



MONMOUTHSHIRE HOMESEARCH

SCHEME USER GUIDE

Version 11 • June 2018



www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk



Monmouthshire HomeSearch is committed to helping everyone to access our scheme.

If you have any specific requirements please contact us to discuss alternative ways of accessing the scheme.

We can also provide information to you in:

- One to one help from staff
- Large print
- Audio translation
- Braille
- Translation into other languages

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Remember

To be considered for a property you need to actively take part in the scheme:

1. Look at adverts
2. Make your choice
3. Place your bid
4. Update change of circumstances

Welcome

TO MONMOUTHSHIRE HOMESearch

Helping you find a home in Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire HomeSearch is a choice based letting scheme that lets you choose where you would like to live.

We advertise a variety of homes available to rent on our website and on the HomeSearch mobile phone app. You can view these adverts and decide whether you would like to be considered for any of the properties advertised.

This Scheme User Guide summarises how to access the Housing Register and use our scheme. It also aims to give you a better idea of what properties are available to rent in your area.

Once a property is allocated we provide feedback so you can see how long successful customers have waited for a home and what

level of priority they had been given. We believe this information will be helpful to you when making decisions about where you want to live and how long you might have to wait.

There is a very high demand for social housing in Monmouthshire. We are unable to rehouse everyone on the housing register, because only a relatively small number of properties become available each year. There are however, a number of other housing options available to you, which may reduce your waiting time for a new home.

Please refer to page 18 for details of other housing options that may be available to you, including mutual exchange and the private rented sector.

If you need this information in your own language or information on any of our other services please contact us and we will be happy to help.

Os hoffech gael y wybodaeth hon, neu unrhyw rai o'n gwasanaethau eraill, yn eich iaith eich hun cysylltwch â ni a byddwn yn fwy na pharod i'ch helpu.

如果您希望得到此資訊，或在您所屬的語言得到我們其他任何的服務，請與我們聯繫，我們將很樂意提供協助。

Si vous désirez ces renseignements ou toutes informations concernant d'autres services dans votre propre langue, veuillez nous contacter et nous serons heureux de vous aider.

यदि आप यह सूचना, या हमारी अनन्य सेवाओं में से कोई सेवा अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया हमसे संपर्क करें। आपकी सहायता करके हमें खुशी होगी।

Jeżeli chcesz uzyskać te informacje lub potrzebujesz jakichkolwiek dodatkowych usług w swoim ojczystym języku, skontaktuj się z nami, a z przyjemnością będziemy służyć Ci pomocą.

Ak chcete túto informáciu, prípadne akúkoľvek inú z našich služieb vo svojom vlastnom jazyku, kontaktujte nás a radi vám pomôžeme.

Ha szeretné az anyanyelveden olvasni ezt a tájékoztatást és bármely más szolgáltatásunkról szólni információit, vedd fel velünk a kapcsolatot és örömmel segítünk.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات یا ہماری دیگر خدمات میں سے کوئی بھی آپ کو خود اپنی زبان میں چاہئے تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں اور ہم مدد کر کے مسرور ہوں گے۔

Monmouthshire Homesearch is a partnership between the Local Authority and the five Housing Associations that operate in Monmouthshire. All social rented accommodation is advertised and allocated via this scheme. Other landlords may also use Homesearch to advertise their homes. Members of this partnership are listed below.

 <p>monmouthshire sir fynwy</p>	<p>Monmouthshire County Council, Housing Options Team County Hall, Rhadr, Usk NP15 1GA Tel: 01291 635714 Email: housingoptions@monmouthshire.gov.uk Website: www.monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>
 <p>MHA Monmouthshire Housing Tai Sir Fynwy</p>	<p>Monmouthshire Housing Association, Nant-Y-Pia House, Mamhilad Technology Park, Mamhilad, Monmouthshire NP4 0JJ Tel: 0345 6772277 Email: mail@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk Website: www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk</p>
 <p>charter housing housing people</p>	<p>Charter Housing Association, Exchange House, High Street, Newport NP20 1AA. Tel: 01633 212375 Email: info@charterhousing.co.uk Website: www.charterhousing.co.uk</p>
 <p>melin</p>	<p>Melin Homes, Ty'r Efail, Lower Mill Field, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 0XJ Tel: 01495 745910 Email: enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk Website: www.melinhomes.co.uk</p>
 <p>derwen</p>	<p>Derwen, Exchange House, High Street, Newport NP20 1AA Tel: 01633 261990 Email: info@derwencymru.co.uk Website: www.derwencymru.co.uk</p>
 <p>united welsh</p>	<p>Y Borth, 13 Beddau Way, Caerphilly CF83 2AX Tel: 0800 294 0195 Email: tellmemore@unitedwelsh.com Website: www.unitedwelsh.com</p>

If there is anything about Monmouthshire Homesearch that you don't understand,
Please contact the team:

Tel: **0345 900 2956**

Email: **homesearch@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**

Office opening hours: Monday to Thursday 9:00am to 5:00pm and Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm.

How the scheme works

STEP 1: Registration

You can apply:

- Online at www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk
- If you are unable to complete the online application, please call **0345 900 2956**.
Once you have submitted your online application you will be given an action plan to follow, along with your unique registration number. **We will then:**
- Contact you to confirm your application has been successfully registered by email, call or text
- Tell you the priority date that you have been given and what band you have been placed in
- Provide you with details of the property type and size you are eligible for

STEP 2: Choosing your home

Available homes will be advertised on any day of the week and you can register your interest ('bid') on properties up until midnight on the eighth day.

You can bid on properties in the following ways:

- Online at www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk
- Using the Homesearch app on your phone or tablet

You are not limited in the number of properties that you may 'bid' on. However, you should only bid on properties that you would consider moving into and are eligible for.

Please refer to pages 12 - 13 to find out what property sizes and types you are eligible for and pages 14 - 15 for more information on how to bid on available properties.

STEP 3: Offer of Accommodation

Once bidding closes on a property, the bids are placed into priority and banding order to produce a shortlist of eligible applicants for each property. This is done within 3 working days. Any offer is subject to your application being verified (checked and approved) to confirm your circumstances. You will also be required to provide a form of ID, e.g. driving licence, passport or birth certificate. If your application cannot be verified, the offer will be withdrawn.

Once your application is verified, you will be contacted by the relevant Housing Association who will arrange for you to view the property. If you refuse the property, the next person on the shortlist will be offered it.

If you bid for a property but then refuse it you will be eligible for one more offer of accommodation. If you refuse two

offers, your application will be suspended to Band 4 or 5. Whilst you are demoted, should you refuse a third offer, your application will be excluded from the housing register for 12 months and you will not be able to bid.

If you have been awarded a priority banding by Monmouthshire County Council because you are homeless, your banding may be demoted if you refuse a reasonable offer of accommodation.

If you successfully bid for more than one property, we will contact you to ask which property you would prefer as your first choice. We will usually contact you within a week of bidding on a property if you have been successful with your bid.

If you are invited to view a home and you do not plan to attend, please let the Housing Association know the reason why otherwise this may count as a refusal.

Whilst a property is under offer to you, you will not be able to place bids on other properties.

STEP 4: Feedback

Feedback information will be available on our website and via the mobile app once homes have been let. The feedback tells you how many people have bid for the property along with the band and waiting time of the successful bidder. This helps you to see how long successful bidders have been waiting for a home.

Once bidding has closed you will be able to view your position on the shortlist on the Monmouthshire Homesearch website. Please be aware that if a letting quota has been applied to the property, this may affect your position on the list, e.g. 'preference to Homeseeker's'. See opposite for 'Bidding Restrictions' information.

Due to the number of bids received by Homesearch, it is not possible to notify individuals when bids have been unsuccessful.

Change of Circumstances

You must keep us informed about any change in your circumstances, e.g. adding or removing people on your application, change of addresses, employment status. This is very important as it could result in a change to your band or your eligibility for certain properties. If you fail to let the Homesearch Team know any changes it could result in an offer being withdrawn. You can download a change of circumstances form from our website or call us on **0345 900 2956**.

Transfers (Monmouthshire Only)

Existing tenants of Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA), Melin Homes, Charter Housing, Derwen and United Welsh will need to apply and bid for properties using the Monmouthshire Homesearch scheme.

Exclusions or Suspensions

In certain circumstances applicants can be suspended from the waiting list due to unacceptable behaviour, current or former rent arrears. Anyone affected will receive a written explanation. If you disagree with the decision, you have the right to request a review.

If you know you have former tenant arrears you should contact your current / previous landlord to make arrangements to pay these.

Bidding Restrictions

Sometimes we may restrict bidding to certain groups of applicants, **for example:**

- Properties that have been adapted or specially designed to meet the needs of older people or people with disabilities
- Properties reserved for applicants from the waiting list (home seekers), homeless applicants or the transfer list (existing tenants). This is to ensure that properties are allocated in accordance with the approved letting quotas
- We may also use local sensitive or lettings policies to help manage local issues. This is to try and build balanced communities and any special conditions or restrictions will be clearly stated in the property advert
- Properties allocated under the Rural Allocations Policy. This is where people with a local rural connection are given priority to developments in rural areas. Please see Rural Allocations on page 10

Medical and Welfare Cases

If you need to move due to medical reasons or on welfare (social) grounds, please contact Monmouthshire Homesearch to discuss your situation and how moving will help you. You will be asked to complete a medical or welfare application form and provide professional supporting information.

Help & Assistance

If you have any questions about how the scheme works, please call Homesearch
0345 900 2956

Welfare Reforms

Universal Credit

As part of the welfare reforms, Universal Credit will replace Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income based Jobseeker's Allowance and income related Employment and Support Allowance. Most working age tenants will not be able to choose to have any of their benefit paid direct to their landlord and will start to personally receive the housing element of Universal Credit as part of their monthly payment. It is important that you let your landlord know that you are on Universal Credit so you can make arrangements to cover the rent. Most Housing Associations will be prepared for Universal Credit and can offer support and advice to help you.

Universal Credit roll-out began in Monmouthshire in June 2018.

Do you have a spare room?

Those who are subject to the bedroom tax* will find their housing benefit capped. If you would like to downsize to a smaller home to stop the bedroom tax, please register with Homesearch.

What does bedroom tax mean?

If you have more bedrooms than the Government says you need, you may lose part of your housing benefit. **The new rules mean you will be allocated one bedroom for:**

- Each adult couple
- Any other person aged 16 or over
- Two children of the same sex under 16
- Two children under 10 regardless of their sex
- Any other child
- A carer (who doesn't normally live with you) if you or your partner need overnight care

Each Monmouthshire Homesearch Partner will give you affordability advice prior to offering you a property. This advice will help you to make an informed choice before accepting an offer of accommodation and help the landlord to decide if you have the financial ability to pay the rent. If the Housing Association decides you cannot afford the property, the offer may be withdrawn.

For more information, contact your landlord if you are a Housing Association tenant.

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this section is correct at time of print but is subject to change by the Government

The Adverts

This is an example of an advert

	2 bed apartment	Ref No: 272
	Oakley Way, Caldicot, Monmouthshire	visit google maps
Landlord: Monmouthshire H.A.	Priority to maximise occupancy. Good size 2 bed apartment on the top floor. Fully upgraded apartment benefiting from new kitchen & bathroom. Property benefits from internal and external storage. shared garden. One weeks rent payable in advance.	
Rent: £96.32pw		
Service Charge: £1.85pw		
Additional Information: Click Here		
Bidding closes: 10 Jun 2018		
     		

Key to advert symbols

   	Number of bedrooms in the property	    	Number of people the property is suitable for
   	Property designed for people this age or above	    	Floor level of property, if flat or maisonette
	Mobility Level 1 - Suitable for wheelchair user indoors and outdoors		Mobility Level 2 - Suitable for people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the day
			Mobility Level 3 - Suitable for people who can manage 1 or 2 steps or stairs
	priority given to those with connection to the parish / community council area		Transfer
	Garden NB: Advert will state if the garden is communal, e.g. apartments of sheltered housing have communal gardens.		Homeseeker
	Lift / No Lift	 	Pets allowed / pets not allowed

Assisted Bidding

Help

Monmouthshire Homesearch operates an assisted bidding service for applicants who may need assistance to find a home.

If you would like to use this service, please contact the Homesearch Team team on **0345 900 2956** to see if you are eligible.

Feedback

This is an example of feedback on let properties

Property List Issue Date	Advert Reference	Size	Property Type	Location	No of Bids	LETTING INFORMATION		
						Band	Priority Date	Application Type
Charter Housing								
09 Jan 2013	280	2 Bed	House	Troy Way	33	3	06 Jul 2009	Transfer
Monmouthshire Housing Association								
31 Oct 2012	163	2 Bed	House	Tulip Gardens	27	2B	17 Apr 2012	Homeseeker

Understanding feedback reports

- **Property issue date** – this is the date that the property was advertised in the Monmouthshire Homesearch freesheet
- **Advert reference** – this is the reference number given to properties advertised. Each property has its own unique reference number - you use this number when you bid on a property
- **Size and property type** – this is simply a description of the property advertised
- **Location** – this is the address of the property
- **Bids** – this is the total number of bids that were made for each property
- **Banding and Priority Date** – this information is very useful as you can look at what bands successful customers were in and how long they waited in the priority band for a home
- **Applicant Type** – this states whether an applicant has transferred from an existing tenancy or was an applicant from the Housing Register known as a 'Homeseeker'

REMEMBER: How long you wait for a property will depend on a number of factors...

For example, which band you are in, how long you have been on the housing register and the available properties within your chosen areas.

How can this information help you?

You may wish to use this information to influence how you make your bids in the future, **for example:**

- If an applicant has been offered a property and was in the same band, note how long they waited. This may give some indication of the length of time that you may be waiting for a property of this type, in a similar location
- You could bid for properties of different types and in areas that attract fewer bidders. However, remember that you should only bid on properties that you would consider moving into
- If you are in a lower band you are unlikely to be offered certain property types due to demand and in this situation it is advisable for you to consider other housing options such as the private rented sector



The feedback on all lettings will be provided on the website or mobile app when you log in and also on the Freesheet

For more information on estimated waiting times, please visit the homesearch website to view the interactive map or follow [this link](#).

Allocation Scheme

When you register for Homesearch, we will aim to assess your application within 10 working days and your application will be placed into one of 7 bands. We may contact you for further information we are not clear about.

Applicants in housing need and with a local connection to Monmouthshire will be considered first. Applicants who are not in housing need or have no local connection to Monmouthshire will normally be placed into Band 5 and are unlikely to receive an offer of accommodation.

If you bid on the same home as someone else that is in the same band as you, we will offer the property to the person that has been waiting the longest in that band and who meets the letting criteria.

If you move up to a higher band, your effective date will start from the day that you moved up into the higher band. If you then move back to a lower band, your effective date will go back to the same day that you were in the lower band (this is usually the registration date that you first went onto the housing register).

If you think that you have been placed into the wrong band you can request a review of this decision by contacting Homesearch on **0345 900 2956** or emailing **homesearch@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**

Rural Allocations Policy

The Rural Allocations Policy will be used to allocate the first 10 homes on all new housing sites and on all subsequent lettings of these properties in rural areas of Monmouthshire. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that homes developed for local people are allocated as intended; therefore, applicants must meet the rural local connection criteria if they wish to be considered for one of these properties. For more information please visit the Monmouthshire Homesearch website and click on "useful Information" to find a copy of the Policy.

You must provide satisfactory information and documentation to prove that you meet the criteria.

Below is a summary of the banding criteria. The length of time you will wait will depend on your band, the type of property you require and the area you choose. For a full copy of the Allocations Policy and for more information of the banding please visit our website.

Band 1	Urgent Housing Need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Management Lettings • People Occupying Unsanitary or Unfit Housing • Exceptional Medical Need • Exceptional Welfare Need • RSL Tenants Requiring Decanting • National Witness Mobility Scheme Referrals
Band 2A	High Housing Need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking 2 or More Bedrooms • Lacking Basic Amenities • Care Leavers / Child in Need • Vacating Adapted or Disabled Property • Transfers Under-Occupying by One or More Bedrooms • Successors who are Under-occupying • Move on from Supported Housing • High Medical Need • High Welfare Need • Major Disrepair • Foster Carers, Adoptive Parents, Adult Placement and Supported Lodging Providers • Social Services Referral 1 • Displaced Agricultural Workers

BAND 2B	Homeless Households
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owed Full Homeless Duty (Section 75 Duty)
BAND 3A	Medium Housing Need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking One Bedroom • Intentionally Homeless • Medium Medical Need • Medium Welfare Need • Leaving Armed Forces • Split Families • Children in Flats • Occupying one bedroom/bedsit accommodation with resident child(ren) • Social Services Referral 2 • Caravan Dwellers • Private renting & receiving Discretionary Housing Payment • Families sharing facilities
BAND 3B	Homeless Households
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owed Potentially Homeless Duty (Section 66 or 73 Duty)
BAND 4	Low Housing Need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Medical Need • Low Welfare Need • Sharing facilities • Reduced Preference Due to Refusals • Adequately Housed Private Tenants with a local connection • Minor Disrepair
BAND 5	No Housing Need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Owners • Serving Armed Forces Personnel • Serving Prisoners • Sufficient Financial Resources • Reduced Preference Due to Refusals • No Local Connection • Adequately housed RSL tenants

Which properties can I bid for?

The tables below shows what type and size of properties you can bid for.

Table 1 - General Needs Accommodation

Household Size	Bedsit	Flat/Maisonette			House				
		1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed (NP)	3 Bed (P)	4 Bed +
Single Person	✓	✓			✓				
Single person with overnight access to one child +*		✓	✓		✓				
Single/Couple who are pregnant 20+ weeks **		✓	✓		✓	✓			
Couple ***		✓	✓		✓				
2 Single Adults			✓						
3 Single Adults			✓	✓			✓		
4+ Single Adults			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Single Adult/Couple + 1 child or non-dependent			✓			✓			
Single Adult/Couple + 2 children (different sex aged under 10)****			✓	✓		✓	✓		
Single Adult/Couple + 2 Children (Same Sex under 16)****			✓	✓		✓	✓		
Single Adult/Couple + 2 Children (Different Sex where at least 1 child is aged 10+)			✓	✓		✓	✓		
Single Adult/Couple + 2 Children (Different sex over 16)				✓			✓		
Single Adult/Couple + 3 Children (Same Sex)				✓			✓	✓	
Single Adult/Couple + 3 children (Where 2 children are over the age of 16) ****				✓			✓	✓	✓
Single Adult/Couple +4 or more children							✓	✓	✓

NOTES:

*Single person with overnight access to one child+, the applicant will be classed as having a spare room under housing benefit criteria. Changes to the Common Allocations Policy will mean that properties will not be allocated to those not considered to be fully occupying a property

**Single/couple who are pregnant, housing benefit will only pay for 2nd bedroom once baby is born. Eligibility for second bedroom will only be agreed once the maternity certificate (MAT B1) has been received

***An adult couple (under pension credit age) are expected to share a bedroom under housing benefit criteria

****Under housing benefit criteria the applicant will be allocated one bedroom for two children of the same sex under the age of 16, or two children under the age of 10 regardless of their sex

✓ These are properties you are eligible for under the Common Allocations Policy

✓ These are properties you may be eligible for under the Rural Allocations Policy which allows for under occupation or the Common Allocations Policy if insufficient demand is received, however, this is unlikely

Table 2 - OAP/Sheltered Accommodation

Household Size	Bedsit	Flat		Bungalow**	
		1 Bed	2 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed
Single Person aged over 55 or 60*	✓	✓	#	✓	#
Couple aged over 55 or 60**		✓	✓**	✓	✓**
Non Co-Habituating Couple aged over 55 or 60*			✓		✓

NOTES:

** An adult couple (under pension credit age) are expected to share a bedroom under the Housing Benefit criteria

#If no interest has been expressed by a couple in housing need, two bedroom OAP/sheltered accommodation may be offered to single applicants (with the exception of RSL transfers)

✓These are properties you are eligible for under the Common Allocations Policy

If you are under occupying your property by 1 bedroom and need to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, there will be a shortfall of 14% which you will need to pay yourself.

Table 3 – Partner RSL Tenants wishing to downsize due to under occupation

Household Size	Bedsit	OAP Flat or Bungalows		General Needs Flat (inc Maisonettes)			GN House	
		1 Bed	2 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed
Single tenant aged over 55 or 60 wishing to downsize & move to older persons accommodation	✓	✓	✓					
Single tenant living in a 3 bed & wishing to move to smaller accommodation	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
Single tenant living in a 2 bed & wishing to move to smaller accommodation	✓			✓			✓	
Single adult/couple & two children same sex under 16 currently living in 3 bed					✓			✓
Single adult/couple & two children different sex aged 10 currently living in 3 bed					✓			✓

NOTES:

** An adult couple (under pension credit age) is expected to share a bedroom under the Housing Benefit criteria

✓These are properties you are eligible for under the Common Allocations Policy

If no interest has been expressed by a couple in housing need, two bedroom OAP/sheltered accommodation may be offered to single applicants (with the exception of RSL transfers)

Ways to bid

Before placing a bid you must read the property advertisement details carefully to make sure that you really want to be considered for the property. All of our adverts include the postcode and using the Internet you can search for websites such as "Google Earth" or "Up My Street" to find out more information about the local area. You can also download the Monmouthshire Council 'My Monmouth' app on your smartphone. This gives local information including bin and recycling collection and the latest news about the area.

If you need any assistance to bid or have any questions about the properties advertised please give the Homesearch Team a call on **0345 900 2956**.

The staff at the Council's One Stop Shops will hand out property Freesheets and can help people to bid.

Free internet access is also available at:

Abergavenny Library Tel: 01873 735980

Caldicot Library Tel: 01291 426425

Chepstow Library Tel: 01291 635730

Monmouth Library Tel: 01291 775215

Usk Library Tel: 01291 674925

**Multi-Agency Centre
Abergavenny Tel: 01873 733590**

You can also place a bid at one of our Housing Association offices. See page 3 for contact details.

Bidding Via Our Website

The quickest and easiest way to express an interest (bid) is through our website www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk

Instructions are given on screen. You will need to know your application number and date of birth of the lead applicant in order to log on. If you lose your log-in details please contact Monmouthshire Homesearch and we will provide them for you.

On the website there is an online copy of the freesheet, if you see a property that you are interested in and you meet the eligibility criteria you can place a bid.

If you have made a bid but then change your mind you can remove the bid on the website as long as the bidding is still open. You can also view your bidding history once you have logged in.

Bidding by Mobile App

The Homesearch app is free to download on ios and android mobile devices. It works in a very similar way to logging in using a computer.

The app will allow you to place and remove bids, update your contact details and view feedback.

The app can be downloaded from the app store or the Monmouthshire Homesearch website.



Other Housing Options

The demand for social rented housing in Monmouthshire is much greater than the number of properties available each year. As part of your online application process you will have already been provided with your housing options.

Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness

If you are going to lose your accommodation or are currently homeless, please contact Monmouthshire County Council's Housing Solutions Team for advice and assistance by telephoning **01635 644644** or by email: housingoptions@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Private Rented Housing

Monmouthshire County Council provides advice and guidance on housing issues. If you are looking for somewhere to live or need assistance on how to access the private rented sector please contact their Housing Options Team on **01633 644644**.

Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO)

LCHO is a way to buy a home more affordable. The scheme is intended for people who can afford a mortgage but are struggling to get a foot on the property ladder. Properties are made available at discounted rates, typically between 30 & 50% below the market value. To find out if there are any schemes running in your area please contact our housing association partners. Details of LCHO properties can also be found on the Homesearch website:

www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk

Intermediate Market Rent Properties

The housing associations will also occasionally advertise properties via the Homesearch scheme that are offered on Assured Shorthold Tenancies (initially for 6 months) and where an intermediate rent is offered (usually 20% lower than the market rent). A deposit and references will be required from the housing association and full details will be included in the property advert. For more information please visit the [Monmouthshire Homesearch website](http://www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk).

New Developments

Housing associations will also advertise new developments via the Homesearch scheme. These may be offered on a tenure neutral basis whereby applicants can rent or purchase the new properties (see Homebuy below). Details of any new developments will be advertised on the [Monmouthshire Homesearch website](http://www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk).

Other Landlords

Occasionally other landlords will advertise their properties through Monmouthshire Homesearch. However, they will apply their own eligibility criteria which will be different from Monmouthshire's Common Allocations Policy.

Mutual Exchange

If you are already a Council or Housing Association tenant the quickest way to move is to swap (also known as Mutual Exchange) your home with another tenant.

MHA, Melin and Charter Housing Associations all subscribe to a national mutual exchange scheme called HomeSwapper. If you are one of their tenants you can join free of charge. If you are interested in exchanging with another tenant please go to the HomeSwapper website: www.homeswapper.co.uk

Useful Contacts

Monmouthshire County Council Housing
www.mcchousing.co.uk

Shelter Cymru - 0345 075 5005
www.sheltercymru.org.uk

Melin - 0345 310 1102
www.melinhomes.co.uk

Pobl Group - 01633 679 911
www.poblgroup.co.uk

My Advice Gateway
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Frequently Asked Questions

Who can register?

Anyone can register who is aged 16 years and over, providing they are not already registered for housing on someone else's application or subject to immigration control. By law we cannot allocate housing accommodation to anyone who is subject to immigration control.

How is my application assessed?

When assessing your housing application, we will look at your current situation; this includes factors such as your family size, whether your home is over-crowded / under-occupied and take into consideration any medical or welfare issues you have. The Common Allocations Policy aims to give priority to those people in the greatest need.

Once we have assessed your application, you will be placed in one of seven bands according to your level of housing need. The specific bands are explored further in the Scheme User Guide.

How do I apply for housing and bid for available properties?

New applicants will need to register and complete an application form online on a computer or laptop.

Once registered, available properties will be advertised on a daily basis and applicants can express an interest by placing a bid via the website, the mobile phone app or call homesearch directly if they are having difficulties.

What is Choice Based Lettings (CBL)?

CBL is a scheme that offers a choice to housing applicants about where they want to live. Applicants can express their preferences through 'bidding' rather than wait in date order.

When do the adverts go on?

Adverts go on any day of the week between Monday and Friday. Each property is advertised for a total of 8 days.

How long will it take to be housed?

An interactive map on the Homesearch website will provide a guide of expected waiting times depending on your band and size of home you need.

How long you will wait for a property depends on the properties that the housing associations have available and the amount of people bidding for the property. Please see [our interactive map](#) on the Homesearch website for an estimated waiting time.

I'm in band 5, what are my chances of being housed?

Applicants who are placed into Band 5 and considered not to be in any housing need are extremely unlikely to receive an offer of accommodation through this scheme. These applicants will be encouraged to consider other housing options such as renting privately, mutual exchange if they are a tenant or undertaking adaptations to their existing home.

I completed an application for housing but not heard anything?

Your application form will be assessed within 10 working days, the validation may take longer if external agencies need to be contacted for references.

Everyone who is eligible for housing will receive a welcome pack either by email or in the post confirming that you are on the register, as well as your unique application number, band and band date.

Included will be a scheme user guide which will explain how properties are advertised and the different ways you can express an interest (called bidding).

Why is my position / rank different on each property?

Your position will vary on each property as there are different people bidding on different properties. Your position will not be the same for every property.

Can I get help to understand the scheme?

If you require any more information on the Common Allocations Policy or Choice Based Lettings scheme you can either go to the website www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk or contact the Homesearch Team on **0345 900 2956** or email homesearch@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk and we will be happy to help.

What if you don't hear about a bid?

If you do not hear back about a bid, you have been unsuccessful. Once the property has been let you will be able to see information (feedback) about the number of bids, the band of the successful applicant and how long they have been waiting on your feedback when you next log in. This will help you decide the best properties to bid for and shows which properties and areas are in the greatest demand.

What is a Direct Let?

Most properties will be advertised through the Homesearch scheme, however in certain circumstances we may let some properties directly to an applicant on a permanent or temporary basis. Where a landlord identifies an applicant that requires a Direct Let, the request will be referred to the Homesearch Partnership for approval, on a case by case basis.

Can I have the number of the property?

We are not able to give out the number of the property that is advertised, however, we encourage applicants who are interested in the property to visit the area or click on the Google link at the top right hand corner of the advert. This will take you in to Google maps in order to explore the area and local amenities.

All relevant information should be on the advert, however, if you require more information about a property you will need to contact the relevant Landlord. The Landlord will be specified on the advert.

How do I complete a Change of Circumstance Form?

You can find an electronic version of the 'Change of Circumstances' form on the Monmouthshire Homesearch Website; please ensure, once all your information has been typed in, that you save the form and email it through to [Homesearch](mailto:homesearch@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk) (homesearch@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk). If you are unable to complete the form electronically then you can complete a change of circumstances form at your local Monmouthshire council one stop shop. They will forward the document to Homesearch on your behalf.

I have my children / grandchildren stay a few nights a week/ I have joint access to my children

Housing Benefit / Universal Credit housing costs, does not take into consideration children who are not a permanent, full-time member of a household. Under this criteria a child is entitled to one bedroom in one property. As such parents/relatives with only part-time access to children may be subject to the bedroom tax. For this reason Housing Associations are advertising properties as 'preference to those who maximise occupancy'. This means that couples/single people who have access to children are unlikely to receive an additional bedroom.

I can afford a bigger property than I need, so can I be considered?

The numbers of bedrooms you are eligible to bid for on Homesearch is based on your actual household size. All Homesearch landlords aim to maximise occupancy to make best use of their housing stock.

If you would like a larger home and are able to pay, you may wish to consider Intermediate Market rental homes, or look at the private rented sector.

Can I bid for more than one property at a time?

You can bid for more than one property at a time but please only bid for properties that you are interested in. You should only bid for properties that you are eligible for and always read the description and criteria on the advert to avoid disappointment. For example, age restrictions, adaptations or specific lettings criteria.

I have placed a bid, where am I? What is my ranking / position?

We are not able to tell you the exact ranking position whilst the bid is open, we are only able to give a range in which you are ranked. This information is also available to you on your log in page through the Homesearch website.

It takes 24 hours for the system to update and your position may change whilst the advert is still open.

What does maximising occupancy on adverts mean?

To maximise occupancy means that offers will go to households who fully occupy a property. This is because of significant changes with welfare reform and to ensure that properties remain affordable. Please see page 12 for the scheme user guide which shows the type of property you are eligible for.

How will you help older, vulnerable or disabled people to bid to make sure they don't miss out on properties?

It is very important that there is access to all on the scheme. Applicants who are considered to be vulnerable will be offered assisted bidding to support them to find suitable housing.

What is a Mutual Exchange? Am I eligible?

If you are a Council or Housing Association tenant, with a secure or assured tenancy, you may have the right to exchange your home with another tenant. This is called a mutual exchange and it can be a faster way to move home for many. You can register your property on Homeswapper, which is a free service, at www.homeswapper.co.uk or call Homesearch for more information.

Why has a property been withdrawn / cancelled / removed?

Properties can be withdrawn for a number of reasons. For example errors in the advert or the leaving tenant changing their mind and withdrawing their notice.

Will the number of properties available increase with choice based lettings?

The number of people waiting to be housed is significantly greater than the number of homes available each year. Choice Based Lettings does not mean there are more homes available to let. However, the scheme aims to be transparent and to ensure people have a much better understanding of whether or not they are likely to be offered a housing association property.

You will be able to see how many homes are available, how many other applicants have bid for the properties and your chance of success. The scheme is also used to promote other housing options, such as mutual exchanges, intermediate market rented properties and low cost home ownership.

What is Intermediate Market Rent?

This is where a property in the private rented sector is available through the Housing Association. The rent is cheaper than renting privately but higher than the social rented sector. These are sometimes advertised through Homesearch and will ask for a bond and a month rent in advance. The landlords are usually identified on the advert as Capsel, Seren and Melin Homes.

I am just about to be made homeless, what should I do?

If you are about to be made homeless or you are threatened with homelessness, please contact the Housing Solutions Team, Monmouthshire County Council on **01633 644644**. Homesearch or the Housing Association Partner's are not responsible for providing emergency temporary accommodation as this is allocated through the Council.

How do I tell you about a change in my circumstances?

You must keep us informed about any changes in your circumstances, e.g. adding or removing people on your application, change of address, employment status etc. This is very important, as it could result in a change to your band or your eligibility for certain types of properties.

If you need to add that you are pregnant, once you reach 20+ weeks gestation, you will need to provide Homesearch with a copy of your MATB1 certificate, which you can get from your midwife. Please complete a change of circumstances form found on our website: www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk/choice/uploads/COC_Form_V2.pdf

Can I visit the property whilst it is being advertised?

You must not visit the property without permission. This is because the property is either still occupied by a tenant or works are being carried out. In the case of a new development, it will be because of health and safety practice that unauthorised people are not allowed on to a building site.

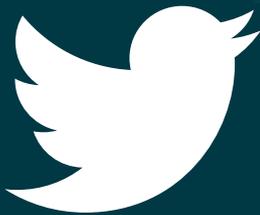
You will be allowed to visit the property accompanied by the housing association representative nearer the time of your move.

Can I buy my social home in the future?

The 'Right to Buy' and 'Right to Acquire' will end in Wales on 26 January 2019. Visit the Welsh Government website for more information.

Map of Monmouthshire





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www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk

