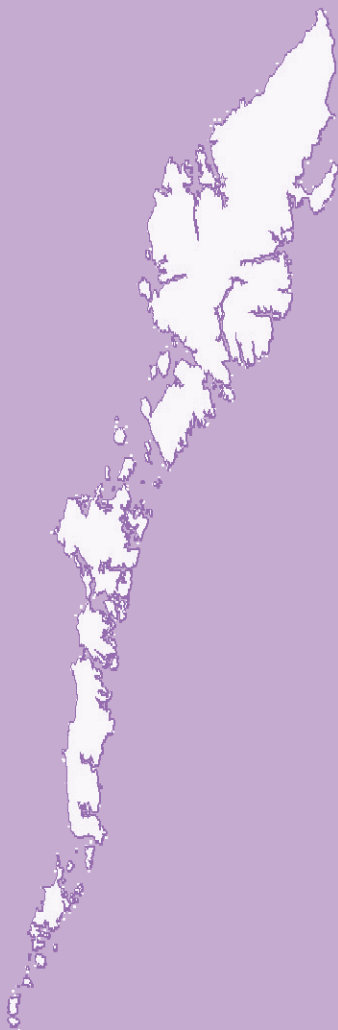




hebridean housing
partnership



Housing Applicants Information Booklet

This information booklet should be read prior to you completing your housing application or transfer application form

Introduction

If you wish to apply to be housed by Hebridean Housing Partnership you should complete and return our Housing Application form which you can get from any of the offices listed at the end of this leaflet. Our staff will be happy to advise or help you fill in this form.

Once you return the form to us we will usually arrange to interview you within 2 to 3 weeks. Normally this interview takes place in our offices but home interviews can be arranged so long as you are living within the Western Isles. If you are eligible to go on our housing list we will confirm this within a further 2 to 3 weeks. If you are not eligible for any reason we will tell you at once.

Hebridean Housing Partnership

The Partnership own 2000 houses located in twenty six letting areas from Ness on the Isle of Lewis to the Isle of Vatersay. The location of our houses can be found on page 14 of the Housing Application form. Applicants will be offered a maximum of two houses in your area of choice. Please remember the more you limit your choice the longer you are likely to wait for housing.

Hebridean Housing Partnership is the largest owner of rented accommodation in the Western Isles. Applications will be accepted from anyone aged 16 years or over. In allocating our houses we will not take account of whether an applicant is resident in the Western Isles if the applicant:

- is employed or has been offered employment in the area;
- wishes to move to the area to seek employment;
- wishes to move to the area to be near a relative or carer;
- has special or medical reasons to be housed within the area;
- wishes to move to the area because of harassment; or
- wishes to move to the area because you are fleeing from domestic violence.

Housing Allocation Policy

The Partnership uses a points system to assess applicants housing need. The questions in the application form are designed to ensure that all of your existing circumstances are taken into account when we calculate how many points you have.

When you submit your application it is assessed, the number of points you have is calculated and your details entered on the appropriate housing list. When a house becomes available for letting, the applicant who has requested that area and who has the most points will receive the first offer of the tenancy. In the event of applicants having the same number of points, the earlier date of application will determine the offer of the tenancy.

The circumstances we take into account when calculating points include:

- whether you are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- whether you live in lodgings, furnished accommodation or temporary accommodation;
- The condition of your present house; and
- If you live in accommodation that is too small or too large for your needs.

The Partnership reviewed the Allocation Policy during December 2007 to reflect current housing needs in the Western Isles. The major changes to the Allocation Policy are undernoted:

- Housing applicants will now be split into two categories: Housing List and Transfer List;
- Homeless persons in priority need will be awarded 300 points, potentially homeless in priority need 20 points and non-priority homeless applicants 10 points; and
- Houses falling vacant in letting area 3C (Stornoway) will be allocated in the following manner: 60% to homeless applicants in priority need, 30% to housing applicants and 10% to transfer applicants. This quota will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

At present, housing demand does not make it necessary to allocate quotas for housing applicants out-with Stornoway.

Offers of Housing

HHP will normally offer tenancies to the applicant with the highest number of points who has a need for the particular type of property being let.

There may however be situations where applicants will be bypassed for an offer of housing and these are set out below:

- There is evidence that an allocation would place the community or an individual(s) at risk.
- Enquiries to check the household's circumstances provide clear evidence that a particular allocation is unsuitable or inappropriate.
- An applicant is subject to immigration control and is not entitled to be offered a tenancy.
- An applicant has an unsatisfactory tenancy reference for any of the following reasons:
 - > any rent arrears;
 - > the condition of the property - if an applicant is not keeping their current home and garden in a reasonable condition they will be bypassed for an offer of housing until they bring their property up to a reasonable standard; and
 - > any anti-social behaviour - if there is clear evidence that an applicant or anyone living with them or visiting them have behaved anti-socially (usually within the last three years) and the issue is not resolved they will be bypassed for an offer of housing.
- The property is too large for the applicant's household.
- The property is too small for the applicant's household.
- The property has specialised features which are not required by the applicant. Preference will normally be given to applicants who have a need for any special facilities or features that the property provides.
- The property is ground floor with level access and this is not required by the applicant. Preference will normally be given to applicants who have a need for such accommodation
- The applicant or a family member has a condition or illness that is likely to be long term or permanent and the property is not suitable or cannot be adapted to make it suitable.
- The applicant requires support and assistance to sustain a tenancy and the support is not available or in place
- The applicant is in supported accommodation and is not ready to move to more independent living
- The applicant's circumstances have changed and information is awaited or required to enable their application to be re-assessed.
- Any quota set in the policy for that applicant group has been reached.

Suspension from housing list

An applicant for housing may be suspended in particular circumstances as defined within legislation and Hebridean Housing Partnership's Allocation Policy.

Examples where suspensions will be considered include:

- a previous tenancy which was conducted unsatisfactorily (we will ask for housing references after you apply);
or
- where there is clear evidence of anti-social behaviour.

Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 comes into force from April 2013. If you are accepting a property which you will be under-occupying (e.g. if you accept a property that has more bedrooms than you require any Housing Benefit that you receive will be reduced. This only applies if you are receiving Housing benefit.

Housing transfers and exchanges

Existing Hebridean Housing Partnership tenants can apply for a transfer to another property owned by them for a variety of reasons and we will process these applications in the same way as housing applicants who require to move for medical, overcrowding, relationship breakdown or access to employment reasons.

We ensure that our allocation selection procedures are carried out fairly providing accommodation for those in greatest need.

You are advised to widen your choice of areas and type of housing as much as possible to help ensure that you are housed as quickly as property availability will permit.

Homelessness

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness you should first contact the Comhairle's Homeless Service on Telephone No. 01851 707909.

Hebridean Housing Partnership has entered into an agreement with Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar to provide accommodation for housing applicants deemed to be homeless and in priority need by the Comhairle's homeless service staff.

If you are homeless or think you are likely to become homeless within the next 28 days you should contact the undernoted offices.

Review your application

Hebridean Housing Partnership will review your application once every twelve months. Any medical priority will be reviewed as necessary. At this time you will be required to complete review forms giving up to date circumstances. If you do not complete the review form, your application will be removed from the list.

You may change your area of choice at any time. It is your responsibility to keep Hebridean Housing Partnership informed of any changes of address or your household circumstances, which may affect your application. All changes will be confirmed in writing to you.

Trust Housing Association

Trust Housing Association has 60 sheltered houses located in Matheson Road and Lewis Street, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis.

The Association uses a different allocation policy for letting its houses. Details of Trust's housing allocation policy can be obtained from the undernoted HHP offices or from Trust Housing Association, 12 New Mart Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1RL, Telephone Number - 0131 444 1200

Contact details

If you require help in completing the housing application form please call at your local Hebridean Housing Partnership Office or contact us on one of the phone numbers shown below:

Stornoway

Gleann Seileach Business Park
Creed Court
Willowglen Road
Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2QP

Tel: 0300 123 0773

Balivanich

17 Winfield Way
Balivanich
Isle of Benbecula
HS7 5LH

Tel: 01870 603939