



GRAMPIAN
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Guide to applying for a home with Grampian Housing Association



THESE HOMES

Welcome to These Homes

Simply a better way to provide homes

This Guide contains important information which you should read carefully to enable you to understand how These Homes works and ensure that you don't do anything that might lower your chances of getting a property. If there is anything you don't understand or you need more advice or information on, please contact us.

These Homes is a digital lettings system used by several landlords operating in different areas throughout Scotland. You can register with any of these landlords, allowing you to apply for properties in lots of different areas. The advantage of a digital lettings system is that you, the applicant, can see what properties are available at any time, and can choose to apply for the properties that are suitable for your needs, and are in areas where you would like to live.

The These Homes Register is shared by several Scottish landlords. You only have to register once then you can choose to be considered by one, a few or all of them depending on where you want to live. Once you have registered with These Homes, you can apply for all properties advertised provided you have chosen to register with the landlord the property belongs to. There will usually be a lot of people applying for the same property and so there are some simple rules to decide as fairly as possible who will be offered the property.

Contents

1. Registering

- *You need to register before you can apply for houses*

2. Priority Passes

- *What are they and how do they work*

3. Who is not eligible for Housing

- *Circumstances under which registrations may be suspended*

4. Applying for a House

- *How to apply for an advertised property*

5. Offers of Property

- *How and when offers are made*

6. Local Lettings Plans

- *When we might use these*

7. Refusing Offers

- *What happens if you refuse an offer of a property*

8. False Information

- *Providing false or misleading information can lead to your registration being suspended, or eviction action being taken*

9. Reporting Allocations

- *What information we will publish following an allocation*

10. How to Make a Complaint

- *Where to make a complaint to*

11. Information in Alternative Formats and Languages

- *Services we can provide*

12. Data Protection

- *How we process and protect your personal data*

1. Registering

You must register with These Homes before you can apply for one of our properties. Anyone aged over 16 can register. The easiest way to register is online at www.thesehomes.com. When you complete the registration process, you choose which area(s) you want to live in and you will be given a list of the These Homes landlords who have properties in your selected area(s). Should you require support to complete the registration process, please contact us for assistance.

Once you have completed the online registration process, you will be given a registration number. You need this number to log in to your registration details online, apply for properties or if you need to contact us.

If your circumstances change at any time it is very important that you update your registration online because if you successfully apply for a property, then we find that the information we have about you is incorrect, the offer of the property may be withdrawn.

2. Priority Passes

We want to make sure that we allocate the homes we have available to the people who need them most. Therefore, if you have a “significant housing need” you might qualify for a priority pass. You might be in housing need for one of the following reasons:

- You are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- You are experiencing harassment or anti-social behaviour
- You or a household member are suffering domestic abuse
- Your health is affected by your current housing situation
- You are overcrowded as you do not have enough bedrooms for your family
- Your home is too big and you need a smaller property
- Your property is unsuitable because of its condition or lack of amenities
- You need to move to a particular area for work or family reasons
- You are experiencing financial hardship (more than 30% of household income is being paid towards rent)

If any of these situations apply to you, you will be asked for further information during the registration process which has been designed to collect the information we need to accurately assess your housing need in line with our Lettings Policy. Our Lettings Policy can be downloaded from the Grampian Housing Association specific area on www.thesehomes.com.

If you are eligible for more than one priority pass, we will award all passes that are relevant for their housing need.

Homeless passes are only awarded where your Local Authority has completed a homeless assessment. You should receive a statutory homeless decision letter from the Local Authority and you must send a copy of this letter to us before we can award the pass. If you are homeless you should contact your Local Authority without delay. Please note that we do not provide any temporary accommodation.

How do we assess Priority Passes?

Priority passes can be awarded on four levels Gold, Silver Plus, Silver and Bronze and there are five priority areas as indicated in the table below.

If you are eligible for a priority pass, you will be issued the pass types that are relevant to your current housing circumstances.

Priority Category	Gold	Silver Plus	Silver	Bronze
Housing Circumstances	√	√*		
Medical	√		√	√
Overcrowding/Under Occupation	√**		√	√
Lacking Facilities			√	√
Personal Circumstances	√		√	√

*Silver plus housing circumstances will always have an expiry date

**gold pass is awarded for overcrowding only

The level of priority you are entitled to will be assessed based on the information you have provided during the registration process; therefore, it is important that you give us enough information to make a decision. Sometimes we may need more information, for example, we may ask for a letter from your doctor to clarify your medical needs. If we need further information, we will contact you to let you know.

Once we have assessed your registration you will be advised if you have been awarded a priority pass. If you are awarded a priority pass, it will be considered every time you apply for a property that falls within any limits set on your pass (see section 5 below).

If you are not awarded a priority pass, or if you believe you have been awarded the wrong level of priority, you can appeal the decision. If you wish to appeal, please email thesehomes@grampianhousing.co.uk marking the subject line "Appeal" and give your reasons as to why you wish to appeal.

Limiting Priority Passes

If you are awarded a priority pass it may be limited to a specific area or areas, or to a specific type of property (to take account of any medical needs you may have). If your pass is 'limited' it means that it is only valid for properties that meet the 'limited' criteria. You may still apply for properties that do not meet the 'limited' criteria but your pass will not be recognised for that property and you will be classed as a registered applicant with no priority pass. For example, if your pass was limited to properties in Kingswells then you could only use it for properties in that area. If you have been assessed as statutorily homeless, your priority pass will only be applicable for properties in your local council area.

When a Priority Pass is not awarded or is removed

A priority pass will only be awarded where an applicant meets the specified criteria. There will be occasions where an applicant will not be considered to have any priority need for housing. An applicant with no priority pass can still apply for available properties, however they are unlikely to be successful in being housed. There are other housing options available for those with no priority and you should refer to our website www.grampianhousing.co.uk to see what other options we have.

If you have a change of circumstances such as a change of address, you need to let us know so that your pass can be reviewed. You may retain your original pass or it may be that you qualify for a different level of pass.

Your pass may be removed following assessment by a Neighbourhood Officer for a property as it may be determined that the circumstances are no longer valid.

If it is felt that you have deliberately worsened your circumstances (e.g. you may have moved to a smaller property and are now over crowded) then your pass will be removed.

3. Who is not eligible for housing?

In certain circumstances, registrations can be 'suspended'. This means you will not be able to apply for any houses until the 'suspended' status is removed.

As part of the registration process, you will be asked to answer several questions and to confirm this information is correct. The answers you give show whether or not you meet the criteria to apply for housing with us (see also **false information**). If any criteria are not met, your registration will not be made 'live' until such time as you can demonstrate to us that you can now meet the criteria to apply for housing. Examples of when registrations are 'suspended' include:

- You have outstanding rent arrears either with Grampian Housing or another landlord, and you haven't maintained an agreement to pay them off
- You have a history of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity (subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) when action has been taken (or is pending) by Police, local authority, landlord etc.
- You supply false or misleading information – see section 7 below
- We have asked you for more information and have not yet received it

If you would like more information about whether or not you are eligible, you can contact us in confidence. If you are not eligible, we will advise what action is required before you can apply through our system.

4. Applying for a House

Our available properties will be advertised online weekly at www.thesehomes.com. When you complete your registration, you can select to be notified by email when a property suitable for your needs is advertised.

Once you have completed your registration you can apply for any property that we advertise, as long as it is suitable for you (for example, we wouldn't allow you to apply for a property that was too small for your family).

When you see an advert for a property you are interested in you can apply online by logging in to your account (remember you will need your registration number). Alternatively, you can apply over the phone, in writing or in person at our office. Properties are advertised for a limited period of time so it is important that you contact us before the closing date and time specified in the advert.

It is important that you only apply for properties that you would accept if you were offered so before you apply it is a good idea to check Google Maps 'Explore this Area' for information about the area (www.google.co.uk/maps). If public transport links are an important consideration you should also look at www.traveline.info for information about buses and trains.

You can apply for as many advertised properties as you wish at any one time. If you qualify for more than one offer at the same time, we will assume that the property you applied for first is your first choice, and so on, in the order you chose to apply. You can only be made one offer at any one time, so the order in which you apply could be important to you.

If you do not want to apply for advertised properties each week, you do not have to. Every year we will send you a reminder to check whether you still wish to remain registered with These Homes.

5. Offers of Property

Once the closing date and time for the advert has been reached, we look at all of the applicants who have applied for advertised properties. We will normally consider an applicant for housing according to the following steps:

- Who would make 'best use' of the property – for example, by using all the available bedrooms or by using disabled adaptations
- If more than one applicant would make 'best use' of a property, we will offer it to the person with the highest level of Priority Pass
- If more than one person has the same level of Priority Pass, the offer will go to the person who has held their Priority Pass the longest
- If there are no applicants with Priority Passes, the offer will go to the applicant who first registered with These Homes

The Association reserves the right to favour properties for an existing GHA tenant/Key Worker and may do so on occasion. However, the same steps as listed above would still apply.

If you are successful in applying for a property you will be notified as soon as possible after the closing date of the advert.

6. Local Lettings Plans

Under certain circumstances and where a new development is 20 units or more, the Association may have an agreement with the relevant Local Authority to use Local Lettings Plans (LLP) to manage lettings.

The LLP will be agreed with the Local Authority and will take account of local housing strategies.

Where there is an LLP in place, the Association and the Local Authority will have an agreement in place where a percentage of the properties will be let to people who are on the Local Authority waiting list. The Local Authority will provide the Association with a list of suitable candidates (in line with the LLP agreement) for these properties.

These properties will be ringfenced for Local Authority nominations and will not be advertised for let on These Homes

7. Refusing an Offer

It can be tempting for some to apply for several properties at once with no real interest in some of these properties. To minimise this from happening and to ensure

that applicants only “apply” for properties that they want to live in, the following conditions apply to applicants who repeatedly and unreasonably refuse properties:

1st refusal – warning letter will be issued

2nd refusal – deferment for 6 months

Should you wish to appeal a warning or suspension letter, you can do so by emailing us at www.thesehomes@grampianhousing.co.uk.

8. False Information

If you intentionally give false or misleading information in an attempt to secure an offer of property, we will immediately withdraw any priority pass you have and your registration will be “suspended” for up to two years. If a tenancy has started, the landlord may immediately take legal steps to repossess the property.

9. Reporting Allocations

We will publish regular reports on These Homes to give everyone some idea of the demand for different properties. This can help you make reasonable choices about where you want to live. For example, is it more important to have a home sooner and go for properties that are in low demand, or can you wait for the ‘perfect’ property to come along elsewhere?

10. How to Make a Complaint

We aim to provide an excellent service at all times but accept that we may not always get it right. If you are unhappy with the service you have received from us and wish to make a complaint. You can download a copy of our complaints policy from our website www.grampianhousing.co.uk, alternatively you can contact us and ask for a copy to be sent to you.

11. Information in Alternative Formats and Languages

We will provide material in formats such as large print, audio tape or computer disk, on request.

If you require this leaflet or any other publication translated into another language we will provide this on request.

Read Speaker a read out loud service is available at www.thesehomes.com to assist you with your application. In addition to this, the Association is a member of Happy to Translate and can provide this service free of charge if required.

12. Data Protection

When you register with These Homes, you consent to our processing your personal data, including any sensitive personal data. Sensitive personal data includes any information that we collect about your racial or ethnic origin, health, committed or alleged offences, including court proceedings and sentencing. This data will only be processed where necessary. Please inform us as soon as possible of any change in your personal information by logging onto www.thesehomes.com and updating your registration to keep them complete and accurate.