which they can sleep. This also applies to applicants where a parent has to share a bedroom with their child over the age of four irrespective of the sex.

- **Statutory overcrowding and bedroom deficiency**

Statutory overcrowding is defined in part 10 of the Housing Act 1985. (We will award points for each bedroom deficient.)

- **Under-occupation**

If you are a tenant of South Holland District Council who currently lives in accommodation which is too big for your needs and you want to move to smaller accommodation, providing that it does not cause an overcrowding situation, we can award you additional points. Further details are available on request. We can make a contribution of up to £180 towards removal expenses to those tenants moving from general housing to elderly or disabled persons accommodation. Please contact us for more details.

- **Children living in flats**

We will award points to current tenants of the Council, a social landlord or private landlord but we will require proof. These points only apply until the child reaches the age of 18.

- **Medical need**

If you are in urgent medical need for alternative, more suitable housing you may be eligible for additional points. You can tell us about your medical condition by completing Section 5 of the Housing Application Form.

A Housing Management Officer, Community Support Officer or

# A guide to the Housing Register



Customer Services Assistant will initially assess your medical priority. They will ask you to provide information about your medical condition, how your condition is affected by your current housing and what medication you are taking. Once we have all of this information we will ask our Independent Medical Advisor to make an assessment of your medical condition and we will advise you of the outcome of the assessment.

**Please note that even very serious medical conditions may not be given priority points where your present home is considered suitable for your medical needs.**

Details of the medical points scheme are available on request.

## ● Separated family

These points are awarded where a family unit is forced to live apart, where it is reasonable to assume that that they would be expected to live together as a household. The criteria for this are contained within the homelessness legislation and are available on request.

## ● Non-permanent/unsuitable accommodation

There are three levels of points awarded in this category. Details are available on request.

## ● Sharing or lacking facilities

These points are awarded to independent households, they will not be awarded to households that they have previously lived with. For instance a single adult child living with parents or relatives that they have previously lived with as a member of the household would not get these points.

## ● Financial hardship

These points are awarded following a means tested calculation, which is in accordance with guidance provided by the National Debt Line. This calculation is subject to review and the Council will take this into consideration when making financial assessments. You will need to complete Section 6 of your Housing Application so that we can make an assessment.

## ● Waiting time

If you are awarded housing needs points, you will be awarded points for each complete year you are on the Housing Register. There is a maximum number of 10 points awarded so long as you remain on the register and they will be automatically updated.

## ● Special need

Circumstances may arise which warrant an urgent move, which are not adequately reflected by the standard housing need categories. Where the Housing Management Officer or Housing Needs and Advice Officer considers that you have a special need for rehousing they may award additional points, subject to the approval of the Housing Operations Manager. A list of special need circumstances is available on request.

## ● Connection with South Holland District Council

You have a local connection with South Holland District Council if you have the following:

- ◆ six months permanent residence in the district this has to be six months out of the last 12 months
- ◆ adult relations, children, parents, sisters, brothers, who have been permanent residents in the district for three years continuously out of the last five years
- ◆ you are elderly or disabled and need to move to be near adult relations, children, parents, sisters, brothers, who have taken up permanent residence in the district for three years continuously out of the last five years
- ◆ or you have lived in the district previously for a minimum of 12 months continuously.



Important factors that may affect the priority of applications

## 7. Important factors that may affect the priority of applications

With the exception of those persons who are not eligible in law, see Section 2 of this leaflet, the Council will consider all applicants for allocation. However, whilst there are no blanket exclusions, in certain circumstances we may adjust the priority attached to individual applications. These are explained below:

### a. Serious unacceptable behaviour

If it is decided that you have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a tenant, we will remove all priority from your application.

When considering unacceptable behaviour we will apply the following tests:

- ◆ Have you or a member of your household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
- ◆ Was the unacceptable behaviour serious enough to have entitled the local authority landlord to obtain a possession order?
- ◆ At the time of the application, are you still unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of your behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of your household?

Please note: In applying these tests, you will be regarded as if you had been a secure tenant of the Council, whether you actually were/are a tenant. Examples of unacceptable behaviour are available on request.

### b. Other circumstances in which your priority may be adjusted:

#### ● Tenancy conduct and behaviour

Conduct that affects a person's suitability to be a tenant will be taken into account. This is behaviour that is not serious enough to warrant removal of all priority, see unacceptable behaviour above, but could result in a reduction in priority. Details are available on request.

#### ● Financial circumstances

##### Owner-Occupiers

Owner occupiers may have any potential points reduced to a minimum of five, where, following an affordability assessment, it is felt that you have sufficient capital assets which may include savings, investments and property to enable you to secure suitable alternative accommodation. You will be notified in writing of any decision which may affect your priority and you will have the right to a review. See Section 11 of this leaflet, 'Your rights to advice, information and the right to a review of decisions'.

#### ● Sheltered Housing Support Needs

If you have a need for Sheltered Accommodation, we will require information about your support needs. We will assess your support needs in two stages:

- ◆ you will need to complete Section 9 of the Housing Application Form. This is a self assessment at the point of application, which will ask you to provide details about why you need supported accommodation. Supported accommodation is accommodation where there may be a resident warden or where a mobile warden will visit you. We will ask you to provide information about your support needs, including how your support needs are affected by your current accommodation
- ◆ a Supported Housing Management Officer, Warden, Mobile Warden or Community Support Co-ordinator will interview you and make an assessment to make sure that you are allocated suitable accommodation.

Changes

## 8. Changes in circumstances

If your circumstances change it is important that you let us know immediately. You can tell us about changes by ringing us, writing to us, emailing us or calling into the Council Offices. If you are currently on the Housing Register we will update your details within 10 working days and we will write to you to advise you of any changes to your points.



Allocating  
properties

## 9. How are properties allocated

All properties are allocated on the basis of housing need priority, which is assessed by the points scheme. In order for us to make best use of the housing stock, we will match the size of the property to the size of the household. Properties will not be allocated where to do so would cause under or over-occupation.

When a property becomes available we will check the Housing Register for people who have requested that property type, in that area. The household with the highest points will be considered for the offer of the property. Where two or more households have the same level of points we will consider the household who has been on the register the longest.

In order that we make the best use of the housing stock, we will firstly consider any transfer application and even though the points may be lower, we may make an offer, providing that the applicant with the highest level of points is not disadvantaged. This means that the property vacated by the transfer applicant will be offered to the person at the top of the waiting list.

Offers made to transfer applicants will be subject to an inspection of the property. If the property is found to be in an unsatisfactory condition we may withdraw the offer or apply conditions, requiring them to carry out repairs or decoration deemed to be the tenants responsibility. All offers are subject to a clear rent account or by an arrangement to pay in full before the transfer takes place.

In certain circumstances, the Council also reserves the right to vary the letting criteria where there is an overriding factor that, by allocating the property, there could be an adverse effect upon an individual or the community.

Where properties are of low demand the Head of Housing and Property or Housing Manager can vary the allocation criteria.

Choice

## 10. Statement of choice

You are free to indicate up to five first choices of accommodation in the South Holland District and you can tell us what streets/roads you prefer. You can tell us the property types and areas you are willing to consider on your Housing Application Form. You will only be considered for the property size that your household needs. Section 8 of the Housing Application Form gives details of where the properties are situated in South Holland.

You will not be penalised for refusing an offer, providing your reasons for refusal are felt to be reasonable. However, if the reasons for refusal are felt to be unreasonable you will be deferred for six months. You do have the right to appeal against this decision and you must do this in writing within 21 days. Section 11 of this leaflet tells you about your rights to a review of decisions.

**Important Note:**

There are less than 4,000 council properties in South Holland. Around 1,000 of these are classed as Sheltered and a further 1,000 as Elderly and Disabled. Spalding East and West are the highest demand areas, this means if you have these areas as you preferred areas of choice you may have to wait much longer before an offer can be made.

Please note the wider your choice the easier it is for us to help you.

If you have made an application for housing on the grounds of homelessness and the Council has agreed to provide you with settled accommodation by making you an offer through the Housing Register, you must check the details of the offer very carefully. If the letter states this is a **final offer**, the duty to provide housing for you is likely to cease if you refuse the offer. It is very important that you speak to a Housing Needs and Advice Officer before you make any decision to refuse the offer.



Your  
rights

## 11. Your rights to advice, information and the right to a review of the decisions

- a. Everyone has the right to apply for housing accommodation. Anyone likely to have difficulty in making an application is entitled to free assistance. If you need help please contact the Housing Needs Unit at the Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding.
- b. You have the right to certain general information, that is:
  - ◆ information that will enable you to assess how your application is likely to be treated and whether you are likely to fall within the reasonable preference categories
  - ◆ information about whether accommodation appropriate for your needs is likely to be made available and, if so, how long it is likely to take.
- c. You have the right to be notified in writing of any decision not to give you any preference (priority) because of unacceptable behaviour.
- d. You have the right to be informed if you have been refused access to the register and the reason for refusal.
- e. You have the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of your case which has been, or is likely to, be taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to you.
- f. You have the right to request a review of a decision mentioned in, **c**, **d** and **e** above. All requests for a review must:
  - ◆ be made in writing within 21 days of notification to the applicant
  - ◆ be made by the applicant or their representative
  - ◆ clearly state the grounds on which the review is being sought.

Other  
housing  
options

- g. The review will be carried out by the Housing Operations Manager and the outcome of the review will be given in writing within 28 days of the request.
- h. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a review decision you can request that a further review be heard by the Allocations Appeals Panel. The request must be made within 21 days of the initial review decision. The outcome of the review will be given in writing within 28 days of the request.

## 12. Other Housing Options

### Mutual Exchange

Exchanging your property with another tenant of South Holland District Council, another Council or a Registered Social Landlord.

If you are a tenant, you could find another tenant to exchange with you. You must receive written permission from the Council, and any other landlord involved. Details of how to do a mutual exchange can be found in Tenants' Handbook Leaflet 12.

### Homeswap

This scheme allows you to advertise in another council's area if you want to move there. Forms are available from the Council Offices. We also have lists of people living outside the district who want to move to South Holland.

### Private rented accommodation

The Housing Advice Leaflet 11 provides details of Estate Agents if you are considering private rented accommodation. If you think you may be eligible for Housing Benefit, you should seek advice as there are regulations about who can claim and the amount of benefit that would be paid. A Housing Needs and Advice Officer is available to provide you with advice and assistance if you need it. In certain circumstances we may be able to help you with a rent deposit or a grant. See Housing Advice Leaflet 2. If you are interested in private rented accommodation, please complete Sections 6/7 of the Housing Application Form.

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## Affordable private rented accommodation

Sometimes private developers provide affordable private rented accommodation because of the Council's affordability policy. In some cases the landlord will ask us if there is anyone on our Housing Register who may be interested. If you are interested in this scheme it is important that you fill in Sections 6/7 of the Housing Application Form.

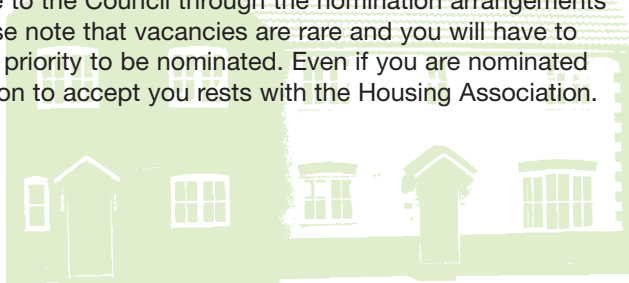
## Shared Equity Housing

There are a number of schemes in South Holland where people can buy shared equity homes, which are provided by a housing association or private developer. Normally, you would own at least half of the home but the private developer, a housing association or the Council would also have a share in the equity.

We are sometimes asked if there is anyone on our Housing Register who may be interested in shared equity housing. If you are interested in shared equity housing, please complete Sections 6/7 of your Housing Application Form. It is also a good idea to keep an eye on the local papers and contact the provider direct.

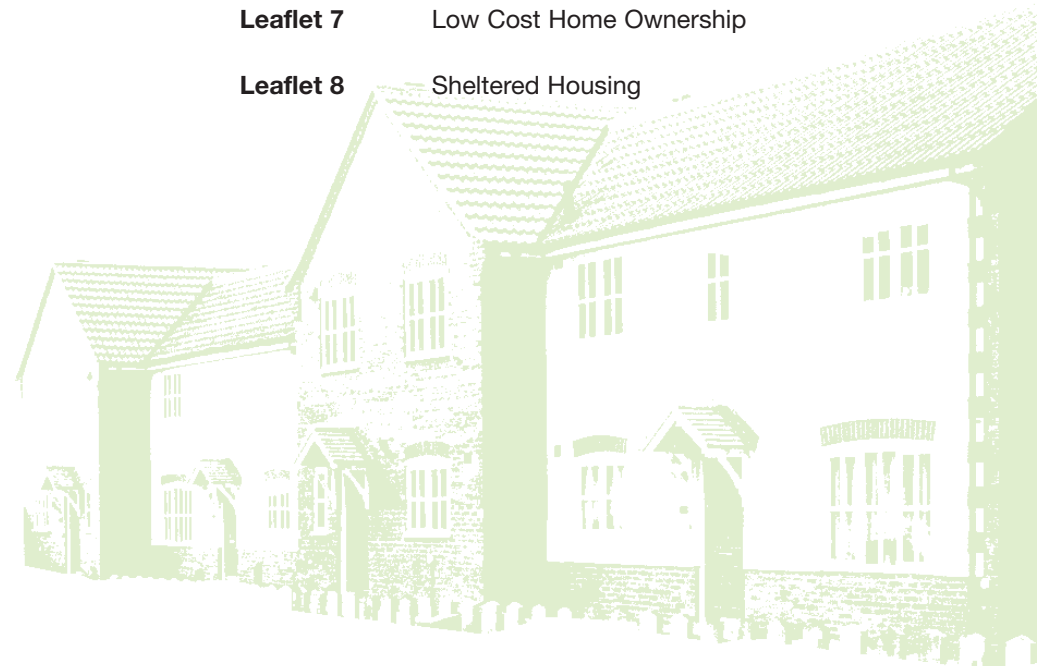
## Housing Association accommodation

If you want to be considered for Housing Association accommodation in South Holland please tell us on your Housing Application Form. Providing you are accepted on to the Housing Register you will automatically be considered for vacancies that are made available to the Council through the nomination arrangements we have. Please note that vacancies are rare and you will have to have sufficient priority to be nominated. Even if you are nominated the final decision to accept you rests with the Housing Association.



## This Guide to the Housing Register is part of a series of Housing Advice leaflets:

- Leaflet 1** Private Rented Accommodation
- Leaflet 2** Rent Deposit Loans, Rent in Advance Loans
- Leaflet 3** Relationship Breakdown
- Leaflet 4** Homelessness Advice
- Leaflet 5** Housing Advice for Young People
- Leaflet 6** A Guide to the Housing Register
- Leaflet 7** Low Cost Home Ownership
- Leaflet 8** Sheltered Housing



# A guide to the Housing Register

## How to get in touch with us:

### Write to us at:

South Holland District Council  
Housing Section  
PO Box 8, Priory Road  
Spalding, Lincs PE11 2XE

**Call in and see us** at the Council Offices in Priory Road, Spalding - any weekday from 8.30am to 5.15pm, except on Fridays when we close at 4.45pm.

**Telephone:** 01775 761161  
ask to speak to Housing

**E-mail:** [info@sholland.gov.uk](mailto:info@sholland.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk)

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