A guide to using Home Choice

www.tandridge-homechoice.org.uk
A guide to using Home Choice

Contents

1. What is Tandridge Home Choice? .................................................................3

2. What is East Surrey Home Choice? ............................................................3

3. What is a ‘bid’ and how do I place one? ....................................................4

   3.1 Bidding on the website ........................................................................4

   3.1a Logging in .....................................................................................5

   3.1b Searching for properties .................................................................6

   3.1c Placing a bid .................................................................................6

   3.1d Keeping track of my bids .................................................................8

   3.1e Other account options .................................................................9

   3.2 Bidding on the phone .....................................................................11

4. What happens next? ..................................................................................12

   4.1 The offer process ..........................................................................13

5. What do the symbols mean? ....................................................................14

6. What types of property are available to rent in the Tandridge area? .......15

7. Where can I see copies of the Home Choice Newsletter? ..................15
1. What is Tandridge Home Choice?

Tandridge operates a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme called Home Choice. The scheme allows you to choose the properties you are interested in, rather than the council deciding which housing to offer you.

CBL aims to help applicants take a greater role in choosing their home. Just like in the private rented sector, available social rented (council and housing association) homes are advertised and applicants can express their interest in advertised homes in the areas where they would like to live.

The Council no longer offers properties to applicants just because they are on its housing list. You will only be offered the tenancy of a particular property if you have registered a ‘bid’ for it. This applies to all applicants, regardless of their current housing situation.

All available properties are:

- Advertised on our website at www.tandridge-homechoice.org.uk
- On a telephone information line - 01883 722000 select option 4
- Displayed on posters at the Council Offices in Oxted
- Published in a newsletter available at key agencies and locations in the district. A list of these locations can be found at the end of this guide.

2. What is East Surrey Home Choice?

As well as Tandridge Home Choice, we also work in partnership with three other authorities – Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead – through East Surrey Home Choice.

The aim of East Surrey Home Choice is to help housing register and transfer applicants apply for social rented homes in any of the four East Surrey areas, giving you a wider choice of areas in which to live and possibly reduce waiting list times.

Up to ten percent of all social rented homes that become available each year will be advertised as East Surrey Home Choice properties and will be available for moves across the council boundaries.

This scheme works in much the same way as Tandridge Home Choice. Available properties are advertised weekly and eligible applicants will be able to bid for these homes. You will see these properties listed as ‘Sub-regional CBL’ when you search for properties on the Tandridge Home Choice website or in newsletters.
3. What is a ‘bid’ and how do I place one?

Placing a ‘bid’ is simply the term used on the Home Choice system to say that you are expressing an interest in a particular property. There is no financial commitment involved in placing a bid on a property.

You can bid for up to three properties each week if you are on the housing register or a tenant of Tandridge District Council or one of our partner housing associations and have registered for a transfer.

You are only able to bid on those properties for which you are eligible. For example, if you only need one bedroom, you will not be able to bid for a two bedroom property.

The following instructions are for placing a bid through our website or automated bidding telephone line. If you have special needs and are unable to use either of these, contact Housing Needs on 01883 732825 as soon as possible to discuss your options.

3.1 Bidding on the website

On the website you can find full details about the scheme. You can search for properties that meet your needs and see important details about them. You can also place a bid, withdraw a bid, find out if you are eligible for certain properties and track your progress for any bids you have placed.

You can only bid for properties where you match what the advert asks for, regardless of your banding or priority. For example, if the property advert states ‘Suitable for a couple and two children only;’, only couples with two children can bid for that property.

It is important to remember that you can only bid for a maximum of three properties per bidding cycle. A bidding cycle is from 00:00am Friday morning until 23:59pm the following Wednesday night. No bids can be placed on Thursdays.

To log into the website you will need:

- Your Home Choice reference number, which you will find on your welcome letter included in this pack.
- The date of birth of the primary applicant for your housing application, which you will also find on your welcome letter.
3.1a Logging in

Begin by typing **www.tandridge-homechoice.org.uk** into the address bar of your internet browser.

From the Home page click on the ‘Login/My Account’ button.

On the Login page enter your Home Choice Reference Number in the box that says ‘Enter your unique reference’. This is the number on your Welcome letter that begins with a 3 and has 10 digits in total. Next enter the date of birth of the primary applicant in the box that says ‘Enter your memorable date’. Please make sure that you enter the **full date** and include the / mark between the day, month and year. For example, if the date you need to enter is 1 January 1955 you would enter it as **01/01/1955**. The date of birth of the primary applicant can be found on your Welcome letter just below the Home Choice Reference Number.

**You must enter this information correctly otherwise the system will not allow you to access your account details and you will not be able to bid on any properties.**
3.1b Searching for properties

There are two ways to search for properties on the system. If you only want to view those properties for which you would be eligible you can do so through your account summary page after you log into the system. In the middle of the page there is a section called “Properties that you can bid for” which will tell you how many properties are currently being advertised which you would be able to place a bid on. To view those properties simply click on the link that says “Click here to show the ___ properties that you are eligible for”. If there are no properties being advertised that fit your eligibility criteria you will see a message in this section that says “Currently you are not eligible for any properties”.

The second option is to click on the tab near the top of the page that says “Property Search”. This will take you to a search page where you can choose to see all the properties being advertised, or filter the search to look for certain areas or property types.

3.1c Placing a bid

You can only bid for a property if you match what the advert asks for, regardless of your banding or priority. For example, if the property advert states ‘Suitable for a couple and two children only’, only couples with two children can bid for that property.
You can see further information about the property; such as property type, location, weekly rent and service charges, heating and garden types and marketing information by clicking on the ‘Show full details’ button near the top of the advert. The ‘Marketing Information’ section at the bottom of the advert will also tell you if there are any special features or restrictions on the property.

You can get an idea of your queue position for a property before you decide whether to place a bid by checking the information message above the ‘Apply Now’ button. This message will tell you how many people are currently above you for that property, but please keep in mind that your position in the queue can change as other people add or remove bids during the cycle.

After you have searched through the available properties and chosen the one(s) you would like to bid for, simply click on the ‘Apply Now’ button to begin the process.

You will be asked to confirm your contact details, and then be given the option to either submit the bid by clicking ‘I wish to be considered for this property’, or not continue with the bid by clicking ‘I do not want to be considered for this property’.
If you choose to continue placing the bid you will then see a message confirming this and be given the option to either continue searching and placing further bids, or go back to your account summary page by clicking on the links provided.

You will need to repeat the ‘Apply Now’ process for each property on which you wish to place a bid.

3.1d Keeping track of my bids

You can keep track of any bids you have placed by checking the My Bids section of your Account pages. You can view this page at any time by clicking on the ‘Login/My Account’ button near the top of the page and then clicking on the ‘My Bids’ link along the left-hand side of the page.

On this page you can see your queue position for any current bids, withdraw a bid or view your final position for any historic bids you’ve placed in the last 30 days.

Note: In the ‘Historic Bids’ section of the page you can see all the bids you have placed in the last 30 days. The ‘Status’ column of this section will state ‘Open’ until the final allocation of the property has been made, regardless of your final queue position. See section 4.1 of this guide for further details about the offer process.
### 3.1e Other account options

Besides looking at your account summary and keeping track of your bids, there are a few other ways to manage your Home Choice account through the website. Most of these are accessed by clicking on the links on the left-hand side of the page.

**My Messages**
Send messages to us through this page, and view any replies we have sent to you here as well.

**My Social Housing**
You can see which Band you are in and check your priority date here.

**My Mutual Exchange**
If you are already a tenant in social housing you may be eligible to do a mutual exchange with another tenant in similar housing. This can sometimes be a quicker option than waiting on the housing register.

If you are a tenant of Tandridge District Council or one of our partner housing associations and your property is located within the Tandridge area you can advertise your property through the Home Choice website. To do so click on the ‘Click here to complete a new Mutual Exchange application’ link on the My Mutual Exchange page and complete the online form. Once your advert has been approved by a member of the Allocations team (this can take up to
5 working days) you will be able to see your property advert, and all the other mutual exchange adverts on the system, by clicking on ‘Property Search’ at the top of the page and then clicking the ‘Mutual Exchange’ button.

Your advert will be set to automatically expire after 12 months, but you can withdraw it at any time by clicking on the ‘withdraw your advert’ link at the bottom of the page.

**Recent Lets**
By clicking on ‘Recent Lets’ at the top of the page you can look through the list of properties which have been allocated in the past. It will give you details about the lettings such as area, property type and number of bedrooms, the band and priority date of the successful bidder and the total number of bids that were submitted during the cycle. You can use this information as a guide to which properties to bid for and how long you may have to wait before being successful bidding on properties in certain areas or of a particular type.
3.2 Bidding on the phone

If you do not have access to a computer but are able to use the telephone you can use our automated information and bidding lines.

To hear the list of available properties for the current bidding cycle call the information line on 01883 722000 select option 4. Have a pen and paper ready to take down the property reference numbers for any of the properties you would like to place a bid on.

When you are ready to place your bid(s) phone the bidding line on 0845 270 1908.

You will be charged the local rate for this call, although this rate will vary depending on your telephone service provider.

Using the telephone system you can place a bid, withdraw a bid, find out if you are eligible for a property and hear your current queue position on a property.

It is important to remember that you can only bid for a maximum of three properties per bidding cycle. A bidding cycle is from 00:00am Friday morning until 23:59pm the following Wednesday night. No bids can be placed on Thursdays.

You can only bid for a property if you match what the advert asks for, regardless of your banding or priority. For example, if the property advert states ‘Suitable for a couple and two children only’, only couples with two children can bid for that property.

To bid you will need:

- Your Home Choice reference number, which you will find on your welcome letter included in this pack.
- The date of birth of the primary applicant for your housing application, which you will also find on your welcome letter.
- The property reference number(s) for the properties you want to place a bid on. This number will be given to you when you listen to the property details on the information line.

You log into the system and register your bid using the number keypad on your telephone. As well as using the numbers on the keypad, you will also need to use the hash (#) key.

Once you have placed the call you will be guided by voice prompts. Simply follow the instructions by keying in the numbers on your keypad.
First you will be asked to enter your Home Choice reference number. To do this, key in the 10 digit number given to you in your welcome letter, followed by the hash key (#).

For example, if your housing reference number is 1234567890 you would press the following numbers on your keypad:

```
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0  #
```

Next, you will be asked to enter your date of birth, this will be done in three separate prompts for the day, month and then year.

If your date of birth is 01/01/1964 you would press:

```
0 1 # at the first prompt,
0 1 # at the second prompt and
1 9 6 4 # at the third prompt.
```

Please make sure you follow the instructions given by the voice prompts very carefully.

Finally you will be asked for the reference number of the property you wish to place a bid on. Enter this number in exactly the same way as above followed by hash (#). The voice prompt will read back the number you entered and ask you to press 1 to confirm. It will then let you know that your bid has been placed on the system and give you the option to add further bids or end the call.

4. What happens next?

As mentioned above, the bidding cycle runs from 00:00am Friday morning until 23:59pm the following Wednesday night. No bids can be placed on Thursdays. The advert details for the property or properties you’ve placed bids on will tell you the closing date for the current cycle.

At the end of the bidding cycle all bids received for each property that has been advertised will be put in priority order to produce a list of eligible applicants for that property. Vacant properties are allocated to applicants in band order, starting with applicants in Band A.

If there is no one in Band A eligible for the property, those in Band B are considered and so on through the bands. If more than one household within a band meets the criteria for the property, the application registered the longest will have the highest priority.
The few exceptions to this procedure are explained in our Allocations Policy. You can download a copy of the policy from our website at: www.tandridge.gov.uk/housingneeds. Copies are also available from Housing Needs at the Council Offices by phoning the section on 01883 732825 or e-mail customerservices@tandridge.gov.uk.

4.1 The offer process

- An Allocations Officer will check the application details of the person with the highest priority on the list as described above to ensure they match the details on Home Choice and to ensure that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the property. If the person is a Council or Housing Association tenant they will also do an arrears check. If there is any reason why the highest bidder would not be eligible for the property they will move onto the next person on the list.

- The officer will then phone the successful applicant to check for any change of circumstances since the original application was made, and to confirm that they are indeed interested in the property.

- If both the officer and the applicant are happy to go ahead with the allocation, what happens next will depend on the type of property being allocated:

  - For **general needs accommodation** the officer will usually arrange to do a home visit to check that the information given on the application is correct. They will check things such as household size, sleeping arrangements for all family members, financial details (payslips, bank statements, child or any other type of benefits), National Insurance Number, and where applicable, local connection information.

  - For **sheltered (warden assisted) accommodation** the officer will arrange for a ‘Support Need Assessment’ to be carried out. This will usually involve the applicant going to view the property with the Sheltered Scheme Co-ordinator and a Sheltered Housing Team Leader where they will assess the applicant’s need for support.

  - If the home visit or ‘Support Need Assessment’ is satisfactory then a formal offer of the property will be made.

  - For **council tenancies** the offer letter will be sent directly to the applicant with details of how to contact the Management Officer to arrange a viewing and sign up. They will then be told by the
Management Officer when they can come to the Council Offices to collect the keys.

- For **housing association tenancies** a nomination will be sent to the housing association that owns the property who will contact the applicant to arrange the viewing, sign up and key collection.

- For most **sheltered accommodation tenancies** the viewing can be done at the time of the ‘Support Need Assessment’ and sign up will usually be done at the time the applicant collects the keys for the property.

The time it takes from the end of the bidding cycle to the successful bidder collecting the keys will depend on many different factors, but usually takes around 1 to 2 weeks.

**Please note:** If the bid you placed on a property was not successful you will not be contacted by an Allocations Officer, as it is not possible to contact everyone who registered an interest.

We recommend that you check the **My Bids** page of your account on the website where you will be able to view your final queue position. See section 2.1.4 of this booklet for details on how to do this.

### 5. What do the symbols mean?

If you search for properties on the Home Choice website, or look at one of the newsletters that are distributed to key agencies throughout the district you will see symbols which give information about the property. Below is a simple guide to what the symbols mean.
6. What types of property are available to rent in the Tandridge area?

- **Tandridge Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**
  Rented property in the Tandridge area for eligible people on the housing register. This includes property owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), also known as Housing Associations.

- **Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**
  Rented property in one of the sub-regional partners’ areas for eligible people on the housing register. The sub-regional partners are Tandridge District Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

- **Mutual exchange property**
  Mutual exchange property for eligible current council or housing association tenants.

- **Shared ownership property**
  A property for people who may be able to buy a part share in a property.

- **Private sector property**
  An approved property available from a private landlord available to anyone.

7. Where can I see copies of the Home Choice Newsletter?

A copy of the Home Choice Newsletter is sent to the following locations throughout the district.

**Libraries**
(may also provide free internet access – please ask the library for details)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caterham Hill Library</td>
<td>Monday: Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday: 9.30am to 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday: Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday: 9.30am to 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday: 9.30am to 6pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saturday: 9.30am to 4pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday: Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey CR3 5TP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 0300 200 1001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:Caterhamhill.library@surreycc.gov.uk">Caterhamhill.library@surreycc.gov.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterham Valley Library</td>
<td>Stafford Road, Caterham, Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingfield Library</td>
<td>The Guest House, Vicarage Road, Lingfield, Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxted Library</td>
<td>12 Gresham Road, Oxted, Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlingham Library</td>
<td>Shelton Avenue, Warlingham, Surrey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Citizen’s Advice Bureau**

| Oxted Citizens Advice        | 14 Gresham Road, Oxted, Surrey | 01883 715525 | oxted.cab@dial.pipex.com | Monday 10.00 - 13.00 | Tuesday 10.00 - 13.00 | Wednesday 10.00 - 13.00 | Thursday 10.00 - 13.00 | Friday 10.00 - 13.00 | Saturday 9.30am - 4pm | Sunday Closed |
Caterham Citizen’s Advice
Soper Hall
Harestone Valley Road
Caterham CR3 6YN
Phone: 01883 344777
Email: bureau@caterhamcab.cabnet.org.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>10.00 - 16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>10.00 - 13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>14.00 - 17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>10.00 - 16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>appointment only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support Services**

The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE)
St Piers Lane
Lingfield
Surrey RH7 6PW
Phone: 01342 832243
Email: info@ncype.org.uk
Website: www.ncype.org.uk

Transform Housing & Support
Tern House
Upper West Street
Reigate
Surrey RH2 9HX
Phone: 01737 233893
Email: reigate@transformhousing.org.uk
Website: www.transformhousing.org.uk

**Other places around the district where you can view the Home Choice Newsletter**

There is a **Home Choice display** in the Reception area of the Council offices where you can view colour posters of the properties being advertised each week. You can also pick up a copy of the newsletter to take away with you. The Council offices are located at: **Station Road East, Oxted, RH8 0BT.**

A copy of the Home Choice Newsletter is displayed each week on the notice board at the **Douglas Brunton Centre** located at **Park Road, Caterham, CR3 5TA.** The entrance to the Douglas Brunton Centre is on Chaldon Road (opposite Westway Common).

The centre also has a computer room open each weekday 9.30am-3.30pm to members of the general public. There is no charge to use the computer, apart from a nominal charge for printing and stationery. Sessions can be booked in advance and training is available. For more information ring **01883 347230.**

If you are already of resident at one of the Council’s **sheltered developments** you can find a copy of the Home Choice Newsletter displayed each week on the notice board in the common room. You can also speak to your Sheltered Scheme Co-ordinator who can put you in touch with the Housing Needs Team if you need advice or assistance using Home Choice.
More information

By post: Housing Needs
Tandridge District Council
Council Offices
8, Station Road East
Oxted RH8 0BT

By telephone: 01883 722000
By e-mail: customerservices@tandridge.gov.uk
Our website: www.tandridge.gov.uk/housing
Tandridge District Council’s website is a comprehensive source of information about council services and the community.

You can find information about businesses, councillors, council tax and benefits, housing, jobs, planning, leisure, recycling and waste collections and much more.

www.tandridge.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter: @TandridgeDC  
Find us on Facebook: Tandridge Council