



Other Housing Options and Advice

Renting in the private sector

More people apply for housing with Bristol City Council and partner housing associations than we have vacancies each year. Therefore, for many people, renting from a private landlord is the quickest way to find more suitable accommodation. Properties are more readily available, there is more choice regarding areas and property sizes, and they are often already furnished. Property rents are higher in the private sector, and can often seem unaffordable. However, if you are in receipt of benefits, or you are working but on a low income, you could be entitled to claim Housing and Council Tax benefit.

For more information about claiming Housing and Council Tax benefit, please visit our web site at

www.bristol.gov.uk. To see if you may be entitled to some help with your rent or council tax you can use the online Benefits Calculator.

You can also call into any of our Customer Service Points (see page 11 for locations and opening times) and speak to a Customer Advisor.

You can contact the Benefits Service directly by:

Telephone - 0117 922 2300

Email - benefits@bristol.gov.uk

Post - Housing & Council Tax Benefits, PO Box 43, Bristol BS99 1BF

www.homechoicebristol.co.uk



BALMA

BALMA (Bristol Association of Letting and Managing agents) is a group of letting and managing agents for privately rented properties who aim to provide a reliable and trustworthy service. For more information, please contact any Customer Service Point for a leaflet, or visit their web site at www.balma.co.uk

BRISTOL CREDIT UNION

Bristol Credit Union may be able to help you to access private rented accommodation through a loan for the deposit and sometimes the first month's rent. All loans are individually assessed and you will need to be able to afford the repayments. You will also pay interest on the loan.

The Credit Union also offers a range of services including Current Accounts, savings, and other loans. They also provide a Rent Direct service where they send on tenants' Local Housing Allowance directly to landlords. This can sometimes help you to access private rented accommodation as it helps show that rent will be paid as quickly as possible. For more information, please visit their web site at

www.bristolcreditunion.org or at:

Bristol Credit Union
112/114 Cheltenham Road
Stokes Croft
Bristol BS6 5RW
Tel: 0117 924 7309

Email:

info@bristolcreditunion.org.uk

EXCHANGE

A mutual exchange is where you swap your property and your tenancy with another council tenant or tenant of a housing association. To do this you must be a secure tenant. Mutual exchanges are often found to be a quicker method of moving



house than a transfer.

Bristol City Council and many of our partners have signed up to a service which is free to their tenants. HomeSwapper is a national exchange-advertising web site. This means that you can search for a mutual exchange with tenants who live in and outside of Bristol. If the site identifies a potential exchange match, you will be notified by email or text.

Please visit **www.homeswapper.co.uk** to sign up to this service. If you do not have a computer at home, you can use the self-service facilities at our Customer Services Points, or computers at your local library.

Once you have found someone to exchange with, you must both submit exchange application requests to your own landlords to request permission to exchange. You cannot exchange until both parties have received formal written permission from their landlords.

NEW BUILD HOMEBUY

New Build HomeBuy used to be called shared ownership. It enables qualifying applicants on the housing register who are unable to buy a home outright, to buy a share of a housing association property. You need to raise enough money, usually through a mortgage and savings, to pay for the share that you are buying. The minimum share you can purchase is 25%, and 75% is the usual maximum. You will pay rent on the share of the property that is owned by the housing association which is calculated to be affordable.

To apply for the scheme you will need to contact SouthWest Homes who are the zone agents for the Bristol area, on their web site **www.southwesthomes.org.uk** or by phone on **0300 100 0021**. They act as a one-stop shop for everyone wanting to buy a property through the New Build or Homebuy Direct schemes.

The housing associations that take part in the scheme in Bristol are Knightstone and Sovereign. They can be contacted through their web sites:
www.knightstone.co.uk
www.sovereign.org.uk

SHARED OWNERSHIP PROPERTIES FOR RE-SALE

Many shared ownership properties become available when the current owners wish to move. As with New Build HomeBuy, qualifying applicants can't afford their own property but can afford to buy the current owner's share of between 25% and 75%, and pay an affordable rent on the part of the property owned by the housing association.

Housing associations keep lists of people who have expressed an interest in re-sale shared ownership properties who they can contact when a re-sale property becomes available. For more information contact Knightstone or Sovereign housing associations.

INTERMEDIATE RENT

This option offers new build homes to rent at 80% (or less) of the rent you may pay to a private landlord. Homes are available through a range of housing associations on an assured shorthold tenancy, usually for an initial period of six months. This is reviewed regularly.

Properties are listed by developers and housing associations on the SouthWest Homes web site. For more information, please visit www.southwesthomes.org.uk

THE HOUSING ADVICE TEAM

The Housing Advice Team (HAT) is an advice centre for families and singles or couples with medium to high support needs who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Housing Advisors will case manage customers and advise on all housing options available. They can also refer households of all sizes on to the Private Renting Team (PRT), who help people into private tenancies. Referrals to the PRT can also be taken from a range of Supported Housing Providers. Access to the HAT is by referral only; there is no drop in. If your needs meet the criteria for this service you can be referred by either a Customer Service Point or by a current Support Worker.

TENANCY RELATIONS

This service offers advice to private landlords and tenants about their responsibilities and

rights. They also investigate and take legal action against cases of harassment and illegal eviction. For further information, please contact them direct on **0117 914 1206** or **0117 914 1207**, by email at **tenancy.relations@bristol.gov.uk** or visit our web site at **www.bristol.gov.uk/tenancyrelations**

50+ HOUSING (BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL)

These are homes where preference is given to people who are aged 50+. They are usually one or two bedroom flats, a small number of schemes are a mix of flats or bungalows. Not everyone in the household has to be over 50 but families with children under 18 will not be considered.

The flats can be in high rise or low rise blocks. Each scheme is different, most have one or more of the following:

- secure door entry systems
- communal rooms
- laundries
- communal gardens
- all of the high rise schemes have lifts, most of the low rise schemes do not

For more information regarding 50+ housing, please visit the Council web site at **www.bristol.gov.uk**, or contact the Customer Service Centre on **(0117) 922 2400**.

SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE SCHEMES (SHOPS)

Supported housing provides a home specially designed for older people who value their independence, but wish to live somewhere that is easier to manage and where emergency support is available 24 hours a day.

We have 28 schemes throughout Bristol. These individual separate units of accommodation are self contained, having their own:

- Front doors
- Kitchen
- Bathroom
- Heating
- Emergency alarm system
- Bedroom

Our schemes normally have:

- Parking
- Gardens
- Community room - for use by residents, older peoples community groups and older people within the community

- Laundry
- Guest bedrooms

The benefits of the service are round the clock emergency support, a friendly and dignified service, and invaluable support to help residents maintain their independence and well-being.

For more information about SHOPS please visit the web site at www.bristol.gov.uk/shelteredhousing, or contact the

Support to Older People Team by:

- **Email:** stop@bristol.gov.uk
- **Telephone:** 0117 922 4612
- **Fax:** 0117 922 4188
- **In Person:** You can speak to someone face to face by telephoning the Support to Older People Service and asking for an appointment or you can visit any of the Customer Service Points.
- **By Letter:** Support to Older People, PO Box 595, Bristol, BS99 2AW

VERY SHELTERED HOUSING

Very Sheltered Housing accommodation is primarily for people over 65 years of age, but if you are disabled, have learning difficulties or have mental health issues then you may be eligible if

you are over 55.

Flats will be given to people on the Health and Social Care 'waiting list'. To be included on this list you should contact Care Direct to request an assessment for Very Sheltered Housing. If you have a social worker already please let Care Direct know.

To contact Care Direct, please telephone **0117 922 2700**.

For more information regarding Very Sheltered Housing, please visit the Council web site at www.bristol.gov.uk

SUPPORTED HOUSING

Supported housing is available in the city for people who need extra help. The accommodation is almost always shared with other residents, and the type of support offered varies - some schemes offer 24 hour support or regular visits from workers. There are supported housing schemes for:

- ex-offenders;
- young people;
- people leaving care;
- young single mothers;
- single homeless people;
- people with mental health diagnosis;

- people with physical disabilities or learning difficulties;
- drug and alcohol users;
- refugees.

What is the Housing Support Register?

The Housing Support Register is Bristol's new centralised service for the referral and placement of customers into Supported Housing Services.

Bristol City Council has a range of services that are dedicated to helping customers who need housing related advice, help or support. As part of this commitment the Council funds a number of voluntary and private sector organisations through the Supporting People programme to provide specialist housing related support. These services are accessed via the Housing Support Register which is a computerised referral system. It runs alongside the HomeChoiceBristol scheme which deals with applications for general social housing. Members of the public cannot access the Housing Support Register directly but can be referred by a range of specialist agencies, for example: 1625 Independent People,

Missing Link, Housing Advisers and Children and Young Peoples Services.

The Housing Support Register Directory provides information on the different services and enables the referral agent to make direct referrals to all those services who can provide the support you as the client would need. Please remember this accommodation is often time limited to a stay of up to two years only and that due to the limited amount of accommodation available you may have to wait for a suitable placement option

If you would like more information on the Housing Support Register and supported housing in Bristol, please visit our web site at

www.bristol.gov.uk/hsr

HOMECHOICE WEST

All four Authorities in the West of England Partnership - North Somerset Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council run Choice Based Lettings Schemes (the way that we let social housing). We have set up a sub-

regional scheme, which is called HomeChoice West. This scheme is designed to make it easier for you to move to other parts of the region.

Each Authority has a local connection policy. At the moment, this can affect the banding awarded to you if you do not live in, or have any other connection to that Authority, for example, if you do not have a close relative in the area, or if you do not work in the district.

For any property advertised as part of HomeChoice West (5% of available properties), we will change the way we assess your local connection. If you have a connection to one of the partnership areas, we will assess your application as if you had a connection to the area you are applying to. Please remember that this will only apply to properties included in HomeChoice West.

Any property let as part of this scheme will carry the HomeChoice West logo and it will be advertised alongside all other available properties. These properties are open to anyone to bid on and you must still meet any other criteria mentioned in

the advert.

Before you can bid for housing you need to be on the housing register of each Local Authority that you wish to apply to.

Please contact the individual Local Authorities and complete their own housing application form, which will be assessed according to their lettings and assessment policies.

If you would like to know more about this scheme, or how to apply for social housing in the area, please visit our web site at www.homechoicebristol.co.uk

ADVICE CENTRES FOR AVON (ACFA)

ACFA is a network of independent advice agencies providing legal advice to the public across Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and surrounding areas. They can offer advice on a wide range of subjects, including benefits, housing, debt and health. For more information, please visit their web site at www.advicewest.org.uk

AVON AND BRISTOL LAW CENTRE

This service offers a free legal advice and advocacy service for unwaged and low paid people.

They offer specialist advice on a range of issues including housing, benefits, employment, immigration, discrimination and community care. For more information, contact the law centre at:

Avon and Bristol Law Centre
2 Moon Street
Stokes Croft
Bristol BS2 8QE
Tel: **0117 924 8662**
Fax: **0117 924 8020**
Website: **www.avonandbristollawcentre.org.uk**
Email: **mail@abl.org.uk**

CHAS HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE

This is an advice, information and advocacy service for homeless people or people in housing need. The service also provides advice on welfare rights, and landlord and tenant issues. For more information, you can contact them direct either through their web site at **www.housingjustice.org.uk** or at the local branch as follows:

CHAS Bristol
Housing Advice Service
PO Box 2219
Bristol BS99 7HH
Tel: **0117 935 1260**

Email: **chasbristol@supanet.com**

SHELTER

This is a national charity for homeless people or anyone with housing problems. Local offices are shown below, or you can contact them for more information by calling Shelterline Freephone **0808 800 4444**, or looking on their web site at **www.shelter.org.uk**

Shelter (covers all of Avon except South Gloucestershire)
Bristol Housing Aid Centre
Kenham House
Wilder Street
Bristol BS2 8PD
Tel: **0344 515 1414**

CITIZENS ADVICE

Citizens Advice provides advice on a range of subjects including debt, benefits, housing, legal matters, and employment. For more information, you can contact them direct either through their web site at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk** or at:

Citizens Advice
12 Broad Street
Bristol BS1 2HL
Tel: **0844 499 4718**

Complaints, comments or compliments

Bristol City Council is committed to providing a high quality service to all its customers. We welcome feedback from customers and therefore, if you would like to submit a compliment or complaint about the services you have received, you can do so at any Customer Service Point. The Customer Service Point will be able to provide you with a leaflet giving more details about how to submit feedback. Further information can also be obtained from the council's web site www.bristol.gov.uk. There is also an online form that can be submitted via our web site.

How to contact us

If you have a rehousing enquiry or want to discuss your application you can talk to a Customer Advisor at the **Customer Service Centre**. The centre is open 8.30am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. You can contact the centre by:

■ **Telephone:** 0117 922 2400

■ **Textphone:** 0117 357 4444

Alternatively, you can contact the **Rehousing Service** online or by post.

■ **By Post:** Rehousing (FHO), PO Box 595, Bristol BS99 2AW

■ **Online:**
www.homechoicebristol.co.uk



Customer Service Points

If you would like to see someone in person you can visit any Customer Service Point. Please note opening hours are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Wednesday 10.30am to 5pm and Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm, with the exception of Phoenix Court which is open til 6pm Monday to Friday

- **Phoenix Court**, Bond Street South, Bristol, BS1 3PH
- **Bedminster**, 2/3 Waring House, Redcliff Hill, Redcliffe, Bristol, BS1 6TB
- **Fishponds**, Robinson House, Hockeys Lane, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 3HL
- **Hartcliffe**, Symes House, Peterson Square, Hartcliffe, Bristol, BS13 0BD
- **Knowle**, Salcombe House, Salcombe Road, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 1AB
- **Ridingleaze House**, Ridingleaze, Lawrence Weston, Bristol, BS11 0QE
- **Southmead House**, 256 Greystoke Avenue, Southmead, Bristol, BS10 6BQ

TRANSLATIONS

If English is not your first language and you need a translation, we can get one for you.

ALBANIAN

Nëse anglishtja nuk është gjuha juaj amtare dhe keni nevojë për një përkthim, ne mund t'ua sigurojmë atë.

BENGALI

ইংরেজী আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হলে এবং আপনার কোন অনুবাদের প্রয়োজন হলে আমরা তা প্রদান করতে সক্ষম।

CHINESE

如果英文不是您的第一語言，而您需要翻譯的話，我們可以為您安排。

GUJARATI

જો તમારી પહેલી ભાષા અંગ્રેજી ન હોય અને તમને ભાષાંતરની જરૂર હોય તો અમે તમને તે આપી શકીએ છીએ.

HINDI

यदि अँग्रेज़ी आप की पहली भाषा नहीं है और आप को अनुवाद की आवश्यकता है तो यह हम आपको प्रदान कर सकते हैं

KURDISH

Heke îngilîzî zimanê we yê yekem nîne û pêwîstîya we bi wergêr heye, em dikarin yekî ji we re bibînin

POLISH

Jeżeli język angielski nie jest Twoim językiem ojczystym i wymagasz tłumaczenia, możemy to zapewnić.

PORTUGUESE

Se o Inglês não é a sua língua materna e precisa de uma tradução, nós podemos obtê-la.

PUNJABI

ਜੇਕਰ ਇੰਗਲਿਸ਼ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਸਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

SOMALI

Haddii Ingiriisku aanu ahayn afkaaga kowaad oo aad u baahan tahay turjumaad, annagaa kuu samayn karra.

URDU

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو ترجمہ کی ضرورت ہے تو ہم آپ کے لئے فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔

VIETNAMESE

Nếu quý vị không thạo Anh văn và cần bản dịch, chúng tôi sẽ giúp quý vị một bản.

If you would like this information in a different format, for example braille, audiotape, large print or computer disk, or community languages, please contact **0117 922 2400**

2005-2006
Promoting Racial Equality
2006-2007

Transforming the Delivery of
Services Through Partnerships

2007-2008
Healthy Schools

2007-2008
Preventing and Tackling
Anti-social Behaviour

