Housing Helpsheet

Applying for social housing in South Gloucestershire

What is social housing?

Social housing is provided either by housing associations (not-for-profit organisations that own, let, and manage rented housing) or the local council.

As a social tenant, you rent your home from the housing association or the council. They act as the landlord.

Social housing is generally more affordable than private renting. It is also usually more secure: social housing tenancies are longer-term, and it is harder for social housing tenants to be evicted.

Social housing in South Gloucestershire

In South Gloucestershire, all of the social housing is provided by housing associations (none is provided by the council).

There are not enough social housing properties in South Gloucestershire to house everyone who needs one, and houses are allocated according to need.

This means that households found to be a low priority for social housing may be on the waiting list a long time, or they may never receive an offer of social housing.

Therefore, these households may be better off looking for an alternative, such as private rented accommodation.

How do I apply for social housing in South Gloucestershire?

In South Gloucestershire, social housing can only be accessed via HomeChoice South Gloucestershire.

HomeChoice South Gloucestershire is a partnership between South Gloucestershire Council and housing associations across the area.

Last updated January 2026

Making an application

If you wish to access social housing, you will need to start off the process by making an application through HomeChoice South Gloucestershire.

They will assess your application and tell you if you meet all of the requirements needed to access social housing or not.

You can sign up and complete this application here.

Before you register, the HomeChoice South Gloucestershire website will take you through a 'Housing Options Wizard'. This gives you a summary of the housing options available to you aside from social housing. It also provides you with some links to further advice resources.

It can take several months for an application to be assessed so if you decide you want to apply for social housing, it is best to apply at the earliest opportunity. If you want to know what the current processing times are for new applications, you can call Home Choice South Gloucestershire (contact details at the end of this helpsheet).

If you are found to meet all the requirements needed to access social housing, you can start to bid for properties you would like to live in.

What do I need for the assessment?

The information you need to provide during your assessment will vary depending on your circumstances.

The following things will *always* be necessary:

- Identification (ID) for each adult in the house (e.g., passports and birth certificates);
- Information about why you want/need to move into social housing;
- Proof of address for all household members.

The following information *may* be required, depending on your circumstances:

- Medical evidence of any health conditions, particularly if they're worsened/caused by your current housing situation;
- Proof of pregnancy if you're pregnant;
- Evidence of your right to reside in the UK if you're not a British Citizen (e.g., passport and Home Office documentation);
- EU Settlement Scheme share code (if you are an EEA national);
- Details of benefits, earnings and/or savings;
- Details of previous addresses;
- Information about why you need to be rehoused. This is so that HomeChoice South Gloucestershire can assess how great your need for social housing is. Relevant factors may include:

    - Your current housing is overcrowded;
    - You have a medical need which is being directly affected by your current housing;
    - You are at risk of harm due to violence, domestic abuse, or harassment;
    - You are living in unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing (and an Environmental Health Officer has confirmed this).

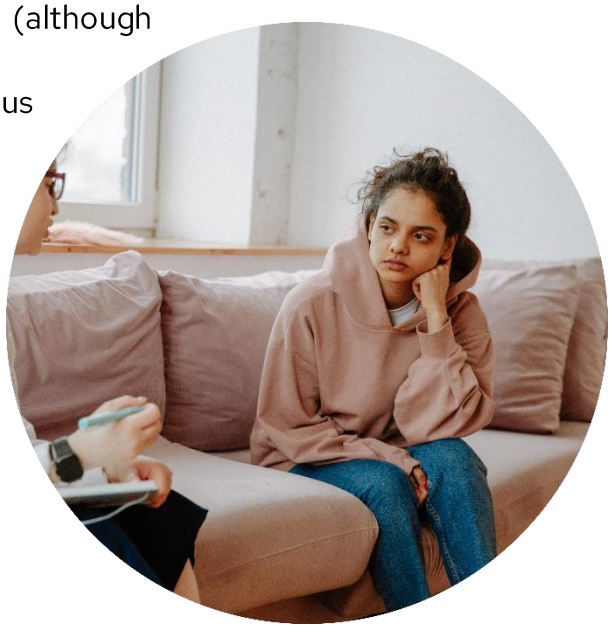
Can I apply for social housing?

You need to meet certain criteria in order to access social housing.

It is easier to state what would *prevent* you from accessing social housing.

You *will not* be successful in accessing social housing if:

- You do not have a right to live in the UK;
- You do not have a right to live in the UK for more than three months;
- Your only right to live in the UK is as a jobseeker;
- You are a British citizen but you currently live abroad for most or all of the time;
- You are subject to 'immigration control' (although there are a few exceptions to this);
- You have been found guilty of serious breaches of a current or previous tenancy;
- You are under 18 years of age (unless you are a care leaver, or accepted as homeless under law);
- You earn over £40,000 per year and/or have savings over £40,000;
- You own a home in the UK or abroad;
- You have lied on your HomeChoice application;



- You are currently in prison;
- You are an EU citizen who moved to the UK after 1st January 2021 (unless you moved to join a family member);*
- You do not live within the South Gloucestershire boundary or you have not lived within it for the last 2 years, and donot have a 'local connection' in South Gloucestershire.
- You are not permanently employed in South Gloucestershire (or you are but work for less than 16 hours per week).†

If you *do not* meet any of the criteria above, the council will most likely decide you are able to place bids on properties (following their assessment of you).

About HomeChoice 'banding'

If you have been found to meet all of the requirements needed to access social housing following your HomeChoice assessment, you will be placed into one of four bands.

Your banding will be based on your household's vulnerabilities and how urgently you need to be rehoused.

Below is a brief summary of each band. You can find more details on each band's criteria here.

Band A

This is the highest priority band for those in most urgent need of rehousing, for example, applicants where there is a serious risk to their safety, health or wellbeing if they remain in their current home.

Band B

This is the second highest priority band. It is intended for people who are at risk of homelessness, or are considered to be living in housing circumstances that have a negative impact on their health, safety, or well-being.

Band C

For people who need to be rehoused, e.g. because of overcrowding, but are not at urgent risk.

Due to a shortage of social housing in South Gloucestershire, people in this band are advised to seek other options.

To help find other options, you can use the 'Housing Options Wizard'.

Registered

Some people meet all the requirements to go on the HomeChoice register, but will not be placed in Band A, B, or C. Instead, they will be placed in the "registered" category.

In practice – due to a shortage of social housing – this means that you are highly unlikely to be successful in accessing social housing.

HomeChoice will have decided that you are able to access alternative accommodation with your own resources. They will decide you have enough resources to do this in the following circumstances:

- You do not qualify for means tested benefits due to a combination of your income, equity and savings, and/or;
- You have equity in a property exceeding the current savings limit for housing benefit (£16,000).

However, this does not apply to:

- Care leavers between the ages of 16 and 24;
- People owed the main housing duty, or;
- Shared lives carers.

If you fall within any of these three categories, you will be placed in Band A, B, or C, depending on your/your household's vulnerabilities and how urgently you need to move, regardless of your financial position.

Priority cards

**If you're an EU citizen with pre-settled status, the situation is complicated. You should speak to your local One Stop Shop.*

†If you're not permanently employed in South Gloucestershire but you've been offered a job/apprenticeship within South Gloucestershire, you may be able to access social housing if it's not possible for you to travel to your new job/apprenticeship from your current home.

- Priority cards can be awarded to households where their need to be rehoused is extremely urgent. These are awarded by the HomeChoice Panel.
- Households with a priority card will be prioritised above all other households on the HomeChoice South Gloucestershire waiting list.
- Priority cards will usually be valid for 12 weeks, although they can be extended.

Once you have been accepted onto the housing register, South Gloucestershire Council will write to you to tell you:

- Your registration number (you will use this number to log-in to HomeChoice);
- Which band you have been placed in, and what date this banding takes effect; and
- The number of bedrooms you are entitled to

Once you have received this information, you will be able to start bidding.

If you are unsure whether you have been placed into the correct band, Housing Matters can advise you on this.

Placing bids on properties

Once you have been placed into a band, you will be able to 'bid' for properties. 'Bidding' is how you apply to live in a particular property.

You can place bids on properties in the following ways:

- Online using the HomeChoice South Gloucestershire website;
- By telephone on 01454868005;
- By post using a bidding coupon (available on property advert sheets);
- In person at one of South Gloucestershire Council's One Stop Shop (in Patchway, Kingswood or Yate).

'Bidding' cycles refresh weekly on Fridays and remain open until the following Thursday. Be sure to bid on properties you are interested in before the new cycle begins.

Things to consider

Due to the shortage of social housing in South Gloucestershire, lots of people will likely bid for the same property.

The property will generally be offered to the person in the highest band, who has been waiting the longest.

However, this is not always the case. For example, if a house has been adapted for wheelchair users, it will likely be offered to a household that includes a wheelchair user, regardless of their wait time.

It is important to read the additional information given on each property advertisement as these can often include additional things to consider. For example, new build homes may still be under construction; or the property may have communal access or a lift or a shared garden.

If you refuse two suitable offers of property your application will be suspended for six months.

You should try to avoid having too many weeks when you do not bid on any properties – if you do not bid regularly enough, HomeChoice South Gloucestershire will review your banding.

Which properties should I bid on?

Only bid on properties that you think are suitable for you and your household.

When thinking about whether to bid on a property, you should consider all aspects of the property, such as:

- What area of South Gloucestershire the property is in:
    - Is it in a location which will allow you to get to work or get your children to school?
    - Consider what the public transport links are like and how far you might be from your support network/work/school.
- The type of property it is e.g.:
    - Is it a house, a bungalow, or an upstairs flat?
    - Can you be open-minded as to the type of property you live in, or do you/your family have particular needs which mean you must have a certain type of property?
- The features of the property e.g.:
    - Does it have a garden

- Number of bedrooms
- Disabled access, if needed
- Pets permitted, if needed

When deciding whether a property is suitable to bid on, try to be as open-minded as possible – you are likely to have to wait a lot longer for a property if you are very fixed on your wants.

For example, if you are fixed on moving to a particular area of South Gloucestershire or having a large private garden, you will probably have to wait much longer to be rehoused.



Before bidding, it might be helpful to work out:

- What you *want* (e.g., if your preference would be to live in a particular area), and;
- What you absolutely *need* (e.g., if you need to live close to your child's school or your support network)

You will need to weigh up your wants and needs with how quickly you need to move house.

How many properties should I bid on?

You can bid on up to three properties each week.

Only bid on properties that you think are suitable for you and your family.

You do not *have* to bid on three properties every week. Some weeks, you may find that there are no suitable properties for you to bid on, or you may find that there's just one suitable property for you to bid on.

You should try to avoid having too many weeks when you do not bid on any properties – if you're not bidding regularly, HomeChoice South Gloucestershire may review your banding.

South Gloucestershire Council Contact Information

By Phone: 01454 86 8005

By Email: homechoiceteam@southglos.gov.uk

In person:

Kingswood One Stop Shop, Civic Centre, High Street Kingswood, BS15 9TR	Patchway One Stop Shop The Patchway Hub, Rodway Road, Patchway BS34 5PE	Yate One Stop Shop, Kennedy Way Yate BS37 4DQ (access via West Walk)

For further advice on the process of applying for social housing in South Gloucestershire, get in touch with Housing Matters.