RBC Living & Homes

Scheme User Guide

January 2014

www.rbc-homes.org

Version One
RBC LIVING & HOMES is an independent choice based lettings scheme, designed to manage expectations about the supply, demand and availability of social housing within the Borough of Runnymede.

Now you have the chance to choose the type of property and the area in which you want to live. You will be able to see an advert of the properties which are available to rent and express an interest. This is explained on page 9 of this guide.

RBC LIVING & HOMES is working in partnership with Locata Housing Services (LHS) who are an organisation which specialise in choice based lettings and who work with many other organisations to offer this service.

This scheme can be used for existing Runnymede Council tenants as well as applicants who are living with family, have a private rented tenancy or other forms of occupation - other than existing home or property ownership and are on the Housing Register. These applicants are known as HOMESEEKERS or TRANSFERS.

The Council will not contact you to advise you have been allocated a particular property. Instead, you will need to look at the adverts of properties that are available for rent, which will be advertised on a fortnightly basis on the RBC LIVING & HOMES website.

You need to look at these adverts fortnightly and decide whether you are interested in a property and whether you can bid based on the picture icon in the advert. This includes things like the number of bedrooms, property type such as house, flat, maisonette, bungalow, and whether the property is suitable for people with mobility problems. Picture icons are explained later in this guide.

Once you are registered on the RBC LIVING & HOMES Housing Register, your application will be assessed into one of four Bands, A to D, with Band A being the highest priority. Within some bands there is also a priority order. For Band A priority is based on the date the application was given this award. Bands B – D are based on the registration date of the application.

You will need to bid for a property if you want to be considered for it and how you do this is explained on page 9. The applicant with the highest banding and priority within this banding will normally be invited to view the property and may view with other shortlisted applicants.

On the website you will be able to see how homes previously advertised were let, the level of priority the successful bidder had, and how long they waited for a new home. When you see this information it may help you decide on whether to expand or change your choice of property type eg house, flat or area.

Choice Based Lettings does not create any more properties but simply offers a choice to applicants and gives a realistic picture of availability. The more restrictive you are in bidding, the longer you are likely to wait to be rehoused. Social housing will not meet the demand for homes in the Borough and it is important that applicants see this bidding process as one option amongst others that they may be able to pursue.
How RBC Living & Homes works

With RBC LIVING & HOMES it will not be the Council who will find and allocate you a home; instead you look for your own home using the RBC LIVING & HOMES website.

There are five steps you must follow in choosing your new home:

### Step 1 – Membership

You are automatically a member of RBC LIVING & HOMES (RBC L & H) if you are an existing tenant who has applied for a transfer or you have applied for housing and have been accepted onto the register.

You may not be eligible to be on the housing register. Please contact us for further advice on this.

### Step 2 – Registration

Once you are accepted onto the RBC L & H register you will be informed of your unique reference number, which band you have been placed in (A, B, C, or D) and your priority date. (See page 6 for details of how the priority band and date system works).

You will be required to re-register at regular intervals, usually annually.

You must keep us informed of any changes to your housing circumstances. This will be your responsibility by updating your housing register application online.

This is very important as it could result in changing your band or your eligibility for certain homes. If you do not tell us of all changes we cannot be held responsible.

### Step 3 – Choosing your Home

Available properties are advertised online at the RBC L & H website.

The adverts give you information about each property available for letting.

Once you have viewed the information about available properties, you can bid for a property:

You are entitled to bid for up to 3 properties in each cycle as long as you are eligible for them.

You can bid in the following 2 ways

On the internet Go to [www.RBC-Homes.org](http://www.RBC-Homes.org) and logon with your RBC L & H reference number and date of birth.

By text Call [07781 472726](tel:07781472726) (see page 9 for instructions on making your bids by text).

If you need help, call [01932 425831](tel:01932425831) or call into the Civic Centre and ask for the housing duty officer.

Available homes will be advertised from 9.30am on the opening Tuesday until 12 noon on the following Monday. Your bids must reach us by 12 noon on the closing Monday. There are no postal or telephone bids but you can ask a member of RBC staff to bid on your behalf so you do not miss an opportunity.
Bids received for each property advertised are placed in priority order to produce a shortlist of applicants for each property.

We will carry out further eligibility checks and if your name is at the top of the shortlist, you will normally be invited to view the property.

If you refuse this property, the next person on the shortlist will be invited to view the property if they have not already done so. You will need to refer to the Council’s allocations policy to see how refusals of offers may affect your banding assessment. This is available on the RBC L & H website and the Council’s main corporate website www.runnymede.gov.uk

We may invite more than one member to view the property at the same time, although the property is always offered first to the member with the highest priority who attends the viewing.

If you are at the top of more than one shortlist, we will decide which property to offer you and the other properties will be offered elsewhere.

Any offer is subject to your application being verified (checked and approved) to confirm your circumstances. You are responsible for ensuring that you supply all supporting documents in order to verify your application. If your application cannot be verified, the offer will be made to another applicant. The Council will visit you at home before inviting you to view a property to verify your housing application.

All properties are listed on the “Feedback” page of RBC L & H once they have been let. The feedback tells you how many people bid for each property, as well as the band and registration date of the successful bidder.

This helps you to see how long the successful bidders have been waiting and helps to manage expectations, particularly if an applicant is being restrictive about areas and types of properties.

It is not possible to notify you individually when your bids have been unsuccessful.

If a person who was top of the shortlist refuses, the next person who was on the list may be invited to view some weeks after the closing date.

We are committed to helping everybody access RBC LIVING & HOMES.

There is a Google translation facility on the RBC Living & Homes website which will translate the text in this Scheme User Guide.

If you require help with this guide or using the website please contact us to discuss your particular needs.

Runnymede Borough Council
Runnymede Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2AH

Tel: 01932 425831
Email: CBL.teamRBC@runnymede.gov.uk
Priority Bands

When you register for a Transfer or for re-housing as a Homeseeker, your application will be assessed according to the Council’s current allocations policy.

You will be placed in one of the priority bands described below according to the information you submit.

If you disagree with your priority band you can discuss this with us and advise of any missing or incorrect information so we can reassess your application.

When bids are considered for advertised properties, priority will be given to bids from people in the highest priority band. If people from the same priority band bid for the same property the person with the earliest registration date will be considered first.

Band A applicants, this is the priority date, not the registration date.

If your circumstances change your application needs to be amended by you using the online process and it will then be reassessed on line according to the new information you provide.

Medical information needs to be e mailed or posted to the Council to support any medical application or else we will be unable to award any additional priority if appropriate.

Below is a general guide to the priority bands. You should refer to the Runnymede BC Housing Allocations Policy for full details, available on the RBC LIVING & HOMES website and the Council’s corporate website www.runnymede.gov.uk

• The Council no longer allows applicants without a local connection to register for housing.
• Runnymede has an independent CBL scheme and is not party to any other allocations policy.
• The Council does not let any homes through any other CBL scheme.
• Homeless Households are not permitted to bid for properties within the RBC CBL scheme and will be made a direct let of a suitable property.

Band A - Emergency Need to move – such as decanting from required properties, welfare reform impact and extreme health and welfare.

Band B – Urgent Need to move - such as urgent medical needs, armed forces with threatened homelessness within 28 days, welfare reform impact.

Band C1 & C2 – identified need to move such as homeless households and households lacking bedrooms and facilities. This is a dual band to reflect reduced priority.

Band D1 & D2 - low or no housing need. This is a dual band to reflect reduced priority such as deliberately worsening your circumstances within a set time period.

This is a very brief guide to the main themes of the banding assessment.
Which properties can I bid for?

Before bidding, please consider:

**Is the property designated for Homeseekers/Transfers or both?**
Your bid will not count if, for example, the property is for home seekers only and you are a transferring tenant.

**Is there an age restriction on the property?**
Some properties have a minimum age requirement, for example, in some cases only people over 60 can apply. This will be shown by a picture icon on the advert.

**What can I bid for?**
We will use the information you give us on your form to assess your eligibility.
Some properties will only be available to let to people working in the Borough.
You can bid for up to 3 properties in one bidding cycle.
Sometimes the Council restricts bidding to specific applicants.

**What does the mobility icon mean?**
This is intended to provide a guide to people who have various levels of mobility needs. This does not restrict anyone else from bidding for these properties but the advert will often say that priority will be given to members with mobility needs.

**Pets**
If there is no pet icon you will not be given permission to keep a pet. If you have a pet you will need to check for the ‘pet’ icon on an advert to know if pets are acceptable.

**Circumstances where you may not be invited to view a property**
If your circumstances are not verified or if you have rent arrears or other issues with your tenancy, you may not be invited to view a property.

**Before you bid**
Check out the location of the property on a map to make sure it’s really a place you would consider moving to. Do not waste your 3 bids on areas you do not intend to accept an offer on.

RBC LIVING & HOMES will ensure that copies of the adverts will be available fortnightly on Tuesdays at Runnymede Civic Centre.
The Adverts

Example of an available property:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 bed sheltered flat</th>
<th>Ref No:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan Hilton Court, Cheshire Close, Ottershaw, Surrey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord: Housing 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent: £89.56 pw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Charge: £12.33 pw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Charge: £10.96 pw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H/T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 60+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 55+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 50+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 65+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared garden, central heating, shower. Close to local shops, excellent communal facilities etc, local bus services to Chertsey, Addlestone, Woking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to advert symbols

- Available for homeseekers only
- Available for transferring tenants only
- Available for homeseekers and transferring tenants
- This shows the property has a lift
- This shows the property has no lift

**Mobility Group 1** – Suitable for wheelchair user indoors and outdoors (defined by symbol and white bar)

**Mobility Group 2** – Suitable for people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the day (defined by symbol and white bar)

**Mobility Group 3** – Suitable for people only able to manage 1 or 2 steps or stairs (defined by symbol and white bar)

- Pets allowed
- Pets not allowed
- Garden

Accompanying photographs only show typical properties in the advertised block or street. Please do not contact any occupants in these buildings. You are also requested not to enter any properties where works are being carried out or to ask contractors for any details of the properties. The Council accepts no responsibility for inaccurate information given by residents or contractors.
How to express your interest in properties

Placing your bids on the internet

To place a bid, go to www.RBC-Homes.org and log in using your unique RBC Living & Homes reference number and your date of birth.

Click on MAKE A BID to see properties available to you. If you later change your mind, you can remove your expression of interest (as long as the advert cycle is still open). You can also view the history of your expressions of interest (bids).

Placing your bid by text message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To begin expressing your interest:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 To begin making your bids:</td>
<td>Open a new text message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Enter in your Reference number via the keys:</td>
<td>ABC12345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Then followed immediately by a hash mark:</td>
<td>ABC12345#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 You should now enter the advert reference number of your 1st bid followed immediately by a hash:</td>
<td>ABC12345#456#</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**If you have finished Bidding then send. If not keep following the instructions below.**

| 5 You should now enter the advert number of your 2nd bid followed immediately by a hash: | ABC12345#456#491#                                                     |

**If you have finished Bidding then send. If not keep following the instructions below.**

| 6 You should now enter the advert reference number of your 3rd bid followed immediately by a hash: | ABC12345#456#491#444#                                           |
| 7 Check your Reference number and bids are correct before sending:                             |                                                                         |
| 8 When you have entered all of your bids send your text message to:                            | 07781 472726                                                          |

• Please check with your mobile phone company what they charge for SMS texts.
• To add numbers to the message keep pressing the keys until you get to the digit and select.
• You can enter your bids in both upper and lower case.
• Check your Reference number and bids are correct before sending.
• Please note that you will not receive a text message to confirm the bids you have made.
Feedback

Understanding the Feedback Reports

In each edition of RBC LIVING & HOMES there will be a Feedback page.

The Feedback contains information on lettings that have taken place since the previous edition.

**Date**
This is the date that the advert appeared.

**Advert Reference**
Combined with the date, this gives a unique identity to any advert and is used for bidding.

**Size and Property Type**
This is simply a description of the property advertised.

**Location**
This gives an indication of where the property is situated.

**Bids**
This is the total number of bids that were made against the adverts by members at the close of bidding.

**Letting Information**
This is the status of the successful member who bid for the property.

Example of RBC LIVING & HOMES Feedback Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Advert Reference</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Bids</th>
<th>Letting Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 Jun 13</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>Maisonette</td>
<td>Middlesex Court, Addlestone</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jul 13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Longbourne Way, Chertsey</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jul 13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1 bed</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Corby Drive, Englefield Green</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jul 13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>bedsit</td>
<td>Bedsit</td>
<td>The Crescent, Egham</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Aug 13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2 bed</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Lasswade Road, Chertsey</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Aug 13</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>bedsit</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Harrow Close, Addlestone</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Sep 13</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2 bed</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Surrey Towers, Addlestone</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Sep 13</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>Maisonette</td>
<td>Beechtree Avenue, Englefield Green</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 Nov 13</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2 bed</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Collingsbourne, Addlestone</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 Nov 13</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1 bed</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Darley Dene, Addlestone</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deadline for placing a bid?
All bids must be placed before 12 noon on the closing date shown. We will not consider any bids we receive after 12 noon on the closing date.

Need help to place a bid?
You can ask a friend, family member or support worker to place a bid on your behalf. Please contact us if you need help placing a bid or advice about the process. Contact details are on page 4.

RBC LIVING & HOMES website
www.RBC-Homes.org
You can use a computer for free access to our website in some libraries.
To find your local library and its opening hours please see www.surreycc.gov.uk or phone Surrey County Council on 03456 009 009
You can call into the Civic Centre and see the housing duty officer Monday to Friday and they can place bids for you or help you to update your circumstances online.

Placing a bid by text message
07781 472726
To place a bid by text (SMS), follow the instructions shown on page 8.

Can I have the RBC Living & Homes property adverts posted to me?
If you would like to receive the list of property adverts by post the cost (non refundable) is £15 for six months. You will need to do the following:
Write to RBC LIVING & HOMES at the address below stating your name, RBC LIVING & HOMES reference number (eg RUN 7777) and address (to send the property list to).
Send a cheque or postal order for £15 made payable to Locata Housing Services Limited to:
RBC Living & Homes
PO Box 425
Ruislip
HA4 4FW
Locata Housing Services will contact you after six months to re-subscribe. Please notify RBC LIVING & HOMES, PO Box 425 immediately of any change to your mailing address.