

Information Booklet



If you would like help to understand anything in this booklet, or if you need the information in an alternative format such as large print, audio or Braille, please contact your local Administering Scheme Partner using the contact details on page 15.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Property Pool Plus has been developed by Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral Councils together with over 20 Housing Associations. The Housing Associations will advertise their available vacancies every week through Property Pool Plus.

Once you have registered with Property Pool Plus and your application has been activated you can then express an interest in properties which suit your needs. To do this you can either place a 'bid' on the property in the CBL section, or you can consider the first come first served 'Available Now' properties, or those advertised in the private rented sector and contact the landlords directly.

See section 4.2 Bidding for vacancies for more information.

Property Pool Plus also advertises Private Rented, Rent to Buy and Shared Ownership Properties

1.1 Participating Landlords

These include:

Cobalt Housing	One Vision Housing
Crosby Housing Association	Pierhead Housing Association
Family Housing Association	Pine Court
Guinness Northern Counties	Places for People
Habinteg Housing Association	Plus Dane Group
Halton Housing Trust	Regenda
Jigsaw	Riverside Group
Johnnie Johnson Housing	Sanctuary Housing
Knowsley Housing Trust	For Housing
Leasowe Community Homes	Wirral Methodist Housing
Onward Homes	Association
Torus Group (LMH)	Your Housing Group
Muir Housing Group	

Within each of the local authorities the following Administering Scheme Partner will be responsible for dealing with your application.

Halton: Halton Housing Trust Knowsley: Knowsley Housing Trust

Liverpool: Partner Housing Associations and Liverpool City Council

Sefton: One Vision Housing

Wirral: Wirral Council

Please see Section 7 for contact details.

1.2 The advantages of Property Pool Plus

Property Pool Plus gives you an active role in choosing a new home that is right for you, in accordance with the policy. Property Pool Plus has one application form, one list of applicants, one allocations policy and a shared IT system across all partners. This approach offers you an accessible and consistent service. You will be able to apply for vacancies across all five council areas although your application is likely to receive a different priority in each area.

2 YOUR APPLICATION

2.1 Eligibility and Qualification

To join the scheme an applicant must be both 'eligible' and a 'qualifying person'

Most people over the age of 16 years can register unless they are ineligible or non-qualifying. You may be ineligible or non-qualifying if:

you are an existing tenant and you have been rehoused via the scheme or by an existing scheme landlord within the last 12 months
you are subject to immigration control
you are an offender / ex-offender who is subject to level 2 or level 3 Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
you have a history of serious unacceptable behaviour unless you can show that your behaviour has improved
you have rent arrears or other housing debts equivalent to or greater than 8 weeks gross rent.

For further information please contact your local administering scheme partner (contact details on pages 14 & 15).

You will be notified if you have been deemed ineligible or non-qualifying and will be provided with information on the reason for the decision.

2.2 How do I apply to Property Pool Plus?

All applicants have to complete an application form. You can do this online at www.propertypoolplus.org.uk or, if you need some help in filling in the form, you can visit your local Administering Scheme Partner or One Stop Shop. Please note assistance with completing your application form is not available at One Stop Shops within the Liverpool Local Authority area. All applicants are expected to complete the application forms online unless they are vulnerable or cannot get access to the internet. By using the online application this will save time in processing and activating the application. Required verification documentation as identified during the application process should be submitted to your Administering Scheme Partner within two weeks, to enable your application to be assessed and activated.

2.3 Assessment and Verification of your application

When you register with Property Pool Plus you give permission for the Property Pool Plus partners to contact other organisations to check that the information you have provided is correct including Department of Works and Pensions, Housing Benefit departments, Fire Service, Police and Probation Services, support workers, health or social care professionals, and other relevant agencies.

This is what happens when we receive your application:

We check that you have provided all of the information we need including proof of identification, proof of residence and proof of your national insurance number. If there is any missing information we will contact you.
If you are a current tenant or have held a tenancy in the past you will need to provide a reference from your landlord.
If you tell us that you have been involved, or are still involved with any support agencies such as Social Services or the Probation Service, we may contact them for more information.
If you have included children on your application form, you need to provide proof of residence for each child e.g. child benefit, child tax credit award letters or proof of a formal legal arrangement in order for us to consider them in the application. Any proof provided will need to show your details and the children's names.

The information which you provide relating to your housing application will be treated as confidential in accordance with Data Protection regulations covering both electronic and manual records and governs what can be done with the data, including collecting, storing, using and disposing of it.

Once your application has been assessed, we will write to tell you which priority band you have been placed in. You should receive this letter within 3-4 weeks, if you have provided all proofs of documentation.

2.4 Management of your application

If you already live within Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, or Wirral your application will be managed by the Administering Scheme Partner for the area where you live irrespective of where you may wish to be rehoused. If you live outside these areas, you can choose any of the administering scheme partners to manage your application.

2.5 Can a friend or relative help me apply for housing?

Yes. You may have a member of your family, or a friend, whom you would like us to contact regarding your application. If so, you will need to tell us who they are on the application form and give us permission to speak to them. You will also need to complete a consent form for them to act on your behalf.

2.6 If your circumstances change

You must keep your Administering Scheme Partner informed of any changes to your household, health condition or housing situation. This is very important as it could result in a change in your priority band or eligibility for certain homes. You also need to inform us if you no longer want to be in the Property Pool Plus scheme.

Failure to inform us of a change in your circumstances could result in an offer

of accommodation being withdrawn.

2.7 Renewal of applications

To ensure that accommodation is allocated fairly, and to take account of any change in circumstances affecting your eligibility or current or future housing need, you will need to renew your application every 12 months.

Your Administering Scheme Partner will send you an invitation to renew your application either by letter or email. This will take place annually on the anniversary of your registration date and you will need to respond within 4 weeks. If you do not respond within 4 weeks your application will be cancelled.

2.8 Cancelled Applications

2.0	
Applic	cations will be cancelled in the following circumstances:
	You have been re-housed to social housing
	A request to cancel an application has been received from you (or your representative)
	there is no reply to renewal letters
	letters to you are returned by the Post Office
	We have received notification that the applicant is deceased
	You no longer qualify, due to a change in circumstances, or due to circumstances not declared at initial registration

Applications which are cancelled will not accrue any waiting time on the register. However, if the application is cancelled due to non- renewal and you contact your Administering Scheme Partner within 6 months of the cancellation your application may be reinstated in which case you will retain your original registration date. After the 6 month period, your application will remain permanently cancelled. If you make an application after this 6 month period it will be deemed a new application with a new registration date.

3 ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED

3.1 The Housing Priority Banding system

Banding has been developed to ensure that people with the greatest need for housing are given priority. The different Bands reflect the broad categories of housing need, from urgent to low. There are six bands which are summarised as below. More detail is given in the full policy.

BAND	REASON FOR HOUSING NEED (SUB BANDS)
Band A Urgent priority	 □ Health/Welfare (urgent) for example displaced through fire and rescue, the need to move due to a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces, people who are unable to be discharged from hospital due to unsuitability of current accommodation, people with a long term health condition who are unable to enter/leave their home and are unable to access all essential facilities (see section 3.4) □ Homeless (owed the main duty - unintentionally with priority need) □ Regeneration
	Overcrowded (by two or more bedrooms)Homeless (owed the relief duty)
Band B High priority	 Health / Welfare (high) for example: Homeless Prevention (priority need), Children Act referrals, people assessed as ready to move on from Supported accommodation, people with a long term health condition who are unable to enter/leave their home or are unable to access an essential facility within the home (see section 3.4), members of the Armed Forces who will be discharged within 3 months or who have been discharged within the last 12 months and who have no medical needs Overcrowded (by one bedroom) Disrepair with enforcement action required Under occupation in the social rented sector
Band C Medium priority	 □ Health/Welfare (medium) for example relationship Breakdown, difficulty entering/leaving the home or difficulty accessing essential facilities within the home (see section 3.4), existing Social Housing Tenants who need to move to another Local Authority area for employment reason in accordance with the Government's Right to Move Guidance □ Homeless / Prevention (no priority need) □ Homeless (intentional with priority need) □ Living with family and friends

Band D Low priority	□ No assessed need and in employment
Band E	 No assessed need and not in employment or no local
No priority	connection
Band F	 Reduced priority status due to unacceptable behaviour or
Reduced priority	rent arrears between 4 & 8 weeks

3.2 Prioritising applications within Bands

Applicants in Band A are prioritised in order of the sub bands for housing need as listed in the table above i.e. someone Health/ Welfare (Urgent) is higher priority than Homeless (owed the main duty - unintentionally with priority need). However additional preference may be given to individuals with a particular reason for housing need when a property is advertised to meet local priorities. If this is the case then this will be clearly stated in the adverts.

For Halton, Knowsley, Sefton and Wirral, applicants in Bands B and C are prioritised within each Band by date of entry into the Band and there is no difference in priority between the sub bands.

For Liverpool, applicants in Bands B and C are prioritised in the order of the sub bands above and then by date of entry within each sub band. For example, if you are in Band B Health and Welfare (High) you will receive priority over those in Band B Overcrowded (1 Bed) even though an applicant in Overcrowded (1 Bed) may have an earlier date of entry into Band B.

For all council areas applicants in Bands D to F are prioritised within each Band by date of entry into the Band.

When applicants are prioritised for a property, if there is more than one applicant with the same date of entry into the Band, the applicants will be further prioritised in order of their original date of registration.

3.3 Homeless cases

If you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, you should contact your local Council to arrange an interview to discuss your circumstances. They will work with you to try to prevent you becoming homeless and will discuss your housing options with you. You may still bid for properties through Property Pool Plus, providing your application has been accepted onto the housing register but it may be possible to prevent homelessness through alternative solutions. Homeless households in Priority Band A will be in that Band for a limited time and will only get one suitable offer of accommodation which may include an offer in the private rented sector. If you do not bid then suitable bids can be made on your behalf.

3.4 Health and/or Welfare condition

If someone in your household has a health issue which is being affected by where they live then the Health and Welfare section of the Property Pool Plus application form should be completed, which will be considered in accordance with the scheme policy. When considering applications from people who need to move to a different type of property due to a physical disability, the assessment will be based on the applicant's ability to enter/ leave their home, as well as their ability to access the essential facilities within the home i.e. (bathing/toileting and a separate room for sleeping). The health/welfare assessment may result in a higher priority band being awarded. You can continue to choose which properties to bid for but you must be mindful of your condition, for example you should not bid for houses if your health priority has been awarded due to an inability to manage stairs

3.5 Overcrowding - the bedroom standard

To determine whether your household is overcrowded the following bedroom standard is applied:

One bedroom is needed for you and your partner.

One bedroom is then added for the following people living with you:

Ш	pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender
	pair of adolescents aged 10 to 20 years of the same gender
	any single adult aged 21 years or more
	a child with severe disabilities who requires frequent care during the night
	a foster child where a separate bedroom is a requirement of the fostering authority
	a non-resident carer who is regularly required to stay overnight to attend to personal care / health needs
	A child and an adolescent of the same gender are expected to share a bedroom

3.6 Reduced Priority Status

Rent arrears or housing related debt equivalent to 4 weeks gross rent but less than 8 weeks gross rent will result in Reduced Priority Band F. Applicants will remain in Band F until the debt is reduced to below the equivalent of 4 weeks gross rent.

Applicants who are deemed to have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances in order to gain a priority will be placed in Band F for a period of 12 months.

3.7 Staying in contact with children

If you are separated or divorced, any children will be considered as part of your housing application if you can provide proof they live with you for more than half of the time. The proof may be documents from the court or a solicitor, or written confirmation from the child's other parent.

Where access has been shared equally between two partners, it is unlikely that accommodation of the same size will be made available to both parents. A parent with contact for children enabling them to stay for less than 50% of the time may be allocated an additional bedroom for those children, for example a single person may be eligible for a two bedroom property.

4 FINDING A SUITABLE PROPERTY

Properties will be advertised weekly starting at midnight Monday and finishing at midnight Sunday. You should note that it does not matter when you place your bids during that time as you will automatically be placed in a queue according to your date and priority and this queue position will change depending on who places bids during the week. Adverts will include a description of the property, form of tenure, rental charge, property size and any disabled adaptations. Properties will be advertised displaying any specific criteria or restrictions on who may bid for such properties e.g. if there is a restriction on age group or family size.

When it has not been possible to allocate a property after the first advert, the Housing Association may re-advertise the property relaxing any restrictions previously advertised to include households who were previously excluded from applying. Alternatively if no restrictions previously applied, the property may be advertised as 'available now'.

4.1 What type of property can I apply for?

The type of property you can apply for will be dependent on your household size, bedroom need and any health or welfare needs you may have. The system will identify all of the properties that you are eligible to bid for.

Households with an expectant mother are treated as though the child has been born once the Pregnancy Maternity Certificate (MATB1) has been provided.

Due to the shortage of larger properties, if you are eligible for a four bedroom property you may also be considered for a larger three bedroom property, for example a three bedroom property with two separate living rooms where one could be used as a bedroom.

You will also need to meet the landlords letting criteria.

4.2 Bidding for vacancies

A bid is an expression of interest, a way of telling us that you wish to be considered for a vacant property that is being advertised in the CBL section. You will only be considered for properties if you actively bid. This is where Property Pool Plus is different from traditional waiting lists where you apply and wait to receive an offer. Here is a quick bidding checklist:

,
See a home you like
Check it is in an area you want to live in
Check it is the type and size of home you are able to bid for
Place your bid

You can place up to three bids every week but cannot bid for the same home more than once in the same letting cycle. You can change your bids while the lettings cycle is open.

P	ease	note:

each week you can place up to 3 bids
you should only bid on properties you are genuinely interested in
you do not have to use all three bids every week

	you do not have to bid each week to remain on the register if you do not bid, this will generally not affect your position on the register unless you are in Band A as a result of Homelessness
You w refere When	How to bid vill need your Property Pool Plus Login Reference Number and the property ence number of the home or homes you wish to bid for. I you have looked at what is available and chosen a home you are interested in, an bid:
	Through the website at www.propertypoolplus.org.uk
	By calling 0300 777 3022. This supports multiple languages if English is not your first language
	By text on 07537 402 602 (Type your membership number [space] memorable date [space] property reference number (e.g. 1234567 01/01/1971 101). Text bids will be charged at your normal network rate)
	In person by visiting your Scheme Partner office or Council One Stop Shop

If you bid either on line or by calling the 0300 number you can judge whether you are likely to be successful when placing a bid as you will see or hear your position on the shortlist for that vacancy at the time of making your bid, and your queue position may change through the week. This enables you to make an informed choice when deciding which property to bid for and if social housing is a realistic option in your circumstances.

☐ By telephoning your Administering Scheme Partner's Customer Access

4.4 Auto Bidding

Centre

Vulnerable customers who require support

Some customers may be deemed vulnerable due to a physical disability, learning disability, illness, language difficulty or for any other reason that may make it harder for them to participate in the Scheme.

An auto bidding facility is available for vulnerable customers who require help to Bid for available housing. Automatic bids can be placed on their behalf. If you wish to set up auto bidding please contact your Administering Scheme Partner who can discuss your requirements in more detail.

4.5 Bidding for properties in other council areas

You will be able to bid for properties across the different council areas but you will normally only have a housing priority in the area that you live in, unless you have a 'local connection' to one or more of the other council areas. However, those who are classed as Statutory Homeless or Regeneration will only receive Band A in the area they live in.

No more than 5% of all properties advertised in each Council area will be let to applicants living outside that area.

4.6 Demonstrating a local connection

To be considered as having a local connection you must satisfy one of the following criteria:

	^·
	Have lived in the scheme council area for six months out of the last 12 months or three out of the last five years
	Have a permanent job in the scheme council area, or have a minimum of a 12 month contract or have been working for a continuous period of 6 months in the scheme area
	Have a close family association (parent, child or brother / sister) who is currently living in the scheme council area and has done so for more than five years
	Have a need to be in a specific scheme council area to be near to a particular health facility for long term medical treatment
	Have a need to be in a specific scheme council area to give or receive caring support.
	An existing Social Housing Tenant who needs to move to another Local Authority area for work reasons in accordance with the Government's Right to Move Guidance.
The re	equirement to establish a local connection does not apply to:
	those who are currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces in the five years preceding application. This applies for a maximum of 5 years after discharge
	bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation
	existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service. This applies for a maximum of 5 years after discharge

The above exemptions do not apply to those applicants detailed above who are statutorily homeless.

4.7 Following your bid

When the lettings cycle has ended, the landlord of the property will consider the people who have bid for the property. Some properties will generate a large number of bids, and the landlords will usually contact the person who has made the successful bid for a particular home, however some partners may also contact more than the first person to speed up the viewing process.

If you haven't heard from the landlord by the time the next adverts are published, then you can bid again on the properties available within the new lettings cycle.

If you login to the website you will be able to see the status of your previous/current bids.

4.8 When you are made an offer

The landlord will make arrangements for you to view the property and will usually undertake a pre-tenancy interview.

If you have told us any information that isn't true, or not told us about changes to your circumstances, then the landlord can withdraw your offer and your application will be re-assessed.

The pre-tenancy checks will include a financial assessment to ensure you will be able to afford to pay your rent and other living costs and therefore sustain your tenancy. If the outcome of this assessment shows that the tenancy will not be financially sustainable the offer will not be progressed.

4.9 Refusal of a reasonable offer

To ensure you only bid for properties in which you are genuinely interested, and in order to be as fair as possible to all applicants, the number of reasonable offers you can refuse is limited, see table below.

Band A - Health /Welfare (Urgent)	One reasonable offer only
Band A - Statutory Homeless (Unintentional)	One reasonable offer only
Band A - Regeneration	No limit
Band A - Overcrowded (2 or more bed)	Two reasonable offers
Band B - High Priority	Two reasonable offers
Band C - Medium Priority	Three reasonable offers
Band D - Low Priority	Three reasonable offers
Band E - No Priority	Three reasonable offers
Band F - Reduced Priority	Three reasonable offers

When the limit is reached, a review of your application and priority will be undertaken, which may result in a change to your priority banding, or a change to your band date.

The Housing Association making the offer will decide whether or not the reason for refusing an offer is considered to be reasonable except for the case of statutory homelessness when your Homeless Officer will decide.

5 APPEALING A DECISION

You have the right to request a review of a registration decision or a selection process decision.

5.1 Request for a Review of a Registration Decision

The request for a review of a registration can be made to the Administering Scheme Partner who manages your application.

The request for a review can be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing within 15 working days from the date you were advised of the decision. The request for a review may cover any issue concerning your application, such as:

Decision to deem you as ineligible to register on the Scheme due to immigration status or does not have the Right to Rent
Decision that you belong to a non-qualifying group
A decision regarding the number of bedrooms you require
Decision on your priority status
Removal or review of a priority
Alteration of date of entry into a Band following refusal of reasonable offers

The review procedure is as follows;

Stage 1:

The review will be carried out by an Officer for the Administering Scheme Partner who was not involved in the original decision and who is more senior than the Officer making the original decision. A response will be provided within 15 working days.

Stage 2:

If you are not satisfied with the response of the Stage 1 review, you may request a review of the decision by stating your reasons to your Administering Scheme Partner within 15 working days of notification. An acknowledgement will be issued within 10 working days.

The review will be carried out by a panel of officers from the Pool Plus scheme comprising a representative of the Scheme Council and at least 2 scheme landlords, but not including the partner organisation responsible for the original decision. If an officer of the Scheme Council acting as Administering Scheme Partner made the original decision under review, then a Senior Officer of the Scheme Council not involved in the original decision may be represented on the Panel.

Applicants will have the opportunity to present their case in person to panel if desired. Whenever possible a meeting will be convened within 15 working days of the acknowledgement letter being issued, this may be extended up to a maximum of 31 working days. A decision will be provided within 10 working days of the meeting.

5.2 Request for a Review of a Selection Process Decision

All requests for a review of a decision concerning any aspect of the selection process will be dealt with by the respective Scheme Landlord.

The request for a review can be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing within 15 working days from the date you were advised of the decision. The request for a review may cover any issue concerning the selection process, such as:

- A decision not to offer a property to an applicant by bypassing the applicant on an individual property shortlist;
- A decision to withhold or withdraw an offer based on anti-social behavior, neighbor nuisance or rent history:
- The Lettings criteria (including preferences) specified within the property advert;
- The nature or outcome of verification checks made by the Scheme Landlord as part of the selection process.

The review procedure is as follows;

Stage 1:

The review will be carried out by an Officer for the Scheme Landlord who was not involved in the original decision and who is more senior than the Officer making the original decision. A response will be provided within 15 working days.

Stage 2:

If you are not satisfied with the response of the Stage 1 review, you may request a review of the decision by stating your reasons to the Scheme Landlord within 15 working days of notification. An acknowledgement will be issued within 10 working days.

The review will be carried out by a panel of officers from the Pool Plus scheme comprising a representative of the Scheme Council and at least 2 scheme landlords, but not including the partner organisation responsible for the original decision.

Applicants will have the opportunity to present their case in person to panel if desired. Whenever possible a meeting will be convened within 15 working days of the acknowledgement letter being issued, this may be extended up to a maximum of 31 working days. A decision will be provided within 10 working days of the meeting.

6 INFORMATION AND ADVICE

 Information and advice on the Allocations Scheme will be provided free of charge. The following help is available to you: Help to complete a housing application form if required Written and verbal information to help you understand how your application will be dealt with The opportunity to contact staff to find out whether your needs can be met and, if so, guidance on how long you may have to wait for accommodation Help with reviews and complaints where appropriate. 					
7 Administering Scheme Partners A list of the contact details for the administering scheme partners within the Property Pool Plus scheme can be found on the website at www.propertypoolplus.org.uk and is shown below.					
Information on Property Pool Plus including a copy of the full allocations scheme can be found at www.propertypoolplus.org.uk					
HALTON	LIVERPOOL				
☐ Halton Housing Trust	☐ Your Housing Group				
□ 0151 510 5222	Tel: 0345 345 0272				
KNOWOLEV	☐ Cobalt Housing				
KNOWSLEY:	Tel: 0330 303 2222				
☐ Knowsley Housing Trust Tel: 0151 290 7000	☐ Sanctuary Housing Tel: 0808 100 2578				
101. 0101 230 7000	☐ Liverpool Mutual Homes				
SEFTON	Tel: 0800 678 1894				
One Vision Housing	Mobile: 0300 123 2300				
Tel: 0300 365 1111	□ Onward				
WIRRAL	Tel: 0300 555 0131				
□ Property Pool Plus Wirral	☐ Pierhead Housing Association				
Tel: 0151 691 8518	Tel: 0151 227 1001 □ Plus Dane Group				
	Tel: 0800 169 2988				
	□ Regenda Group				
	Tel: 0344 736 0066				
	□ Riverside				
	Tel: 0845 111 0000				
	☐ Liverpool City Council				