

Guide to applying for a home

With Ochil View Housing Association



THESE HOMES

Affordable Rented Housing Across Scotland


OCHIL VIEW
Housing Association Ltd.

Welcome to These Homes - Simply a better way to provide homes

This Guide contains important information which you must read carefully so that you understand how These Homes works and don't do anything that might lower your chances of getting a property. If there is anything you don't understand or you need more advice or information, please contact us.

The These Homes Register is shared by several Scottish landlords. You only have to register once then you can choose to be considered by one, a few or all of them depending on where you want to live. Once you have registered with These Homes, you can apply for all properties advertised provided you have chosen to register with the landlord the property belongs to. There will usually be a lot of people applying for the same property and so there are some simple rules to decide as fairly as possible who will be offered the property. Ochil View Housing Association's rules are explained in this booklet –other landlords will have different rules.

When you register with Ochil View, we will also share your details with Clackmannanshire Council as we have a Common Housing Registration process with Clackmannanshire Council. This means that when you register with us, you will also be registered with Clackmannanshire Council as well unless you have chosen not to on your registration form. This will make it simpler for you to access all the social rented homes in Clackmannanshire that meet your needs. Once you register on These Homes Clackmannanshire Council will contact you and they will tell you what you must do to be considered for housing by them.

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1. What is These Homes

These Homes is a digital lettings system used by several landlords operating in different areas throughout Scotland. You can register with any of these landlords, allowing you to apply for properties in lots of different areas. The advantage of a digital lettings system is that you, the applicant, can see what properties are available at any time, and can choose to apply for the properties that are suitable for your needs, and are in areas where you would like to live.

2. Registering

You need to register with us before you can apply for one of our properties. Anyone aged over 16 can register. The easiest way to register is online at **www.thesehomes.com**. When you complete the registration process, you choose which area(s) you want to live in and you will be given a list of the These Homes landlords who have properties in your area(s). If you need support to complete the registration process, please contact us; we are here to help. You can download and print a registration form on Ochil View Housing Associations page on These Homes or from our website at **www.ochilviewha.co.uk**.

Once you have completed the online registration process, you will be given a registration number. You need this number to log in to your registration details online, apply for properties or if you need to phone or write to us.

If your circumstances change at any time it is very important that you update your registration online because if you successfully apply for a property, then we find that the information we have about you is incorrect you may not be offered the property.

3. Priority Passes

We want to make sure that we allocate the homes we have available to the people who need them most. If you have a “significant housing need” you might qualify for a Priority Pass. You might be in housing need for one of the following reasons:

- You are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- You or a household member are suffering domestic abuse
- Your health is affected by your current housing situation
- You are overcrowded as you do not have enough bedrooms for your family
- Your home is too big, and you need a smaller property (this applies only to Ochil View or Social Landlord tenants)
- Your property is unsuitable because of its condition or lack of amenities
- You need to move to a particular area for work or family reasons
- You have lived in a flat for 5 years or more (applies only to tenants of Social Landlords)
- You are a veteran who has left the armed forces within the last year and have no secure accommodation

If any of these situations apply to you, you will be asked for further information during the registration process which has been designed to collect the information we need to accurately assess your housing need in line with our Allocations Policy. Our Allocations Policy has more information about the criteria you need to meet to qualify for each Priority Pass which can be downloaded from Ochil View Housing Associations page on www.thesehomes.com.

If you are eligible for more than one Priority Pass, we will issue you whichever one gives you the highest priority.

Homeless Passes are only awarded where your local authority has completed a homeless assessment. If you are homeless you must contact your local authority as soon as possible. Please note that we do not provide any temporary accommodation.

4. How do we assess Priority Passes?

Priority Passes are awarded on three levels; Gold, Silver and Bronze, as indicated in the table below. However, if you are awarded more than one pass, you may be awarded a plus priority pass. A plus priority pass is awarded if you have two or more passes of the same priority as follows:

Two Bronze Passes = **Bronze Plus Pass**

Two Silver Passes = **Silver Plus Pass**

Two Gold Passes = **Gold Plus Pass**

If you are eligible for a Priority Pass you will be issued one of the following Pass Types:

Priority Type	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Statutory Homelessness	✓	-	-
Insecure Accommodation	-	-	✓
Living Care of Friends or Family	-	-	✓
Domestic Abuse	✓	-	-
Medical	✓	✓	-
Overcrowding	-	✓	✓
Under Occupation	-	✓	-
Need to be in a specific Community	-	-	✓
Transfer from Flat to House	-	-	✓
Separated Households	-	-	✓
Veteran of the Armed Forces	✓	-	-

We will assess what level of priority you are entitled to based on the information you have provided during the registration process so it's important you give us enough information to make a decision. Sometimes we may need more information, for example, we may ask for a letter from your doctor to clarify your medical needs, or a letter from your employer confirming where you work. If we need further information, we will contact you to let you know.

Once we have assessed your registration we will confirm in writing if you have been awarded a Priority Pass. If you are awarded a Priority Pass it will be taken into consideration every time you apply for a property that falls within any limits set on your Pass (see section 6 below).

If you are not awarded a Priority Pass, or if you believe you have been awarded the wrong level of priority, you can appeal. We will give you information on how to appeal a decision in the letter informing you of our decision.

5.Limiting & Losing Priority Passes

Pass Limits

In some circumstances we may limit your Priority Pass, to a specific area or type of property. The circumstances where we would limit your pass to a specific area would be for example if you were awarded a 'Need to be in a specific Community' pass to care for a family member, the pass would be limited to that area. The circumstances we may limit your Priority Pass to a specific property type would be if a 'Medical Priority Pass' was awarded with a recommendation for Ground Floor Housing the pass would then be limited to Ground Floor properties only.

You can still apply for properties that do not meet the 'limited' criteria, but your Pass will not be recognised, and you will be applying as a registered applicant with no Priority Pass. One of the ways that we decide who, out of everyone who applies, is offered a property is by looking at who has the highest level of Priority Pass.

Losing Your Priority Pass

There are situations where we can withdraw a Priority Pass. If you have a Homeless Priority Pass and refuse an offer you may also risk losing your homeless priority with the local authority. If your Pass is removed because you refused an offer of housing, but you think you had good reasons to refuse, you can appeal.

6. Applications from Homeowners

If you are a homeowner or a person who normally lives with you is a homeowner then in accordance with Section 8 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, the Association will, when offering a tenancy to a person who is a homeowner, consider whether the housing needs of that applicant can be met through the temporary allocation of a property on the terms of a Short Secure Tenancy Agreement.

Examples of where a Short Secure Tenancy will be appropriate to meet temporary housing needs include where you or someone living with you is a homeowner of a property that you cannot immediately access, or the property is not suitable for your immediate needs.

The Association will not offer a Short Secure Tenancy where the homeowner cannot secure access to the property or when occupation of that property would present a risk to the owner's health.

If we propose to offer a Short Secure Tenancy, we will advise you of this, and the reasons for our decision at the time of offer. You may appeal against our decision to offer a Short Secure Tenancy, more information can be found at section 12.

7. Applying For A House

Our properties are advertised on a Monday after 2.00 p.m. and the closing date is 12 noon the following Monday. If we are closed on a Monday, the closing date is 12 noon on the Tuesday.

The adverts will appear online weekly on **www.thesehomes.com** or on Ochil Views website at **www.ochilviewha.co.uk** or Ochil View's Facebook page. We will also send a copy of our adverts to agencies such as Clackmannanshire Council, Citizens Advice and Women's Aid. You can also request to receive a text when a property suitable for your needs is advertised or you can phone our office on 01259 722899 to hear a list of properties available each week.

Once you have completed your registration you can apply for any property that we advertise, as long as it is suitable for you (for example, we wouldn't allow you to apply for a house that was too small for your family).

When you see an advert for a property you are interested in you can apply online by logging in to your registration (remember you will need your registration number). Alternatively, you can apply over the phone, in writing or in person at our office. Properties are advertised for a limited period of time, so it is important that you contact us before the closing date and time specified in the advert.

It is important that you only apply for properties that you would accept if you were offered so before you apply it is a good idea to check Google Maps 'Explore this Area' for information about the area (<https://www.google.co.uk/maps>). If public transport links are an important consideration you should also look at <http://www.traveline.info> for information about buses and other transport options.

You can apply for as many advertised properties as you wish at any one time. If you qualify for more than one offer at the same time, we will assume that the property you applied for first is your first choice, and so on, in the order you chose to apply. You can only be made one offer at any one time, so the order in which you apply could be important to you.

If you do not want to apply for advertised properties each week, you do not have to. Every year we will send you a reminder to check whether you still wish to remain registered with These Homes.

8. Offers of Property

Once the closing date and time for the advert has been reached, we look at all of the applicants who have applied for advertised properties. We will normally consider an applicant for housing according to the following steps:

1. Who would make 'best use' of the property – for example, by using all the available bedrooms or by using features of the property such as disabled adaptations
2. If more than one applicant would make 'best use' of a property, we will offer it to the person with the highest level of Priority Pass (see the explanation of Priority Passes in sections 4-5)
3. If more than one person has the same level of Priority Pass, the offer will go to the person with the earliest date of registration.
4. If there are no applicants with Priority Passes, the offer will go to the applicant with the earliest date of registration.

Transfer Led

We will give preference in the allocation of the first available property in a chain of vacancies firstly, to an applicant who is an Ochil View tenant and who has a housing need, as evidenced by a priority pass. If no such applicant has expressed an interest in an available property, then to an applicant of a registered social landlord where they have a housing need as evidenced by a priority pass.

When we let the second and any subsequent lets in any chain of vacancies, we will give preference to applicants who are not currently tenants of a registered social landlord and are in housing need as evidenced by a priority pass.

There are exceptions to our Transfer Led approach and certain properties will be excluded from being allocated this way. If a property has any special features such as level access shower or has been designated for those over pensionable age, we will advertise the property to all applicants. Preference will be given to those applicants who require that special feature.

Exceptional Circumstances

There are some exceptional circumstances when we may not advertise a property, or the above criteria is not applied. If you would like more information about this, you can download our Allocations Policy from Ochil View Housing Associations page on These Homes.

We will contact you as soon as we can after the closing date if you have been successful. We will contact you by email or phone in the first instance and then by letter. If we can't make contact with you within 2 days, then we will offer the property to the next applicant.

9. Reporting Allocations

We will publish regular reports on These Homes and on our website to give everyone some idea of the demand for different properties. This can help you make reasonable choices about where you want to live. For example, is it more important to have a home sooner and go for properties that are in low demand, or can you wait for the 'perfect' property to come along elsewhere?



10. Who is not eligible for housing?

In certain circumstances, registrations can be 'suspended'. This means you will not be able to apply for any houses until the 'suspended' status is removed.

As part of the registration process, you will be asked to answer several questions and to confirm this information is correct. The answers you give show whether or not you meet the criteria to apply for housing with us (see also **false information**). If any criteria are not met, your registration will not be made 'live' until such time as you can demonstrate to us that you can now meet the criteria to apply for housing. Examples of when registrations are 'suspended' include:

- You have outstanding rent arrears either with Ochil View Housing Association or another landlord, and you haven't maintained an agreement to pay them off
- You have a history of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity (subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) when action has been taken (or is pending) by Police, local authority, landlord etc.
- You have Abandoned a previous tenancy with a Social Landlord in the previous 3 years
- You have had a property repossessed due to neglect or vandalism in the previous 3 years

If you would like more information about whether or not you are eligible, you can download our Allocations Policy from Ochil View Housing Associations page on These Homes or call us for details. If you are not eligible, we will advise you what you need to do to be able to apply for properties.

11. Refusals

If you refuse 3 reasonable offers of accommodation, then we will suspend your registration for a period of 3 months. Therefore, please ensure that you only apply for properties that are suitable to your requirements and within the areas of your preference.

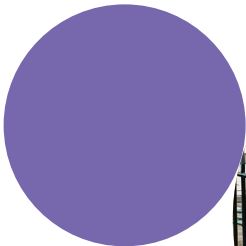
12. False Information

If you give false or misleading information in an attempt to secure an offer of property, we will correct our records as soon as we have the correct information. You may then be suspended from applying for further properties until we are satisfied that the issues have been addressed. We will review our suspended registrations every 3 months. If you were allocated a house as a result of false information, we will take legal action to end your tenancy. To avoid any possibility of this happening, please let us know of any changes in your circumstances as soon as possible.

13. How to Appeal or Make a Complaint

We aim to provide an excellent service at all times but accept that we don't always get it right and hope that you will tell us to give us the opportunity to correct any mistakes.

You have the right to appeal any decision made to suspend their application from offers of housing. We will firstly ask applicants to appeal internally however, they do have a statutory right of appeal to the Sheriff Court. Ochil View's internal review process is that all appeals should be made in the first instance to the Senior Housing Services Officer and in their absence the Director of Housing Services as soon as possible after the appropriate decision was made. Applicants who are dissatisfied with the decision of the Senior Housing Services Officer or the Director of Housing may seek redress through the Association's Complaints Procedure. A copy of the Association's Complaints Handling Policy can be found on our website at www.ochilviewha.co.uk.



14. Contacting Us

If you need any help or advice or you have any comments you would like to make, you can contact us at:



www.thesehomes.com

all information, forms and documents can also be found at
www.ochilviewha.co.uk



Phone us – 01259 722899



Email us at housing@ochilviewha.co.uk



Visit or write to us at:

Ochil View Housing Association Ltd



Ochil House

Marshall

Alloa

FK10 1AB

15. Information in Alternative Formats

If you need this leaflet or any other publication translated into another language, we will provide this on request.

On request, we will arrange for an interpreter to be present where necessary, for example at interviews. This includes sign language interpreters.

We will provide material in formats such as large print, audio tape or computer disk, on request.

We will provide these additional services at no cost to you.

16. Data Protection

When you register online, or you sign and return a paper registration form to us, you consent to your personal information provided within the registration form being handled and used by the landlords of These homes in accordance with the “How We Use Your Personal Information (Collective RSL Members)” statement. The statement is available on www.thesehomes.com. This includes sensitive personal data including any information that we collect about your racial or ethnic origin, health, committed or alleged offences including Court Proceedings and sentencing. This data will only be processed where necessary. Please read that statement carefully before submitting this form.

Please inform us as soon as possible of any change in your personal information by logging onto www.thesehomes.com and updating your registration to keep them complete and accurate.

By completing and submitting a These Homes Registration form, you authorise us to request information about you from other organisations to allow us to manage and administer your registration with These Homes. This includes, for example, the Police for anti-social behaviour checks and medical professionals for medical history checks.



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HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

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