

Allocations policy and the points system



the **MORAY** council

Updated April 2014

We try to review our leaflets regularly to make sure you have the most up-to-date information. However the content of this leaflet is only correct at the time it is published.

For more information or advice contact us on 0300 123 4566 or visit our website at www.moray.gov.uk.

Allocations Policy and the Points System

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The Moray Council Allocations Policy

Our Allocations Policy aims to tackle housing need in Moray. Where possible, we take account of what you would really like as a new home. This policy helps us decide who we think is in most need of housing and how to make the best use of the housing we have available.

You can get a copy of our policy, free of charge, from your local access point, or from our website at www.moray.gov.uk.

What is the housing list?

The housing list includes the waiting list, the transfer list and the homeless list. Anyone aged 16 years and over is entitled to go on to the housing list.

- The waiting list includes people who do not currently rent from us but who would like a council property in Moray.
- The transfer list includes people who are already our tenants but who would like to transfer from their current home to another.
- The homeless list includes people who have been assessed as unintentionally homeless (who have become homeless through no fault of their own). On the homeless list, you will not be awarded points. We usually give priority to the applicant that has been on the list the longest.

What if I am homeless or at risk of homelessness?

If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness you should contact our Housing Options Team as soon as possible for free housing advice.

Housing Options Team
Council Offices
10 High Street
Elgin, IV30 1BY
Phone: 0300 123 4566
Email: housing@moray.gov.uk

If you become homeless after 5pm or on a weekend, phone our out-of-hours emergency service on **08457 565656**.

How do I apply?

We have developed a Common Housing Register (CHR) along with our partners. It is called 'apply4homes'. This means you only need to make one application for social housing in Aberdeenshire and Moray. This one application will go to all or any of the partners. To apply, you will need to register online at www.apply4homes.org.uk. If you do not have access to the internet, you can visit your local library or any of the partners' offices. If you need help to apply online, please phone us on **0300 123 4566**.

The website only collects your information. It does not make any assessment of your housing need - this will be assessed by each partner's Allocations Policy (which you can find on the apply4homes website).

Who are the apply4homes partners?

This is a list of all the partners:

- The Moray Council
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership
- Grampian Housing Association
- Homehunt (Castlehill Housing Association)

- Langstane Housing Association
- Hanover Housing (Scotland) Association
- Moray Housing Partnership

Will I need to give you any other information?

There are times when you will need to give us information. These include:

- **Confirming a pregnancy**

If you, or anybody who will be living with you, are pregnant, you must tell us the date the baby is due. You should send us a copy of the certificate of pregnancy as soon as possible and a copy of the birth certificate when the baby is born.

- **Occasional overcrowding**

If you need an extra bedroom because you have children who regularly stay with you overnight, we will ask you for proof (for example, a solicitor's letter or court papers).

- **Bedroom size**

If you think any of the rooms you use for sleeping are too small to allow two people to share, you should phone us on 0300 123 4566. We may need to visit your home to confirm this.

Your choices

Areas you prefer

We have 63 lettings areas in Moray. When you apply for housing you will be asked to select as many areas that you would like to live in. We will try and match you to an area that you want to live in.

You will be considered **equally** for all the lettings areas that you have chosen. For example, if you select all 63

lettings areas, we may offer you a property in any of these areas. It is important to note that if we offer you housing in an area that you selected and you then refuse the offer because of the property's location, we would consider this to be an unreasonable refusal (please refer to page 18 for more information).

It is important that you only select an area that you actually want to live in. You can change your choices by updating your application. If you only want to live in one area or just a few, you may have to wait longer for a property to become available.

You will also be asked to choose the top three areas that you would prefer to live in. We will only use this information for statistical purposes.

Type of housing

Normally, you can choose whatever type of property you want (such as a house or a flat), but some kinds of housing are designed for a particular group of people, for example, suitable ground floor properties for people with mobility problems. These people who have been assessed and awarded points through our housing needs process.

We will not offer you housing that might make your housing situation worse.

Size of housing

We try to make the best use of the housing available. You will be asked to choose a size of house. We will take into account the actual size of house you need, when we allocate you a property. We work out your house size based on the following rules:

Separate bedrooms are needed for:

- A couple for example, husband/wife or similar partnerships;
- Each person aged 16 years or over;
- Children aged 5 years or over who are of an opposite sex from other children.
- Children of the same sex where there is an age difference of 5 years or more between the elder and the younger child.

No more than two persons of any age should occupy one bedroom.

Below is an example of the house size we will consider applicants for.

Household size	bedroom size
Single person	One
Couple	One
Single parent or couple with one child or pregnant	Two
Single parent or couple with two children of the same sex	
Both children are aged under 16 and there is an age gap of less than 5 years	Two
Both children are aged under 16 but there is an age gap of more than 5 years	Three
One or both of the children are aged 16 or over	Three
Single parent or couple with two children of the opposite sex	
Both children are under the age of 5	Two
One child is aged 5 or over	Three

Single parent or couple with three children of the same sex	
Two children have an age gap of less than 5 years and both are under 16 years of age	Three
There is an age gap of more than 5 years between all three children	Four
All children are over the age of 16	Four
Single parent or couple with three children of the opposite sex	
Two children are able to share a room (both the same sex, less than a 5 year age gap and both under 16 years of age)	Three
None of the children are able to share a room due to opposite sexes and age	Four
Single parent or couple with four children of the opposite sex	
All children are able to share a bedroom	Three
Only two of the children are able to share a bedroom	Four
None of the children are able to share a bedroom	Five

It is important to note our rules are different to those used by the Department of work and Pensions (DWP). For more information please see page 18.

We assess each case on its own merits. There may be circumstances where we may offer you a bigger house. Here are some examples.

Ground floor properties (Bungalows and ground floor flats) If we assess that you need a one bedroom ground floor property, we will also consider you for two bedroom ground floor properties. We will offer a property to the applicant with the highest level of need.

Access to children

In most cases children should be adequately housed by their main carer. Therefore, if you need an extra bedroom because of frequent or regular contact with children, we may award one extra bedroom. This is regardless of the number of children covered by the any contact agreement (unless exceptional circumstances apply).

Health reason for needing an extra bedroom

For example, a member of your household needs to use special medical equipment at home and it would be unreasonable for them to share a room while they use this equipment. We will consider their health needs through our medical assessment process.

Our points system

We award set levels of points for different types of housing circumstances (for example, overcrowding or lack of facilities). After we have checked your application and made sure that we have all the information we need, we will work out the total points for your application, depending on your circumstances. The number of points that we give your application will decide your place on the housing list. We may give you points for the following:

Your household is homeless	
Unintentionally homeless	We will put your application on the homeless list. This list is not part of the points system.

Your home is too small for your needs	
For every bedroom that you are short of	100 points
If you have children who do not live with you permanently. For example, they only stay with you a few nights a week. You will only be eligible for one additional bedroom regardless of the number of children you have contact with.	50 points
Your home is too big for your needs	
For every extra bedroom you don't need (transfer list applicants only)	100 points
For every extra bedroom you don't need (waiting list applicants only)	50 points
You live in poor housing circumstances	
<p>The property is below an acceptable standard, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has an outside toilet or shared toilet (this means that more than one household will be using a toilet); • has serious damage to the structure; • has severe rising or penetrating damp (this is when water is getting into the property through the structure and is usually cause by a fault in the roof or walls); or • does not have a good enough supply of piped water: and • Is going to be knocked down or has a closing order (which makes it illegal for anyone to live in the property until it is 	250 points

improved to meet the standard set out in the order).	
<p>The property is below an acceptable standard, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it has a bathroom with toilet which opens directly onto the kitchen or another room (not including a bedroom); • it does not have a bath, shower or washbasin; • there is evidence of rising or penetrating damp; • it has faulty lighting, poor ventilation or drainage systems; or • there are no acceptable cooking facilities; and • the property does not have a closing order or is not going to be knocked down. 	150 points
The property has minor faults including slight dampness or condensation and areas which need repairing.	100 points
You live in poor housing conditions – caravans	
The caravan needs major repairs and also has poor or no facilities	250 points
The caravan needs major repairs but has facilities	150 points
The caravan needs minor repairs and has no facilities	100 points

You are sharing facilities with another household	
You share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet (points will only be awarded to applicants who are not the tenant/owner of the property).	100 points
You are a key worker	
You have a job which brings in skills that are not available locally	100 points
Care and support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential care or support is no longer appropriate. • Hospital is no longer appropriate. • Where supported accommodation/ supported lodgings/foster care is no longer appropriate. • Where a kinship care placement is no longer appropriate. 	250 points
You live in a flat or maisonette (if you have children under 16 living with you)	
You have lived in a first-floor flat or maisonette with shared access for one year or more	40 points
You have lived in a second-floor flat or above or maisonette with shared access for one year or more	75 points
Need to reside in a specific area	
You are (or a member of your household) needs to stay in or move to a lettings area in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give or receive care or support (that 	50 points

<p>would not otherwise be available);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get or maintain specialist education or specialist facilities; • get or give childcare to allow you (or the person you want to move closer to) to work; • be closer to a place of work; or • continue living in a lettings area where you have your main home. <p>You will be asked to identify the specific lettings area and up to two other bordering letting areas. Only the letting areas chosen will be eligible for need to reside points.</p>	
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Tied accommodation

<p>You may live in accommodation which is part of the conditions of your employment. Points will be awarded if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retiring • Your employment has ended • You are leaving the Armed Forces <p>Points may be given to the spouse or partner of a tenant who has died.</p>	<p>250 points</p>
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Exceptional circumstances

<p>The Housing Needs Review Group will assess this.</p>	<p>0 to 500 points (depending on the circumstances)</p>
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Medical assessment

If your, or a member of your household's health could be improved by moving to another home then we may award medical points. (See our leaflet 'Allocations Policy Medical Assessment').

To ask for a medical assessment form or for more information on how we work out how many points we will award you, please contact us (see page 21.)

Deliberate worsening of circumstances

If we think that you have deliberately done, or failed to do something, to make your housing situation worse, to get higher up the housing list, we will carry out an investigation.

As part of our investigation we will take into account all contributing factors. We will find out if you were aware of your actions and will decide if your actions were reasonable.

Where we have evidence that you have unfairly gained an advantage, you will be suspended from receiving an offer of housing for six months. After the six month period, the suspension will be lifted and your housing application will be reassessed.

Sensitive lettings

We may use sensitive lettings in exceptional circumstances - where we will deviate from our Allocations Policy. When considering a sensitive let, instead of allocating a property to the person at the top of the list (the person in the most housing need) we will consider the suitability of the applicant for the property. This will be based on information we have about applicants, the

property, its location and neighbours. We will make sure that the needs of the applicant and the suitability of the property match.

Bypassing applications

In most circumstances we will offer the property to you if you have the highest number of points and have a need for that particular size and type of house. However there may be some situations where you are bypassed for an offer of housing. For example, if you have support need and are not ready to sustain a tenancy or if a property is not suitable for you.

Local lettings plans

There are times when we will deviate from our Allocations Policy. For example, when we allocate new build council housing, we will use a local lettings plan. This allows us to develop policies and letting arrangements that:

- respond to local housing need and demand;
- help to suitably match applicants to properties; and
- help to achieve a balance housing mix within a particular area.

The main aim of a local lettings plan is to build a strong and sustainable community.

You can find more information on local lettings plans on our website at www.moray.gov.uk.

How long will I have to wait before I am offered a house?

There is no average waiting time. How long you wait for will depend on:

- The number of points we give your application (unless

you are on our homeless list, where it will depend on when you applied);

- How popular the area is that you have applied for;
- The size and type of the property you need; and
- How often vacant properties come up.

What if I need special accommodation?

We provide a range of housing, which has been specially designed, built or adapted to meet the needs of certain groups, particularly elderly people and people with special needs. When you are applying for housing you will be asked to select the type of housing that you would accept. We will consider what type of accommodation will suit you. If you would like advice on the options available, please contact us (see page 21).

How long will I stay on the list?

Unless you accept an offer of accommodation from one of the partners, your application will be active for 12 months from when you first apply or make any changes to your application on the apply4homes website.

If there have been no changes made to your application for 12 months, the partnership will contact you to ask if you still want to stay on the list. If you do not respond the partnership will assume that you no longer want to be considered for housing and will cancel your application.

What should I do if my circumstances change?

If any of your circumstances change, you should go online and update your application. If you need help to do this, phone us on 0300 1234566.

What if I owe money?

If you are behind with your current rent, owe rent from a previous tenancy or have other housing debts, you must make an arrangement to clear the amount you owe. We may suspend your housing application from receiving any offer of accommodation unless:

- The housing debt is no more than 1/12th of the total amount of yearly rent you owe on your tenancy or previous tenancy; or
- You have made a payment arrangement with your current or previous landlord and you have kept to this for at least three months. You will need to prove that you have kept to the repayment agreement. If you still owe some of the debt, we will expect you to continue to make repayments.

What if I receive a poor tenancy report from my landlord?

We may suspend your housing application from receiving an offer of accommodation if:

- You have not kept to the terms of your current or former tenancy in a satisfactory way;
- There is proof that you or a member of your household is responsible for antisocial behaviour; or
- You or a member of your household has been evicted.

How do you decide who to give properties to?

For each empty home, we produce a short list of people who are looking for that size and type of home in that particular area. This list will include people on the homeless, waiting and transfer lists. For the transfer and waiting list we usually offer the house to the person on the shortlist with the most points. For the homeless list, we

will usually offer the house to the person who has been on the list the longest. However, we may not do this in every case. This is because:

- we need to let homes to people from all of the lists to make best use of our housing;
- we consider quotas set for each of the lists to allocate properties fairly to people most in housing need;
- we try to take account of anyone who has a particular need to live in that area, perhaps because they work there, or live there already;
- we will consider any exceptional circumstances when we decide your position on each list;
- we try to take account of any person who has a medical problem or disability and needs a certain type of accommodation (for example, if the house has special features, such as a wheelchair access, or does not have stairs); and
- we also look at the preferences you have shown on your application. For example, if you say you only want a home with gas heating, we will not consider you for a home with electric heating.

What happens if you offer me a property?

We will write and tell you. Our letter will give you details of the home that we are offering you, who to contact to arrange to view the property and how long you have to make up your mind. If you accept the offer, your new tenancy will normally start as soon as the property is ready for you to move into. We will charge you rent from the date the tenancy starts.

What if I refuse an offer?

You have the right to refuse any offer. However if you refuse two reasonable offers of accommodation within a period of one year, we will not make any other offers of accommodation to you for six months from the date of your last offer. If you are going to refuse an offer of accommodation, you should discuss your reasons with the area housing officer who deals with the area the property is in before you make a final decision. This is because it may be some time before we can make another offer to you.

What if I refuse an offer of housing due to the removal of the Housing Benefit Spare Room Subsidy (often called the ‘Bedroom Tax’)?

The way that we work out the size of property that you need is different from the criteria used by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). We may offer you a house which the DWP would view as being bigger than you need. This means that if you are entitled to Housing Benefit, the DWP may consider that you have a “spare bedroom” and you may get less Housing Benefit than the amount of rent due.

If you refuse an offer for this reason, then we would consider this to be a reasonable refusal. We will not take the refusal into account when considering the number of refusals that may have been made. In the future your application for housing will only be considered for a smaller size property.

Do I have any other housing options?

Remember that not all social landlords in Moray and Aberdeenshire are part of the apply4homes scheme. You will need to apply to them separately.

You can find out more about other housing options, such as the private rented sector and low cost home ownership in our 'Guide to housing options in Moray' which you can view at your local access point, library or online at www.moray.gov.uk.

Can I apply for a mutual exchange?

You can apply for a mutual exchange if you are:

- our tenant;
- a tenant with another local authority; or
- a tenant with a housing association.

A mutual exchange is where you exchange your home with:

- another of our tenants;
- a council tenant from another local authority; or
- a tenant from a housing association.

House Exchange is a website that brings people together who are looking to swap their home. To register you will need to visit the House Exchange website at www.apply4homes.houseexchange.org.uk. If you do not have internet access at home you can visit your local library or access point. If you need help applying, phone us on 0300 123 4566.

The landlords of each property must give permission before a mutual exchange can take place. We will not withhold our permission unreasonably.

What happens to all the information that I give?

We may ask for information about your health, household, housing needs and previous addresses. We will use the information you give us to assess and meet you and your dependants' housing needs.

We may also ask you for information about you, including your sex, ethnicity, disability and religion. This information may be used for statistical or planning purposes. We need this information to make sure that we protect your rights and make sure we keep to any relevant laws.

In some cases we can share your personal information with other agencies, such as the health service, if you agree. We may share personal information with our partners, however we will not give this information to any other organisation unless you give us your permission in writing or we have to provide it by law.

We may take court action against you and take back any tenancy we may have granted if you have provided false or misleading information.

What if I disagree with your decision?

If you are not satisfied with the decision we have made about your application, you should write to:

Senior Housing Needs Officer (Allocations)

The Moray Council

PO Box 6760

Elgin

IV30 9BX

Contacts

Housing and Property

PO Box 6760

Elgin

IV30 9BX

Phone: 0300 123 4566

Email: housing@moray.gov.uk

Or visit any of our access points below:

Buckie Area Access Point

13 Cluny Square

Buckie

AB56 1AJ

Elgin Area Access Point

Council Office

10 High Street

Elgin

IV30 1BY

Forres Area Access Point

Auchernack

High Street

Forres

IV36 1DX

Keith Area Access Point

The Institute

Mid Street

Keith

AB55 5BJ

We are continually trying to improve the services that we offer and welcome any comments or suggestions. Please send them to:

Housing Needs Section (Homelessness Strategy Team)

The Moray Council

PO Box 6760

Elgin

IV30 9BX

Or email: homelessstrategy@moray.gov.uk

If you need information from the Moray Council in a different format, such as Braille, audio tape or large print, please contact:

如果閣下需要摩里議會用你認識的語言向你提供議會資訊的話，請要求一位會說英語的朋友或親人與議會聯繫

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać informacje od samorządu rejonu Moray w swoim języku ojczystym, Państwa przyjaciel lub znajomy, który mówi dobrze po angielsku, może do nas

Se necessita de informação, do Concelho de Moray, traduzida para a sua língua, peça o favor a um amigo ou parente que fale Inglês para contactar através do:

Jeigu Jums reikalinga informacija iš Moray regiono Savivaldybės [*Moray Council*], kurią norėtumėte gauti savo gimtąja kalba, paprašykite angliškai kalbančių draugų arba giminaičių susisiekti su mumis

Чтобы получить информацию из Совета Морэй на Вашем языке, попросите, пожалуйста, Вашего друга или родственника, говорящих по английски, запросить ее

Si necesitas recibir información del Ayuntamiento de Moray en tu idioma. Por favor pide a un amigo o familiar que hable inglés que:



Housing and Property
The Moray Council
PO Box 6760
Elgin
IV30 9BX



0300 123 4566



housing@moray.gov.uk



(Wednesday or Thursday Only): 18002 01343 563319