

Your Guide to Homespot

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What is Homespot?

Homespot is Falkirk Council's Choice Based way of letting houses. Houses available for let are advertised and you can decide which houses you wish to be considered for.

We advertise our vacant properties every week. You can look at the list of adverts on the Council's website at www.falkirk.gov.uk/homespot or in the Homespot newsletter that is available throughout the Council area i.e. at our Housing Needs Service, Advice and Support Hubs, local supported accommodation projects, libraries and in housing association partners' offices.

There is also a free phone service (0800 678 3091). This is an answer machine service where you can leave a message and a member of staff will phone you back.

If you see a property that you like you can "bid" for it. A bid lets us know you are interested in a particular property and would like to be considered for it. It does not mean you will have to part with any money.

How do I register with Homespot?

You can get a registration form from our Housing Needs Service or one of our Advice and Support Hubs. A list of contact details is given at the end of this booklet.

If you need help to fill in the registration form staff from the Housing Needs Service or Advice and Support Hubs will be happy to assist.

To help us get you registered as quickly as possible you should make sure that you answer all the relevant questions on the form.

When you have filled in your registration form you should return it to the Housing Needs Service or Advice and Support Hubs.

How is my application assessed?

We will use the information you give us to decide what applicant group you are in e.g. a Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter and you will also be placed in one of four "Bands". A Band is a way of describing the priority for housing which you have been awarded (see section below for further detail of these).

The Band you are placed in depends on your level of housing need. You may be placed in Band 4 (which is the lowest band) when you first register until we have carried out a full assessment of your housing need.

If an assessment is carried out this should be done within 28 days of registration.

Within each Band applications are then placed in date order.

If your circumstances change at any time, you must tell us as it may affect the Band in which you are placed and the type of properties you can be considered for.

What are Home Seekers, Home Movers and Home Starters?

Home Seekers

applicants that have been assessed as homeless in terms of homeless legislation

Home Movers

tenants of Falkirk Council or tenants of an RSL living in the Council area.

Home Starters

all other applicants.

We aim to let 45% of our vacant houses to Home Seekers, 27.5% to Home Movers and 27.5% to Home Starters.

What priority will I have for housing?

There are four levels of priority for housing which we refer to as "Bands". Band 1 (the highest level of priority), Band 2, Band 3 and Band 4 (the lowest level of priority). You will be placed in one of these Bands depending on your level of housing need. The Bands are explained below:

Band 1

Priority is awarded to the following applicants who have an urgent need to move:

- who are found to be unintentionally homeless following a homeless assessment
- that are assessed to be threatened with homelessness within the next two months following a homeless assessment
- who have been "looked after and accommodated" by Falkirk Council and are leaving their care placement
- who are leaving the Armed Forces and their right to occupy service accommodation is coming to an end and a certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to occupy Service Living Accommodation has been issued
- who are unable to be discharged safely from hospital because their home is no longer suitable for them
- whose home is causing significant problems due to a physical medical condition or disability
- whose home is causing significant problems due to a mental health condition or disability
- who are living in an overcrowded house where two or more additional bedrooms are required to meet their needs
- who are living in a one-bedroom property and have two children under the age of 8 years sharing a bedroom with them
- who have two teenage children of different genders sharing a bedroom
- who are Falkirk Council tenants or RSL tenants living in the Council's area that are living in a house which is too big for their needs by two or more bedrooms
- living in a house which is assessed as falling below tolerable standards
- who need to be re-housed as a result of regeneration or redevelopment within the Falkirk Council area

- who are currently both social housing tenants within the Falkirk Council area who wish to move so that they can live as a family unit and require a larger property to prevent overcrowding.
- with exceptional housing needs and a multi-agency case conference has recommended that you need to move. If you are awarded this priority you will be directly matched to a suitable property

Band 2

Priority is awarded to the following applicants:

- who are living in a property which does not have a secure tenure or lease, this does not include applicants that live care of relatives, friends or lodgers.
- who are overcrowded where one additional bedroom is required to meet their needs
- living in bed-sit accommodation
- with social housing need such as:
 - the applicant needs to move to give or receive care and support
 - the applicant's accommodation is unsuitable due to severe harassment.

Band 3

Priority is awarded to the following applicants:

- with children under 10 years living in tenement flats with no access to shared or individual gardens
- Joint tenants/owners who have had a relationship breakdown
- who are living in accommodation where their independence is limited due to a physical medical condition or disability
- who wish to move to the Falkirk Council area due to a local connection e.g. employment
- living in a private sector tenancy
- owners living in the Falkirk Council area that are downsizing by two or more bedrooms
- living in the private sector with a short-assured tenancy agreement
- currently sharing amenities with another household with whom they are not applying to be housed

Band 4

Priority is awarded where there is no housing need

We will also tell you your Band date (this is the date you were awarded priority and your band). If you are a Home Seeker with Band One priority, your band date will be the date you first contacted us to let us know that you are homeless. For all other applicants, your band date is the date your assessment was completed or 28 days after your date of application for priority, whichever is sooner.

If your circumstances change, this may also result in a change in the Band of priority you have been awarded. If your Band of priority changes then the band date will also change.

What if I have more than one housing need?

You will be awarded only one level of priority. If you have more than one housing need, you will be awarded priority for your highest ranked need.

Secondary housing needs are only taken into account when they relate to a medical condition or disability and following a Functional Needs Assessment (see Functional Needs Assessment booklet). On these occasions an indicator (F) is added to the banding e.g. an applicant may have a Band one priority for overcrowding and a medical recommendation for ground floor housing with a shower so their priority award will become Band 1(F) or B1F. This (F) indicator will allow you to bid for properties advertised as "Adapted".

If you think that the priority you have been awarded does not reflect your needs, you can ask us to review your circumstances by using the Appeals Process (see our Allocations Appeal Process leaflet on how to appeal).

Time limits

We are committed to housing you in the quickest time possible and to ensure your housing need is met. Therefore, if you are awarded a Band 1 or Band 2 and have not placed any eligible bids for three months, you will be moved into Band 4. If you think you will have any difficulty managing your application and placing bids, you can ask for help.

If you have been awarded a Band 3 or 4 and have not placed any eligible bids for a period of 12 months your application will be cancelled. We will send a letter to advise you that you are at risk of having your application cancelled. You can request a review of the decision to cancel your application

What choices do I have?

The aim of choice-based lettings is to give you more choice over where you want to live and the type of house you want to live in.

We have a range of different types of houses that you can apply for. When we advertise a property, we will say which applicant group can bid for it. You can only bid for properties that are advertised for your applicant group or properties that are advertised for All Groups.

When you register you will be asked which allocation area you would prefer to live in. There are ten allocation areas across the Council area, and you can choose as many of these as you like.

The allocation areas are:

- Bo'ness
- Bonnybridge / Banknock
- Braes
- Dawson
- Denny
- Falkirk Central
- Falkirk East
- Falkirk West
- Grangemouth
- Larbert / Stenhousemuir

What if I have a recommendation for a certain type of house?

If you have been awarded Band 1F or Band 3F priority because your home is unsuitable for you due to a medical condition or disability it may include a recommendation of the type of property that will be suitable for you. We will not consider you for any property that does not match this recommendation, even if you bid for them. For example, if the recommendation is for ground floor housing, you will not be successful if you bid for a house with internal stairs.

If you feel that your health has improved and the recommendation is no longer relevant, you should tell us about this, and we will review the priority and any recommendation. This may involve an Occupational Therapist or a Housing Visitor visiting you at home.

A review may not remove restrictions on the type of house you can be offered.

Properties that have been adapted will be advertised as "Adapted" properties and all applicants with a medical recommendation will be able to bid for these properties irrespective of whether they are a Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter.

What size of house can I apply for?

We want to make the best use of our housing stock and to do this we have Household Size Criteria as follows:

- Couples are expected to share a room.
- Couples and single applicants will be considered for properties with one or two bedrooms.
- Each household member over 8 years of age can have their own bedroom. Priority for overcrowding will not be awarded where two children under 8 years of age of either sex share a room which is larger than 110 square feet (10 square metres).
- If you have two children of the same sex aged 8 years or over, they can share a bedroom if you wish.

If you wish to move to a house the same size as the one you live in just now, we will not consider any overcrowding priority you may have.

Due to the lack of larger houses with three or four bedrooms, you can be considered for a property that is smaller than you need if it will still reduce overcrowding.

We recognise that some households may need a home that is bigger than the household size criteria allows e.g. an additional room may be needed because of a medical condition. Any professional recommendation for additional rooms will be taken into account in deciding what house size you qualify for.

Based on the household size criteria above you will only be able to bid for properties that meet the needs of your household.

Property sequencing process

In order to meet our target of allocating 45% of available properties to Home Seekers, 27.5% to Home Movers and the 27.5% to Home Starters we have an automatic sequencing process for vacant properties.

This process takes into account the allocation area the property is in, the size of the property, the property type and the date the property became void.

There are ten Allocation Areas which are listed under the “What Choices do I have” section. Within each Allocation Area, properties are grouped into the following sizes:

- Bedsit - two bedrooms
- Three bedrooms
- Four bedrooms or more

Within each Allocation Area and property size, properties are grouped into the following types:

- House / Bungalow
- Four-in-a Block
- Flat / Maisonettes / Multi Storey Flat

Properties are then sorted by the date they became void and sequenced separately for Home Seekers, Starters and Movers.

This is a rolling process which means that wherever we end one sequencing cycle the next one starts.

Housing with Care properties Level 3 and properties that have been designed or previously adapted for applicants with particular needs are not sequenced.

Adapted Properties - When we advertise adapted properties the advert will say that the property is adapted and what facility or adaptation is in the property e.g. level access shower, external ramp or fully adapted or accessible kitchen. All applicants that have been awarded priority following a Functional Needs Assessment will be able to bid for these properties irrespective of whether they are a “Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter”. Preference will be given to applicants that need the facility or adaptation.

Local Lettings Initiative

Falkirk Council aims to make suitable allocations and to promote stable communities. Accordingly, some properties will be advertised to say that they are subject to a local lettings initiative. The following are our current Local Letting Initiatives:

Group Settings - When a house in a grouped setting e.g. within a block of flats, is vacated Neighbourhood Coordinators may consider the profile of the other households living within the grouping and, where appropriate, specify further eligibility criteria for lettings within the block or grouping.

High Flats - These are advertised to say that they are subject to a local lettings initiative and that "preference will be given to applicants aged 50 or over".

New Build Council Houses - Within the new build programme, ground floor properties are designed to barrier-free standards and are suitable for wheelchair users. These properties will be advertised as "Adapted" and preference will be given to applicants that need the facilities provided.

Will all houses be advertised?

We will let most of our houses through Homespot however there are some exceptions, and these are explained below:

Housing with Care level 1 and 2 i.e. housing for older people who are physically frail and need care and support services at home (see separate leaflet on Housing with Care). These properties will be matched to applicants following a full assessment of their needs.

We may need to use a property for temporary accommodation as a result of an emergency situation or to discharge our statutory duty in terms of homeless legislation.

If a property would meet the needs of an applicant with particular needs e.g. someone who cannot leave hospital because their own home is unsuitable then we may re-house another applicant to allow their property to be let to the applicant with particular needs.

We may need to use a property to house an applicant that has been awarded priority due to exceptional needs.

How long will the advertising cycle last?

Properties are advertised every week. The cycle opens at 12 noon on a Wednesday and closes at 12 noon 7 days later. All adverts clearly state the closing date for bids to be made.

What information will be included in an advert?

We aim to make sure that adverts have enough information to help you make an informed decision about whether or not the property is right for you.

An advert will include the following information:

- the address of property the property type e.g. house, flat, multi-storey flat
- the number of bedrooms
- the type of heating
- the weekly rent
- which applicant group will be given preference i.e. Home Seeker, Home Mover, Home Starter, Adapted or All Groups
- any additional qualifying criteria
- the date and time that bidding for the property closes
- a photograph of the property.

What do I do if I see a property I like? When you see a property you are interested in, you should check what applicant group the property has been advertised for e.g. Home Seeker, Home Movers or Home Starter. You can only bid for properties that are advertised for the applicant group that you are in. For example, if you are a Home Seeker applicant you can only bid for properties advertised for Home Seekers. The same applies to Home Movers and Home Starters.

You can bid for a property in the ways listed below:

- online through our website at www.falkirk.gov.uk/homespot
- by contacting one of our Advice and Support Hubs or Housing Needs Service
- by filling in and returning a bidding coupon
- by phoning 0800 678 3091 (free phone).

If you want to bid for a property you must make sure that we receive your bid before the closing date and time stated in the advert. Bids will not be accepted after the list has closed.

How many properties can I bid for?

You can bid for as many properties as you like in any advertising cycle as long as the property is advertised for the applicant group that you are in.

Important - if you bid for more than one property, you need to enter your bids in the order of your preference starting with the property you are most interested in. This is very important because if you are successful for more than one property that you bid for; we will allocate the properties in the order you bid for them starting with your first bid. If your first bid is successful, we will not consider any later bids you have made.

What help and support will I get?

Our staff will help you use Homespot until you get familiar with bidding for properties. We can continue to help you if you have particular problems using Homespot.

How do you decide which bid is successful?

It does not matter whether you make your bid on the first day or the last day of the advertising cycle. Once bidding has closed, everyone who has made a bid for a property will be considered.

We will prepare a short-list of suitable applicants who:

- meet the criteria in the advert i.e. Home Seeker, Home Mover or Home Starter and any additional qualifying criteria
- would make “best use” of the property - for example would use all the bedrooms
- are not suspended for any reason
- have a recommendation for a property type which matches the property advertised (where applicable).

The short-listed applicants will be ranked in order of their level of priority. If there is more than one applicant with the same level of priority, the property will be offered to the applicant that has had that priority longest. For applicants in Band Four, this will be their date of application.

What will happen if there are no eligible bids from the advertised applicant group?

If there are no eligible bids for a property from the advertised applicant group, we will either directly match the property to a Home Seeker that has not been bidding for properties (see section “What is time limited priority for Home Seekers?”) or re-advertise the property for All Groups.

How will I know if I am to be offered a property?

If your bid is successful, you will normally be contacted within 7 days of the closing date. If you are not available when we try to contact, you a letter will be left at the address you have given on your application asking you to contact us urgently. It is very important that you respond quickly. If we do not hear from you within 48 hours, it will be considered that you are refusing a potential offer of housing which means that the offer will count as one of your offers of housing. Your application will also be suspended for 28 days and if you do not contact us within the 28 days, to let us know that you are still interested in housing, your application will be cancelled.

If you have bid on a property and have not heard from us within 14 days of the closing date, it is unlikely that you have been successful on that occasion and you should keep bidding for properties which suit your needs.

What happens if I refuse a property?

We hope that if your bid is successful you will accept the property you are offered.

However, if you are a Home Mover or Home Starter and refuse two properties you will lose any priority for housing need and move to Band Four. After 12 months you can ask to have your situation re-assessed. If you are a Home Seeker and refuse the offer of housing your priority for homelessness will be removed as the Council will have discharged its duty to you in terms of homeless legislation. Your application group will change from Home Seeker to Home Starter and your housing situation will be reassessed. If you are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, you will have to leave this.

Time limited priority for Home Seekers

If you are a Home Seeker and have not been actively bidding for properties for three months, we will make you an offer of housing out with Homespot i.e. we will directly match you to a property. We will try to offer you a property in the areas you have chosen but this will depend on the availability of properties. If you refuse this offer of housing, your priority for homelessness will be removed as the Council will have discharged its duty to you in terms of homeless legislation. Your application group will change from Home Seeker to Home Starter and your housing situation will be reassessed. If you are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, you will have to leave this.

However, if, during the three-month period, no suitable properties are advertised or your bids have been unsuccessful, you will continue to be a Home Seeker with Band One. We will continue to monitor your application to make sure you are bidding for properties which meet your household needs. If you are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, you can continue to live there.

How will I find out about which properties have been let?

We will publish information about properties that have been let in previous advertising cycles. We will tell you the number of applicants that bid for the property, the Band and the Band date of the successful applicant. We will not publish personal information about the successful applicants, such as name and address.

This information will be available on our website at www.falkirk.gov.uk/homespot and at our Advice and Support Hubs and Housing Needs Service.

We hope that this feedback will give you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and how long you would normally have to wait. You can then decide whether to look for other types of properties or areas where you may not have to wait as long.

If I have been rehoused when can I re-apply?

You will have to wait for 12 months from your tenancy start date to re-apply, unless there is a significant change in your circumstances.

Useful Contacts

Abbeyfield Society (Falkirk) Ltd

Thornville, Ladysmill, Falkirk FK2 9AU

T: 01324 634357

W: www.abbeyfield-scotland.com

Ark Housing Association

The Priory, Canaan Lane,
Edinburgh EH10 4SG

T: 0131 447 9027

W: www.arkha.org.uk

Barony Housing Association

2 Earls Court, Roseland Hall,
Earls Gate Park, Grangemouth FK3 8ZE

T: 0845 140 7777

W: www.baronyha.org.uk

Bield Housing Association

7 Eagle Street, Glasgow G4 9XA

T: 0141 270 7200

E: info@bield.co.uk

W: www.bield.co.uk

Cairn Housing Association

15 North Claremont Street,
Glasgow G3 7NR

T: 0141 353 1944

W: www.cairnha.com

Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association

1 Hay Avenue, Edinburgh EH16 4RW

T: 0131 657 0600

E: customer@castlerockedinvar.co.uk

W: www.castlerockedinvar.co.uk

Hanover Housing Association

95 McDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4NS

T: 0131 557 0598

E: admin@hsha.org.uk

W: www.hsha.org.uk

Horizon Housing

Association Leving House,
Fairbairn Place, Livingston EH54 6TN

T: 0845 600 8648

W: www.horizonhousing.org

Key Housing Association

The Square, 70 Renton Street,
Glasgow G4 0HT

T: 0141 342 1890

E: info@keyhousing.org

W: www.keyhousing.org

Kingdom Housing Association

Saltire Centre, Pentland Court,
Glenrothes, Fife KY6 2DA

T: 01592 631 661

E: kingdom@kingdomhousing.org.uk

W: www.kingdomhousing.org.uk

Link Housing Association

Watling House, Callendar Business Park,
Falkirk FK1 1XR

T: 0845 140 0100

E: csc@linkhaltd.co.uk

W: www.linkhousing.co.uk

Loretto Housing Association

Head Office: Lipton House, 2nd Floor,
170 Crown Street, Glasgow G5 9XB

T: 0141 420 7950

E: headoffice@lorettoha.co.uk

W: www.lorettoha.co.uk

Margaret Blackwood H.A.

1 Belses Gardens, Cardonald G52 2DY

T: 0141 883 4477

E: info@mbha.org.uk

W: www.mbha.org.uk

Paragon Housing Association

Invergrange House, Station Road,
Grangemouth FK3 8DG

T: 01324 664966

E: enquiries@paragonha.org.uk

W: www.paragonha.org.uk

Penumbra

Norton Park, 57 Albion Road,
Edinburgh EH7 5QY

T: 0131 475 2380

E: enquiries@penumbra.org.uk

W: www.penumbra.org.uk

Scottish Veterans Garden City Association

New Haig House, Logie Green Road,
Edinburgh EH7 4HQ

T: 0131 557 1188

E: mail@svgca.org.uk

W: www.housesforheroes.org.uk

Weslo Housing Management

15 North Street, Bo'ness EH51 0AQ

T: 01506 639100

E: wesloproperty@weslohm.co.uk

W: www.weslo-housing.org

Y People

William Harte House, 15 Dava Street,
Glasgow G51 2JA

T: 0141 565 1200

E: admin@ypeople.org.uk

W: www.ypeople.org.uk

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Corporate & Housing Services,
Falkirk Council, The Forum,
Callendar Business Park,
Falkirk FK1 1XR

T: 01324 506070

E: privatesector.housing@falkirk.gov.uk

W: www.falkirk.gov.uk

Housing Team Advice and Support Hubs

Housing Needs

Freephone: 0800 587 4440

T: 01324 503600

E: ath@falkirk.gov.uk

Central Advice and Support Hub

E: housingservices@falkirk.gov.uk

T: 01324 506070

East Advice and Support Hub

5 York Lane
Grangemouth FK3 9BD

E: housingservices@falkirk.gov.uk

T: 01324 506070

West Advice and Support Hub

Carronbank House
Carronbank Crescent
Denny FK6 6GB

E: housingservices@falkirk.gov.uk

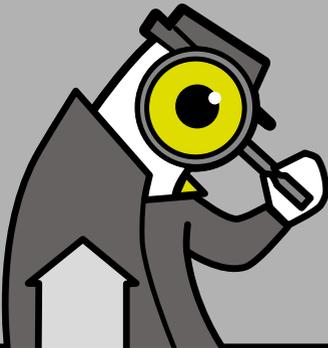
T: 01324 506070

Privacy Statement

The Council must comply with Data Protection Legislation as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018. If you supply personal information to us you can find out how we handle personal data at www.falkirk.gov.uk/privacy

Have your say on how your Housing Service is run, or how it could be improved. To find out more, contact Inspector Tenant on 01324 590796, email inspector.tenant@falkirk.gov.uk or visit us at www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant for more information.

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, large print or audio tape please contact Housing Needs Service.



Falkirk Council

www.falkirk.gov.uk/homespot