

Durham Key Options



**Bidding for a home through
Durham Key Options**



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April 2017

Equality and diversity

All Durham Key Options documents can be provided in large print, audio tape or CD, electronically via email or in Braille. We can also provide an induction loop, BSL interpreter, same-gender interview or home visit if required.

If you would like us to provide this information in your first language, or would like us to provide a translator and meet you to discuss its contents, please contact us on the relevant Durham Key Options phone number as listed on page 3. We can also provide same-gender interviews and home visits in County Durham when needed.

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਾਤਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰੀਏ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਅਨੁਵਾਦਕ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਮਿਲਕੇ ਇਸਦੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਾ ਵਸਤੂ ਤੇ ਚਰਚਾ ਕਰੋ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਦੁਰਹਮ ਕੀ ਐਂਪਲਨਸ (Durham Key Options) ਦੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਣ ਤੇ ਕਾਉਂਟੀ ਦੁਰਹਮ (County Durham) ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਵਿੱਚ ਘਰ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਲਿੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ ਕਰਵਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

Bengali

আপনি যদি উপরে দেওয়া বিবরণ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান বা আপনি যদি একজন দোভাষীর দারা এই বিষয় আলাপ করতে চান তবে দয়া করে নিচে দেওয়া ডারাম টেলিফোন নমবারের তালিকা থেকে নমবার বেছে নিয়ে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন। দরকার হলে আমরা শূধু পুরুষ বা মহিলা দারা আপনার সাথে আলাপ করতে পারি এবং কাউন্টি ডারাম এলাকায় বসবাসকারী হলে আমরা আপনার ঘরে এসে আলাপ করতে পারি।

Hindi

यदि आप चाहते हैं कि हम आपको आपकी मातृभाषा में सूचना प्रदान करें, या आप एक अनुवादक चाहेंगे जो आपके साथ सूचना के बारे में चर्चा कर सकें, तो कृपया हमें नीचे दिये गये उचित Durham Key Options टेलीफोन नम्बर पर सम्पर्क करें। यदि आवश्यकता हो तो हम County Durham के भीतर समान लिंग के व्यक्ति द्वारा इंटरव्यू के अलावा आपके घर आकर भी बातचीत कर सकते हैं।

Cantonese

如果你需要此資訊的其他語言版本，或者你需要一名翻譯工作人員與你一同探討此資訊的內容，請通過杜倫郡以下相關號碼聯絡我們。如果需要，我們還可以安排同性別的工作人員與你訪談，以及杜倫郡內家庭拜訪。

Mandarin

如果您需要此资讯的其他语言版本，或者您需要一名翻译工作人员与您一同探讨此资讯的内容，请通过杜伦郡的以下相关号码联络我们。如果需要，我们还可以安排同性别的工作人员与您访谈，以及杜伦郡内家庭拜访。

Polish

Jesli potrzebujesz aby ta informacja zostala udostepniona w jezyku polskim lub jesli potrzebujesz tlumacza, ktory moglby sie z Toba spotkac i omowic tresc tej informacji, skontaktuj sie z nami wybierajac odpowiedni numer telefonu z dostepnych opcji ponizej. Jesteśmy w stanie zapewnić też rozmowe z osoba tej samej płci oraz wizyte domowa w obszarze Durham.

French

Si vous desirez recevoir ces informations dans votre langue maternelle ou si vous souhaitez que nous vous procurions un traducteur pour vous rencontrer et en discuter le contenu, veuillez nous contacter en selectionnant l'indicatif correspondant a Durham, parmi les options des numeros de telephone indiqués ci-dessous. Nous pouvons en outre, organiser des entrevues avec une personne de meme sexe ainsi que des visites a domicile dans le comte de Durham quand cela est requis.

Arabic

إن أردت الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغتك الأم أو إن أردت وجود مترجم لمناقشة هذه المعلومات فيمكنك الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الموجود أدناه الخاص بخدمات مدينة درم. يمكننا أيضاً تأمين مقابلات مع أشخاص من نفس جنسك كما يمكننا ترتيب زيارات منزلية ضمن مدينة درم إن احتاج الأمر لذلك

Urdu

اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں آپ کو یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان میں فراہم کی جائیں یا آپ کو ایک مترجم کی ضرورت ہے جو آپ سے مل کر اس کے سندرجات پر گفتگو کرے تو آپ چھوٹی ڈی ڈی ہاؤسنگ میں فہرست کے مطلوبہ نمبر پر ہم سے رابطہ قائم کریں ہم آپ کو آپ کی جنس کے مطابق عورت یا مرد مترجم بھی مہیا کر سکتے ہیں۔ ڈرہم کا ڈیٹی میں ضرورت پڑنے پر گھریلو دورے بھی کیے جاسکتے ہیں۔

 Dale & Valley Homes	0800 083 0333	 Karbon Homes (2)	01207 521 100
 Durham City Homes	0800 068 0013	 livin	0800 587 4538
 East Durham Homes	0800 032 0835	 North Star Housing	03000 11 00 11
 Karbon Homes (1)	0191 385 1900		

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Introduction

This booklet explains how you can bid for a home through Durham Key Options.

Don't worry about the word 'bid' - you won't be parting with any money. It simply means you are interested in a particular property and wish us to consider you for it.

The scheme gives you more say in where you live and helps us offer you suitable homes of your choice.

**Please read the booklet and keep it in a safe place
- you may need it later.**

Providing services fairly

We aim to ensure that all our customers can use our services regardless of age, race, sex, disability, religion, sexuality, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or marriage and civil partnership. We do this by ensuring all staff are trained to understand people's different needs. We also monitor our services to make sure we provide them fairly to everyone.

Staff will:

- help you fill in forms
- provide an interpretation service if your first language is not English
- give you information, on request, in different languages or in different formats such as large print, Braille, CD or audio tape
- contact you by your preferred method
- use plain English
- take into account any additional needs you may have
- provide you with support if you need it
- take calls using Typetalk
- where possible, arrange for you to speak to, or be visited by a member of staff of the same sex as you, if you wish
- provide induction loop systems
- visit you at home if necessary
- provide you with a sign-language service if you need it.

What if I need help?

If you need help with using our lettings service or bidding for a home, we can:

- help you apply for a home, including completing forms, at your home if needed
- offer advice and support
- help you understand how the service works
- help you bid for a home
- ask other support agencies to help you, if needed
- continue to support you until you are re-housed.

How to use this guide

Please read:

- page 7 about how we advertise our properties
- page 8 about what our adverts will include and what the symbols mean
- pages 11-12 about how you can bid for a property.

Where can I find out about homes that are available?

We advertise all our available properties across County Durham:

- on our website, **www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk**
- on your mobile or tablet, using the above web address
- in some of our partner landlord offices
- on boards in some public buildings

If you think you won't be able to view the advertised properties in any of these ways, please contact one of our partner landlords and they will be happy to help.

What will the advert tell me?

Our adverts will show you:

- the landlord
- the location (a map link is available on the website)
- the property size
- the rent
- other features such as parking or garden
- council tax banding
- the energy performance rating (where available)

The advert will also say if there are any bidding restrictions, such as age requirements or adaptations, which make the property suitable only for disabled or elderly applicants.

What do the symbols mean?

Here is a key to the symbols you may see on our property adverts.



Number of bedrooms



Pets allowed



Minimum age



Off-street parking



Property has a garden



Supported housing

Are there any exceptions?

Local lettings policies

Our partner landlords may introduce a local lettings policy to ensure good management of housing. This may happen, for example:

- in areas where there is little available housing
- to ensure communities have a good mix of residents and to prevent anti-social behaviour
- because of differences in rents and the demand for properties in the area.

If a local lettings policy applies to a property, the advert will say so. More information about the policy will be available at **www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk** or from the landlord's offices.

Direct lets

In exceptional circumstances we may let a property directly to an applicant, if our partner landlord has agreed to this.

This may happen, for example:

- when the property has had significant adaptations
- if a person has a right of succession to a tenancy but the home is no longer suitable for them – so we offer them a different property
- if an applicant has a special or urgent need.

To ensure fairness and openness, these properties will still be advertised but applicants will be unable to bid for them.

Housing association properties

Durham Key Options works alongside housing associations across County Durham. We have an arrangement with them to put forward applicants from our housing register to properties they own. We will advertise these through Durham Key Options in the same way as our partner landlord properties are.

For more information on which housing associations have properties in County Durham, visit www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk

Deciding which properties to bid for

You can bid for any property you are eligible for. The letter you receive when we accept you onto the housing register will tell you which properties you are eligible for. This will be based on the number of people in your household and your circumstances.

To help you decide which properties to bid for, you can see which applicants we recently let homes to. This information is available on the Durham Key Options website and in some partner landlord offices.

You should only bid for properties you are genuinely interested in. If you refuse 3 offers of accommodation in a 12-month period, we may remove your application from the housing register.

If you are statutorily homeless and refuse one offer of suitable accommodation you will lose the duty that the council owes you. The suitability of properties for homeless applicants will be determined by the Housing Solutions team dealing with your homeless application. Your refusal of a suitable property may also affect your priority banding.

How do I bid for a property?

To make a bid, you will need to provide:

- your housing register reference number
- your memorable date
- the reference number for each property you want to bid for.

You can bid for a property using any of the following methods:

- On-line at **www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk**
- see page 12 for details
- Telephone your Durham Key Options partner
- In person at a Durham Key Options partner landlord office

Can someone else bid for me?

Yes. If you have an advocate, they can bid for you. Applicants with exceptional support needs can bid using assisted bidding. For more about this, please contact us. A friend or family member can also bid for you, but they will need your application number and memorable date to do so.



Bidding on the website

You can place a bid 24 hours a day during the bidding cycle, using the website. We consider bids equally, whatever day or time you bid. This is how to place a bid on a property using the website:

1. Type **www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk** into the address bar of your internet browser.
2. Click **Login**, and then enter your housing register reference number and memorable date. A page will be displayed confirming your basic details and you can access any bids you have previously made by clicking on 'My bids'.
3. Click on the box '**Eligible properties**' to show all the properties you are eligible to bid for. You can narrow your search: type an area of your choice using the '**Properties in**' box and choose a mileage search area from the drop down option. Once you have clicked **Update search**, the website will display your selection. You can refine your selection using the filters on the right hand side of the screen: advert type, property type, number of bedrooms, bathroom type, landlord and adaptations (if any).
4. On the properties you are eligible for, you can see the words **Apply for this property**. The website will also show how many people are already bidding for this property. This can change as other people bid for it. If you are not eligible for a property, a message will tell you why.
5. If you are eligible for a property and want to apply for it, click **Apply for this property**. You will be shown your contact details and can update your telephone number and email address (if you have one). Click on **Confirm details and apply** to continue. If you do not wish to bid, click **Cancel**.
6. When you have made your bid, a message will say that you have successfully placed a bid.

What will happen next?

How long will I get to make a bid?

We have 5 cycles beginning at midnight on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, each lasting 6 days.

Can I change my mind about a bid?

Yes. During any bidding cycle, you can withdraw your bid if you change your mind about a property. You will still be able to bid for other properties in the same cycle.

What happens when the bidding cycle ends?

Once the bidding cycle has ended, we shortlist all applicants who have bid for each property in band priority order. If there are competing bids from the same band, we then look at the priority date of the applicant. We consider adapted properties differently and allocate them to the most suitable applicant. We will offer the property to the applicant at the top of the shortlist. If they refuse the property, we will offer it to the next applicant and so on until someone accepts the property.

When will I know if my bid has succeeded?

We will contact the successful applicant as soon as possible after the cycle ends, usually within a week. If we have not contacted you within a week of the close of bidding, this usually means you have not succeeded this time. Keep bidding until we contact you with an offer.

What happens when you offer me a home?

Before we make an offer, we may contact you or visit you at your home to see if there have been any changes to your housing application. We may not be able to offer you a home if you owe any rent, have a history of anti-social behaviour or have not looked after your home.

We will tell you if we can't make you an offer and what you need to do if there is a problem. If you are shortlisted and offered a property, you will not be able to bid for any more properties until you decide whether to accept the offer.

When we offer you a home, we will invite you to view it with an officer from the partner landlord. If you decide to take it, they will explain the tenancy conditions to you. You will have to sign a tenancy agreement accepting them.

Once you have signed for the tenancy, your application will be closed. If you want to move again in the future, you will need to make a new application.

Refusing an offer of accommodation

Think carefully before you refuse an offer as there may be a penalty for refusal. If you refuse three suitable offers of accommodation in a 12-month period, we will remove your application from the housing register for 6 months. You will be unable to place any further bids during this time. After 6 months you will need to re-apply to join the register.

If you are statutorily homeless and refuse one offer of suitable accommodation you will lose the duty that the council owes you. The suitability of properties for homeless applicants will be determined by the Housing Solutions team dealing with your homeless application. Your refusal of a suitable property may also affect your priority banding.

Feedback on offers

Each week we publish information on our website and in some partner landlord offices, giving details of how properties have been let.

The information will include:

- Street and/or area
- Property type
- Number of bedrooms
- Number of applicants who bid for the property
- Whether the property was covered by a Local Lettings Policy
- The band, application date and priority date of the successful applicant.

This will help you decide which properties to bid for. This is because it gives you an idea of how popular a property or an area is and how long you would normally have to wait. We may let a property to an applicant from a band it was not advertised for. This may happen, for example, if no applicants in the advertised band bid for the property.



This document has been clarity-checked and awarded the Clear English Standard by Plain Language Commission (www.clearest.co.uk), which promotes clear and concise communication in documents and on websites.

