HomeChoice Bristol

How to bid for properties

This help sheet aims to give a simple guide to the three ways of placing a bid for an advertised property that you are interested in through HomeChoice Bristol.

Before you can place any bids on properties you will need to have registered for housing in Bristol and been assessed into one of five bands. If you are not on the housing register then you will need to complete a HomeChoice Bristol application form. For more information about how to apply please see the 'Introduction and How to Apply' help sheet.

Once you have registered for housing and been placed into a band you will be sent your HomeChoice Bristol bidding reference number which, along with your date of birth, you will need to access your HomeChoice Bristol account and place bids. Properties are advertised on the HomeChoice Bristol web site **www.homechoicebristol.co.uk** on a weekly cycle, starting on a Tuesday morning at 00.01am and ending the following Sunday night at 23.59pm, and in the Tuesday edition of the Bristol Evening Post newspaper.

The advertisements will include photographs and indicate the number of bedrooms, location, rent, landlord and other relevant information. On the web site you will be able to access information about the local area and facilities. The advertisement will also indicate any eligibility requirements that the applicant must meet. These may include

www.homechoicebristol.co.uk

Bristol City Council

age restrictions, which bands may bid for the property, and which will be given priority. If your bedroom entitlement is different from the number shown you will not normally be able to bid for that property.

You will be able to place a bid for up to three properties in one cycle. The web site and automated line will tell you what position you are in for the property. Your position may change as other people add and remove bids throughout the week. You will be able to withdraw your bid if you change your mind or do not feel you have a good chance of being offered the property. Properties are not allocated on a first come first serve basis. The person in the highest band who has been waiting the longest will usually be offered the property.

The following three sections provide a brief guide on the three ways of placing a bid.

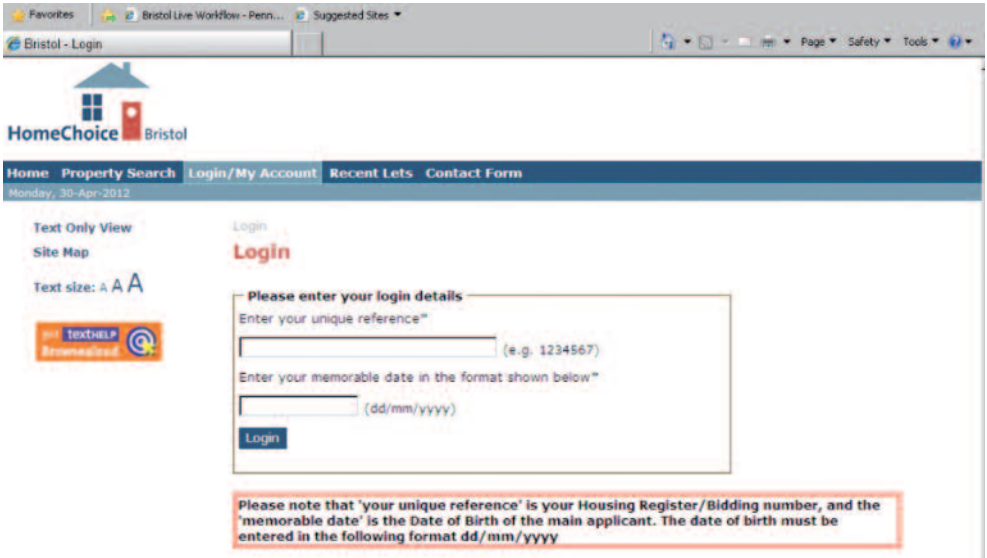
How to place a bid on the Internet

In order to view advertised properties and place bids online you will need to have access to the Internet. If you do not have the Internet at home then you can visit any of the Customer Service Points (see page 11 for locations and opening times). A Customer Advisor will be available to help you make a bid online if you are having difficulties or would like to be shown how to use the web site. Other free Internet access is available at your local library.

Step 1 Logging in to your HomeChoice Bristol account

Visit the HomeChoice Bristol web site at **www.homechoicebristol.co.uk** and select the **'Login/My Account'** page from the options shown in the blue banner on the home page. Enter your HomeChoice Bristol reference number in the **'your unique reference'** field and the main applicant's date of birth in the **'your memorable date'** field, as indicated in the following example and then select the **'Login'** option.

You will then go to the **'My Account Summary'** page which will show you your basic account details (your name, last successful and unsuccessful login, housing register reference number) and a list of actions which you can take as follows:



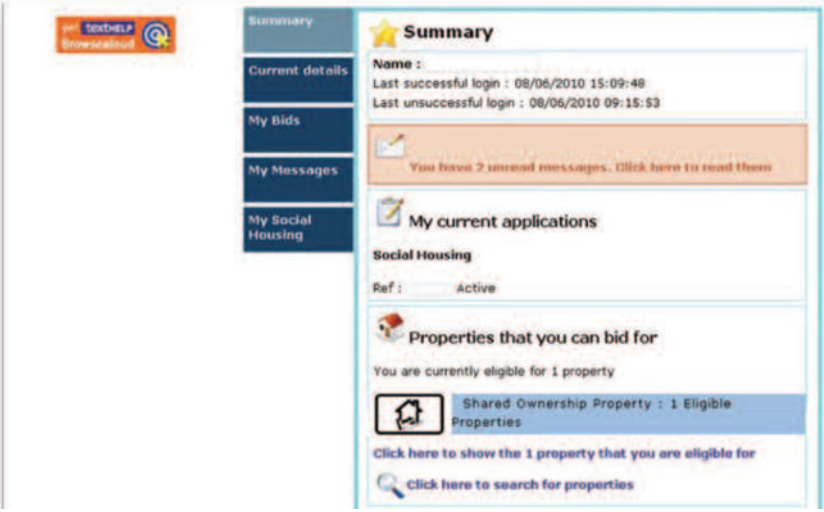
Actions

- Click here to read your messages
- Click here to search for properties
- Click here to show the properties that you are eligible for
- Click here to see your historic bids
- Click here to contact us
- Click here to log off

Step 2 Searching for properties

The second and third actions listed let you search for properties being advertised.

'Click here to show the properties that you are eligible for' This is the simplest option as it shows you all the current properties that you are eligible to bid for.



'Click here to search for properties' allows you to search through all the properties being advertised or enter your own search criteria for size (number of bedrooms) and area (north,central or south).

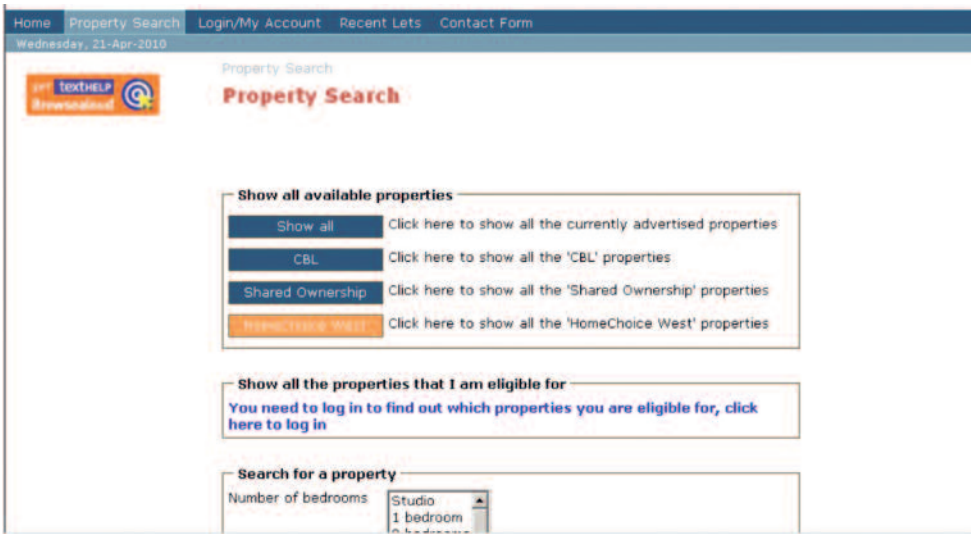
Alternatively, you can click the blue tab on the left entitled **'My bids'**. As well as allowing you to search for properties, you can also view your current and historic bids here.

As mentioned previously the property advert will tell you the landlord, location, size, rent and other features of the property. Some of this information will be shown as symbols. You can find out what each symbol means by holding the mouse over the symbol, and a caption will appear telling you what it is.

Immediately below each property advert you will be told whether or not you are eligible to bid for the property. If you are able to bid for it, you will be told how many people above you have already bid for the property. Your position can change if other people add or remove bids. If you are not eligible to bid, then you will be told the reasons why (eg **'Your bedroom requirements do not match'**).

Step 3 Placing a bid (apply for a Property)

Once you have selected a property that you are eligible for and would like to place a bid on, you need to select the **'Apply Now'** option positioned in the bottom right hand corner of the property advert. You will then go



to the **'Property Apply'** screen which contains important information regarding bidding wisely, and checking your contact details are correct. Please take the time to read this screen then use the **Click here to continue** button at the bottom of the screen to proceed.

You will then be given two options: **'I wish to be considered for this property' and 'I do not want to be considered for this property'**.

Check the property information and if you still wish to place a bid for the property click on the **'I wish to be considered for this property'** option. You will then have the option to return to your account page to view the status of your applications (bids), or to continue your search if you wish to place a bid on another property.

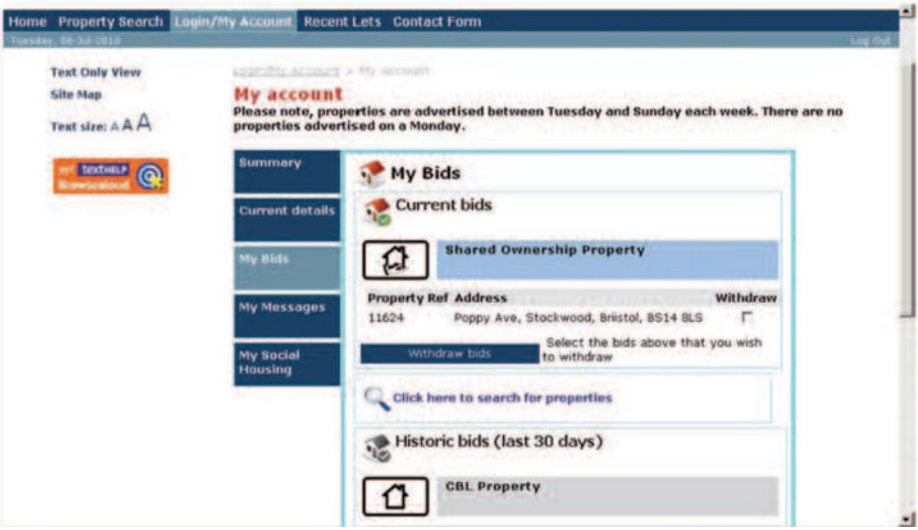
Step 4 How to withdraw a bid

If after placing a bid for a property you decide you want to withdraw the bid, you will need to go to the **'My Account Summary'** page (if you are logging in follow step 1). Click the blue tab on the left entitled **'My bids'**.

Your current bids will be shown below your account details and actions. On the right side of each bid is a small box under the heading **'Withdraw'**. Select which bid, or bids, you wish to withdraw and click on the small box where a tick will then appear. Below your bids is an option **'Withdraw bids'** shown in blue, click on this option and any bid where the withdraw box has been ticked will be withdrawn. You can make a maximum of three bids within a cycle and change as many times as you like, until the cut off time at the end of each weekly cycle.

How to place a bid by phone

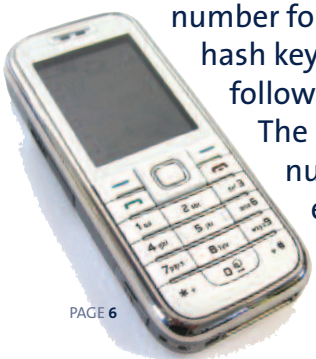
If you do not have access to the Internet, another way of placing bids through HomeChoice Bristol is by phone. The phone line also allows you to review and withdraw your current bids. However, unlike the web site the phone line will not give you access to information on the properties that are being advertised, so you will need to have the property references you wish to bid for ready when you phone to make bids.



The bidding phone line is automated and available 24 hours a day. It is available in the following language options: English, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kurdish, Polish, Portugese, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu.

Calling the Bidding Phone Line

Dial **0845 270 1382** on your phone and follow the automated instructions for making a bid. You will be asked to enter your HomeChoice Bristol reference number followed by the hash key. (eg 1234567 followed by #) The reference number you have entered will then be repeated back to you.



To continue press **'one'** or to re-enter your reference number press **'two'**.

You will then be asked to provide your date of birth, first by entering the day of the month followed by hash, then the month of the year and then the year in full, both followed by the hash key (eg 01 # 01 # 1970 #).

You will then be given three options, to make a bid, to review your current bids or to Exit.

Option 1 Make a bid

Press **'one'** to select this option. You will then be asked to enter the property reference number which is given in the advert, followed by the hash key.

The property reference will then be repeated and you will be told how many people above you have already bid for the same property. Your position can change if other people add or remove bids.

You will then be given the option to confirm your bid by pressing **'one'** or to enter another property reference number press **'two'**.

Pressing **'one'** will take you back to your options.

Option 2 Reviewing or withdrawing bids

If you wish to review or withdraw press **'two'** from the list of three options.

You will then be told the property reference numbers of any current bids you have. If you wish to withdraw a bid you need to enter the reference number, followed by the hash key. You will then be asked to confirm your withdrawal of the bid by pressing **'one'**.

Option 3 Exit

Just press **'three'** to exit.

How to place a bid by text

You can send a text message to **07781 486 941** from your mobile phone. This service will not send you a confirmation text message so please turn on the delivery report function on your mobile phone before sending your text.

You will need to enter your HomeChoice Bristol reference, date of birth and the property reference you wish to bid for (you can bid for more than one property with the same text) in the following format:

[HomeChoice Bristol Ref] [DOB] [Property1] [Property2]

For Example: 1234567 01/01/1970 12545 12354

You will **NOT** receive a return text confirming which properties you have bid for.

Alternatively: If after reading this leaflet you are still unable to use any of the three ways to bid, please call the HomeChoice Bristol Team on **0117 9222400** where we

can discuss alternative options with you, or visit any of the Customer Service Points (see page 10 for locations and opening times). A Customer Advisor will be available to show you how to place a bid on the web site or via any of the other methods described above.

Bidding restrictions

Some people may be restricted from bidding for certain properties:

- People who have a dog or other animals in a flat where pets are not allowed.
- People who are too young for a flat in a block which has been reserved for older people.
- People with children under 10 years old for a flat which has no sound insulation.

Allocation decisions will be made by the landlord of the property being advertised. If you do not agree with an allocation decision you should contact the landlord directly.

Properties with adaptations

Applicants who have a recognised need to move to a property with adaptations will have preference when bidding for properties that have been adapted.

Only applicants with an assessed need for wheelchair accessible properties will be eligible to bid for this type of property.

Local lettings policy

There are currently four areas in Bristol where local lettings policies have been agreed with the aim of building more sustainable communities.

They are as follows:

- **Barton Hill:** For 40% of new build Housing Association properties, priority will be given to applicants who live in the area who are in Bands 4 and 5 with tenants living in multi-storey flats receiving the highest priority.

  For Bristol City Council properties priority will be given to applicants in Bands 4 and 5 for 50% of 1 bed flats and 25% of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties.

- **Kingsdown:** Tenants who live in Carolina, Freemantle, Armada and Francis House will have priority when bidding for vacancies that become available within these four multi-storey blocks.

- **St Pauls Renewal Local Lettings Policy**
  For all deconverted and new build social housing in the St Pauls area, 50% of properties will be allocated to applicants in bands 4 and 5 who currently live in the St Pauls area and 50% will be allocated to applicants who bid for the properties and are in the highest position on the shortlist.

Will bidding be monitored?

Applications will be monitored after certain time periods depending on which band they are in and why. This is to ensure that applicants are able to make bids and to identify applicants who may require support. In some high priority cases, (bands one to three), applicants who fail to bid for properties suitable to their needs may be re-assessed to ensure they are in the correct band, which could result in a lower band being awarded.

What happens when your bid is successful?

The bidding cycle ends on Sunday night at 23.59pm. If you see that you are in first position for a property when the cycle has ended, please wait to be contacted by the relevant landlord, as they may not be in a position to contact you straight away.

You will receive a letter from the landlord (Bristol City Council or Housing Association) giving you details of the property that you have been offered and inviting you to view the property before you have to make a decision. It is important to keep your contact information on your housing application up to date, as the landlord may also wish to contact you by phone or email to inform you of the offer and arrange a viewing.

It is important that you respond to the letter or any other attempt to contact you regarding the offer. If you fail to do so, we may assume that you no longer want to be considered for social housing and your application may be cancelled.

What happens if I accept an offer of accommodation?

Once you have signed the tenancy agreement for the property, your rehousing application will be cancelled. If you then wish to move out of your new property, you will need to make a new application to HomeChoice Bristol.

Offers of accommodation

If you refuse a reasonable offer you may be relegated one band. This is usually for a period of six months, but it can be extended if another offer is refused within the six month period. All offers will be considered reasonable as long as the property was:

- in a suitable condition to be viewed with any essential repairs being completed before the start of the tenancy; or
- suitable for the needs of your household.

You can request a review of our decision if you feel that we have unreasonably reduced your priority.

For more information about other housing options available please see the leaflet 'Other Housing Options and Advice', or visit our web site at **www.homechoicebristol.co.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. Housing Advisors will case manage customers and advise on all housing options available.

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 6pm, Monday to Friday. You can contact the centre by:

- **Telephone:** 0117 922 2400
- **Textphone:** 0117 357 4444

If you prefer to send us a message, you can do this by completing the contact form on the HomeChoice Bristol web site or by logging in to your HomeChoice Bristol account and selecting 'Click here to contact us'

Alternatively, you can contact the **Rehousing Service** by post at: Rehousing (AC), PO Box 595, Bristol BS99 2AW.

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.

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 9am to 5pm, Wednesday 10.30am to 5pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm, with the exception of Phoenix Court which is open from 8.30am to 6pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 10am to 6pm on Wednesday

- **Central Bristol:**
  Phoenix Court,
  Bond Street South,
  Bristol BS1 3PH
- **Fishponds:**
  Robinson House,
  Hockeys Lane,
  Fishponds,
  Bristol BS16 3HL
- **Hartcliffe:**
  Symes House,
  Peterson Square,
  Hartcliffe,
  Bristol BS13 0BD
- **Southmead:**
  Southmead House,
  256 Greystoke Avenue,
  Southmead,
  Bristol BS10 6BQ

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 website.

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，我們可以爲您安排。

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 quí vị không thao Anh văn và cần bản dịch, chúng tôi sẽ giúp quí 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

www.bristol.gov.uk
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