



Choice Based Lettings

User Hints and Tips

City of London Choice Based Lettings scheme is run by Home Connections and has been live since January 2009.

This is the only way we allocate our vacant properties to people on the waiting list, other than a small amount of special access routes which are: Children coming out of care, special project referrals/move on quotas, new/retiring City of London staff in tied accommodation, sheltered accommodation and under occupying households of City of London tenants.

Bidding is essential to be made an offer of housing therefore if you have any concerns please contact the Housing Needs Team to discuss: 0207 332 1237 / 3452.

We can arrange a training session to help you to use the website or discuss alternative options.

If you do not participate, you will not be considered for rehousing.

You should have been sent a personal registration letter which shows your unique User ID and Pin number. Please keep this information safe and replace with any updated letters that we send to you (ie: should you have a change of circumstances and your points are reviewed).

A User Guide from Home Connections who run our Choice Based Lettings service should also have been provided. A link is also available on the home page of this website.

Now that the system has been running for over a year we have discovered what works and what does not. This guide provides a few useful tips about managing your bids and using the online system that you may not find in the user guide.

The website is available to use in the following languages:

Arabic (العربية), Bengali, (ভাষামূল) Cantonese (語言), French, Polish (Języki), Portuguese (Idiomas), Somali (Afafka) and Turkish (Diller).

Previous advice was to view the PDF adverts for our weekly vacancies. However it proves to be much more effective to simply view the available properties via your home profile once you have logged in OR by selecting the **SeeAllProperties** tab, found on the left hand side of the home page.

Available flats are advertised from **Thursday to Monday** each week. You can bid at anytime within that period but once the bidding has closed, there will be no more bids accepted on that particular vacancy.

Offers are made to bidders whom have the highest priority points and you will only be contacted for a viewing if your points are at this level.

It is NOT 'first come first serve' so provided you place a bid within the active period of Thursday to Monday, your bid will be placed in points order when the cycle closes at 23.59 on Monday.

HOW TO VIEW OUR AVAILABLE PROPERTIES:

- Via the direct website: www.homeconnections.org.uk
- Select partner: **City of London**

OR

- Via the City of London website: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/choice
- Click on the link: **view available properties or bid on a property here**

THEN

- **LOG IN.** using your personal Usder ID and Pin number.
What you will now see is your personal home page, name, points, qualifying bedsize, contact details and previous bids.

THEN

- Click "**View Properties**" which is on the right hand side of your screen below your details. A simple search, property option screen will appear. You do not need to change any of the options at this stage.
- If this is during Thursday to Monday, underneath the option boxes, any available vacancies in your allocated property size will be displayed.
- If the words "**No Active Records**" is seen, this means there are no vacancies for your household this particular week. Log out and look again in the next weekly cycle.
- If you log in on a Tuesday or a Wednesday **No Active Records** will always be seen as we do not have vacancies advertised on those days.

Once you have logged in, the programmed display screen will only show your allocated property size. If you can only bid for Studio Flats, this is all that will be displayed. If none are displayed, there are no Studio Flats to bid for this week. Log out and try again the next week.

IF however you can bid for more than one property size (This will be displayed on your registration letter as: 3 /4 bed flats for example), follow the guidelines below.

If you bid on a property size that you do not qualify for, your bid will be bypassed automatically.

If you wish to see the full list of vacancies for that particular week, follow these instructions:

- **LOG IN.** click "**View Properties**".
- On the property option boxes change the "**Bedrooms**" requirement to "**All**".
- Click on the blue "**Search**" button underneath the option boxes.
- All the vacant properties that are available to bid on that week will be displayed underneath the selection screen.
- No other selection options need to be changed for City of London properties.

HOW TO VIEW YOUR BID POSITION

The Home Connections website allows you to estimate your position on the list*. This should help you plan ahead and make informed choices about your current accommodation. Waiting for a number of years from the date you apply should always be anticipated therefore it is likely you will be "bidding" for many years. By working out your average position you will be able to work out how often you need to bid and on which estates you have more opportunity*.

* Your position will vary each time you bid as different people bid each week. This is sometimes due to the estate location, floor height and lift access etc.

You will find that properties located in City of London estates such as Golden Lane and Middlesex Street will have significantly more interest and have bidders with a higher level of points than those in North and South London. It is important that you consider all of our estates if you are in need of rehousing. All of our estates are within travelling distance to the City square mile therefore you should address your housing need with more priority than your wish to be living in the square mile.

You can only view a bid position AFTER a bid has been placed, the weekly bidding cycle has CLOSED and an offer is made. This may or may not be immediately after the bidding cycle has closed depending on whether the property is available to be viewed. We aim to make the offers within 2 days after the bidding cycle has closed but sometimes this can be longer. If you do not receive a telephone call soon after the bid has closed, then it is likely you are not the person with the highest priority.

To check your bid position:

- **LOG IN.** Your home page will always be displayed once you have logged in.
- At the bottom of the page is a list of any bids you have placed recently and that are still under offer/consideration. (if you have not been contacted then you are not under consideration)
- To see your personal bid report, go to the section called "**My Previous Bids**".
View results of previous bids" and a drop down menu giving a time period. We recommend you change this to "**Show all**" and press **Go**. A list will appear of all the bids you have placed (that are closed) and your bid position on each bid. Your position may vary each bid depending on the people that have participated.

Over time you will see a pattern emerge which should give you an indication of your position and waiting time.

TIPS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ONLY place a bid if you are willing to live in that property and estate

Placing a bid is your acceptance to view. Viewing a property counts as an offer.

You can only turn down 3 properties that you are offered before your application is suspended.

READ the FULL PROPERTY INFORMATION before you place a bid.

This will tell you the floor height, whether there is lift access, if the property has had any recent renovations, what heating it has and any special information such as whether it has a shower/wet room rather than a bath etc etc.

It will also tell you which estate it is on, the weekly rent and any other important information such as if the property is a Housing Association Nomination property which means your landlord will be someone other than the City of London.

NOTE: Not all of our estates have lifts so if you have a problem with stairs for example make sure you check this information each time, before you bid.

This is your opportunity to make sure the property is suitable. The viewing is not for basic information like this, the viewing is your acceptance to accept and move in.

You should familiarise yourself with our estates before you bid.

But you are NOT permitted to view a property before you are made an offer.

If you are unsure, call the Housing Needs Team or the relevant estate office before you place your bid to ask any questions.

Make sure you are available

If you are regularly in the **top 5** of the bid list, please make sure you are available for us to call you in the next few days after the bid cycle. If we are unable to reach you or you are unable to visit at the allocated time, it may mean the property is offered to the next person on the list.

Contact details

Please make sure we have your current mobile and a daytime telephone number for you or your partner. If we are unable to contact you to make an offer, it may mean you are bypassed and the property is offered to the next person on the list.

You can call us to provide updated information or use the online "CONTACT INFO" form.

Contact Info form on the website

Due to high levels of contact we are unable to respond to complex queries via the CONTACT INFO form on the website. This form should only be used for a change of contact details or update of basic information.

Please call the Housing Needs Team to discuss any queries you may have or email us on housing.advice@cityoflondon.gov.uk for any questions regarding your application.

We will often respond by letter to any detailed query therefore please allow time for this.

I cannot log in?

- Are you inputting your Date of Birth as 6 digits. IE: 6th December 1970 will be: **061270**. No spaces or punctuation should be used.
- If you have a joint application, the main applicants D.O.B is the pin number.
- Your User ID is your 5 digit registration number eg: 25999.
- Are you attempting to log in sooner than advised? If you have just received your registration letter, you need to allow up to 2 weeks before you can log in.

If this still does not work call the Housing Needs Team for assistance: 0207 332 1237 / 3452

I cannot see any properties

Follow the **HOW TO VIEW PROPERTIES** instructions in this guide.

- If the words "**No Active Records**" is seen, we have no properties that fit your allocated size this particular week. The City of London is a very small authority and there will be weeks where we have no vacancies.
- If you log in on a Tuesday or a Wednesday **No Active Records** will always be seen as we do not have vacancies advertised on those days.

My bedsize/bedspace is 0, is something wrong?

People who qualify for a BEDSIT/STUDIO property as a single person are shown as 0 (zero). This is the bedroom size for a single person. i.e.: 0 is studio, 1 is 1 bed, 2 is 2 bed etc.

I cannot use a computer

Online systems are for good or bad an active force of today's world. We do not however wish to exclude those of you who do not want to use computers or do not have use of the internet at home.

If you do not bid you will not be made an offer of housing therefore:

- If you do not have access to the internet and live on or near a City of London estate, you can visit any estate office during usual opening hours. There is a City of London computer available for you to use and staff can assist if you are unsure.
- All City of London estates show the weekly advert in their notice boards so you can check these each week without having to go near a computer. If you see a property you wish to bid on, call the Housing Needs Team or go in to the estate office during opening hours.
- For City workers: the Barbican Estate Office has a computer in the reception area which you are welcome to use anytime between 9.15am and 4.30pm Monday-Friday.
- If you would like to see a member of staff for help, please remember to make an appointment.
- Libraries and internet cafes also provide cheap or free services all over London.
- If you would like some training on how to use the online service, please make an appointment with a member of staff as you may feel more confident after a quick training session.
- If you are not able to use a computer at all, you may call a member of the Housing Needs Team between 9.15 and 4.45pm on a Thursday, Friday or Monday of each week. (you only need to call once within a weekly cycle).

We can talk you through the available vacancies and provide details over the phone.

You can then make a decision whether to place a bid or not and we will place it for you.

Please remember that by agreeing to place a bid, you are agreeing to view.

If your bid is successful, this will be counted as an offer of housing. You only have 3 refusals after which time your application will be suspended.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

If you need to speak with a member of the Housing Needs Team in person please **make an appointment before you visit us** to ensure a member of staff is available to deal with your enquiry.

If you are dropping off documents in person you can do so between 9.15am and 5pm to the Barbican Estate Office reception who take all documents on our behalf.

Office opening times are between 9.15pm and 5pm Monday to Friday. We are closed to the public every Tuesday until 2pm.

If your CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE you need to contact us to request a Change Circumstances Form. A change of circumstances is for instance: when you move, someone joins or leaves your household, you have a baby, you have a medical condition, your job or place of work has changed etc.

If your circumstances are different to those on your application and your bid is successful, the offer may be terminated and you could be suspended from the waiting list. It is therefore very important we have your current information on file.

Housing Needs Team:

Tel: **0207 332 1237 / 3452**

Advice and Homelessness Officer:

Tel: 0207 332 1804

Fax: 0207 332 3637

Email: housing.advice@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Postal and office address:

**Housing Needs Team
City of London
Barbican Estate Office
3 Lauderdale Place
Barbican
EC2Y 8EN**