



Choice Based *lettings*



user guide



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Introduction

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) is a scheme which asks you to make decisions about where you live.

Previously, people on the City of London's housing register had to wait to be offered a property, based on their needs and preferences.

With Choice Based Lettings, people who are looking for a home act directly, by registering their interest in any advertised home they are eligible for. This is called making a 'bid' for a property. It is important to note that 'bidding' does not involve money; it is simply the term given to registering your interest in a property.

If several applicants bid for the same home, it will be offered to the highest priority applicant with most points (see page 10 for more information about points).

We are working in partnership with an organisation called Home Connections to help us advertise our vacant homes to you. You will still need to register on our housing waiting list and be approved for an offer of housing in order to bid for one of our vacant properties. Your application will be assessed as it was in the past.

This guide explains how you bid for homes. We hope you find this process easy and straightforward. However, help is available if you need it (see page 14).



Choosing a home

City of London Home Connections

Available homes will be advertised weekly (between Thursday morning and Monday night)

- On the City of London page of the Home Connections website. Visit **www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/choice**.
- On posters at each of our estate offices

We can also email you a list of our vacant properties each week. Please contact the Housing Options team if you would like to sign-up for this service.

Step 1: Register

In order to bid for an advertised property, you need to first be registered on the City of London Housing Register or Transfer List and have been approved for an offer of housing.

If you are not already registered, you can find out how to do so on our website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk. From the home page, click on the following links on the left-hand side: Services > Housing > Council housing > Housing applications. You can also find out how

to register by speaking to the Housing Options Team (see page 14).

Once registered and approved, we will send you a letter with your confidential **User ID Number** and **PIN** (personal identification number). These two numbers will give you access to City of London Home Connections.

Without a User ID and PIN you will not be able to participate.

If you think you are registered but do not have a User ID and PIN, then please contact the City's Housing Options Team (see page 14).

Please note that your application can be suspended for certain reasons - for example, if you have rent arrears.

What properties can I bid for?

The size of property you can bid for depends on the needs and size of your household, together with any other letting criteria explained in the advert. We will tell you what sizes of home you can bid for.

All adverts will clearly indicate any restrictions. You will not be short-listed if you fail to meet these criteria. For example, bids for sheltered housing will be restricted to older people who have been approved for this type of housing. Other special cases will include disability-adapted homes and homes on the ground floor or with no stairs.

Please note that housing association landlords may apply additional letting criteria for their properties.

How do I select a property?

To select a property you need your User ID, PIN and the individual Property Advert Reference Number. The Property Advert Reference Number appears on the advert for the property. It is a six figure number.

You can bid on as many properties as you like in any week, but make sure you meet the criteria shown in the adverts.

Your important information for accessing
City of London Home Connections

User ID Number

PIN

(Personal Identification Number)

How do I make a bid?

There are two ways to bid:

- Using the internet
- By phone

Bidding on the internet



Go to **www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/choice**
Follow the links to our Home Connections page.

On the Home Connections page, click on the link in left hand menu labelled **This week's advert and results hyperlink** to view the current week's vacancies.

Find the most recent advert, which will be at the top of the list, and click on it.
Note: the site is closed for bidding on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and no current advert is displayed on that day.

If you see a property or properties you like, make a note of the property advert number (six digits).

You now need to log in. Click on the **Login** tab at the top of the screen, or in the left-hand menu.

If an automatic security notice appears, click on **Yes**.

Enter your User ID and PIN and click **Login** to gain access.

You are now in the **My details** page which provides basic information and your housing application and any properties you have previously selected. To express an interest in a new property, you need to do the following:

- Click on the blue **View Properties** button. This will automatically show properties that have the right number of bedrooms for your household.
- If you are sure you want to bid for a property, tick the box for it and click on the **Bid Property** button.
- To look at properties in a particular area, or with a different bedroom size, you can enter **Filter Criteria**: Area, Bedrooms, or Building Type. You can also use the traditional search facility to look only for Ground Floor Accommodation, Sheltered Accommodation, or Disabled Adapted Properties. Then click **Apply Filters**.
- Once you have found a property you are interested in, click on the **Full Property Info** button on the right side of your screen. This will show more details of the particular property you want to look at. If you wish to make a bid on this property click on the button above the photograph on the left hand side of the screen which says **Click here to bid**. This will record your bid.
- Then repeat the process if you want to bid on another property.

Please note that if you bid for a property that is considered too small for your household, or if there is some other reason why the property is unsuitable for your household, then your bid will not be accepted.

You must now wait until after the adverts' closing date. If your bid is successful (i.e. you are the highest priority person to make a bid on the property) then a member of the Housing Options Team will telephone you to arrange a viewing.



Bidding by phone

The telephone bidding system uses Interactive Voice Response (IVR). It allows you to use your touch-tone phone to select a property and is available in a number of languages. You will need the property advert number of the property you want to bid for, as well as your **User ID** and **PIN**.

- Dial **0845 293 0477**. Calls are charged at local rate from landlines.
- Listen to the introductory message and select the language you want by pressing the appropriate number on your keypad.
- Enter your **User ID**. It will be played back to you. Press **1** to confirm or **2** if you got it wrong and want to re-enter it.
- Enter your **PIN** number. It will be played back to you. Again, press **1** to confirm or **2** if you got it wrong and want to re-enter it.
- You will hear the main menu of options. Press **1** to place a bid.
- Enter the **property advert number** for the property you want to bid on. You will then hear a recording of the details of that property. Press **1** to confirm your bid. If you have changed your mind and do not wish to bid on that property, press **2** and you will go back to the main menu.
- The system confirms the property you have selected. If it is correct, press **1** and your bid is confirmed. If it is wrong press **2** and you will be asked to enter the property number again.
- When you have completed your bid, it will be confirmed to you before the call ends.

You can then make another bid if you wish. From the main menu you can press **2** to see if you have been short-listed for any properties, or **3** to check your previous bids.

If you try to bid on a property for which you are not eligible your bid will not be processed and the system will tell you this.

Allocation groups & points

We place all our applicants in one of four routes - see the table below. We then look at the circumstances of each applicant and give them points for their personal circumstances.

They are then put in order of points priority - for example, if two people have the same number of points, priority is given to the person who registered first.

Route 1 (highest priority)	Management and Overriding Medical Moves
Route 2	Special Groups
Route 3	Transfers
Route 4 (lowest priority)	General List, City residents/workers/sheltered

A brief breakdown of how priority points are allocated is shown below. For a full breakdown see our allocations leaflets.

When you register on our list we will give you a reference number, tell you the number of points you have and what route you are in.

Lacking Rooms	20 points
Sharing Rooms	10 points
Lacking services such as water or electricity	30 points
Being without a tenancy -	5 points
City connection points - :	30 points for either
- Living in the City for 6 months, or	
- Sons and daughters living with their parent (s) on a City of London estate, or	
- Working in the City	
Being subject to possession notice	10 points
In temporary accommodation provided by the City of London Housing Department under homeless legislation	50 points after 6 months
Welfare Grounds (including domestic violence / harassment)	up to 30 points
Expecting a baby	5 points
Time on list	5 points per year
Medical issues	up to 30 points (or move to overriding housing route 1)

The weekly cycle

Properties are advertised on a weekly cycle. On Thursdays new adverts appear showing the week's available properties. You then have until midnight the following Monday to bid for a property. There is no advantage in bidding early as all bids are assessed together.

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays bidding is closed. On Tuesdays, housing officers will receive lists of everyone who bid for a property in the previous week, in order of priority. From these lists they will short-list the top bidder for each property and phone them to invite them to view the property on the **Wednesday**.

If you cannot come to see the home at that time we will not be able to move the date (unless there are extenuating circumstances) and you will have to bid again.

If the short-listed person turns down the property we will contact the next person in order of priority. Please

remember that many properties are offered before they become empty and occasionally the tenant may change their mind and not move.

With housing association nominations the viewing days will be different and the housing association will contact you directly.

On occasion, even though you have priority for a vacancy, we might not invite you to a viewing as it may not be appropriate to consider you for the property. For example, we would not normally allow someone with a history of anti-social behaviour to view a property in a block where a lot of older people live.

After you have been to see the property you must decide if you want to move there. If you do want it we would generally expect you to move in within one week of you viewing and accepting the property.



Change of circumstances or contact information

If your circumstances change you must let us know. For example if you move, please write to let us know your new address (and telephone number, if it has changed).

You can check and update your information directly on the Home Connections website, when you log in and select the **Contact Info** button.

Equal opportunities

The City of London Corporation operates a policy of equal opportunities in housing. We aim to ensure that no-one is treated unfairly on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or age etc.

All people will receive equal treatment when considered for housing. To ensure equal access to services for all customers, support and assistance is available. The back page of this booklet gives you a list of

council sites where you can use the internet to view and bid for properties, and get assistance if you need it.

Specific services can be accessed by customers, carers or voluntary organisations on behalf of those who might otherwise be excluded.

This applies to bidding under Choice Based Lettings. If you have difficulty bidding yourself, a friend, relative, or helper can do this for you using your User ID and PIN.

Don't forget!

- You can only bid for and turn down three properties before being suspended from the housing register for one year (but you can bid for as many as you like until you are made an offer).
- If you accept and sign for a home and then do not move in you will be suspended from the list for one year.
- If you owe us rent you will not qualify to bid.
- We reserve the right to make a direct offer to some households in special circumstances and to people on the list who are not included in CBL. These will be people who the City of London has a commitment to house, such as the homeless or those in short term hostels, for example.
- If homeless households do not make a bid within 6 months of being accepted by the City as homeless, they will be made a direct offer which they must accept. If they refuse this offer we may cancel their temporary accommodation.
- Please ensure all your contact details are correct so that we can get in touch with you when you make a bid.
- Please keep your User ID and PIN number in a safe place.



Help and advice

If you have any questions about the City's Choice Based Lettings scheme or are having trouble with the bidding system, please contact the Housing Options Team:

Barbican Estate Office
3 Lauderdale Place
London EC2Y 8EN

Phone: 0207 332 1804 / 3934 / 1237 / 1654

Internet access

Estate Offices

If you are already a City of London resident and you do not have internet access at home, you can go online at your estate office. You may need to book a time slot to do this, so speak to your Resident Estate Officer.

Libraries

Free internet access is available at most public libraries.

UK Online centres

The overall objective of UK Online centres is to enable everyone in the UK that wants it, to have access to the internet and email near to where they live. The following UK Online centres are located in or around the City:

- St Luke's Centre, 90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ
- Portsoken Community Centre, 14 Little Somerset Street, E1 8AH
- CSV Media Clubhouse London, White Lion Centre, Islington, N1 9PW

Internet Cafés

There are a growing number of internet cafés across London where you can access the internet for a small charge. To find an internet café close to you, check in the Yellow Pages or visit their website www.yell.com.

