



# Applying for Housing

## Information booklet



AUGUST 2021

# What is SEARCH?

**SEARCH helps you apply for housing in East Ayrshire. It is the collective name given to the following social landlords who have agreed to form a partnership and means that applicants only have to complete a single application form to apply for housing with any of these partner landlords.**

The organisations participating in SEARCH are:

## East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire Council is the local housing authority and owns nearly 13,000 properties throughout the area, from Dalmellington in the South through to Lugton in the North, with the main settlements being in and around the Kilmarnock and Cumnock areas.

The Council provides a wide range of property types and sizes including family sized homes, flats and bedsits and a variety of housing models for older and disabled people.

## Atrium Homes

Atrium Homes is a registered social landlord and recognised Scottish Charity, employing 25 staff in its offices in Kilmarnock. Atrium is a "not for profit" organisation and surpluses made on a year to year basis are reinvested in its housing stock and services. The company is run day to day by a professional staff team supported by a voluntary Board of Directors.

Atrium's main services include providing, managing and maintaining properties, regeneration of disadvantaged communities and the alleviation of housing need. Atrium owns over 1100 properties in various parts of East Ayrshire, which it rents to individuals in housing need and a further 99 lock-ups which it lets on a commercial basis.

## Cunninghame Housing Association

Cunninghame Housing Association Ltd. (CHA) was founded in 1984 and has 2150 socially rented properties, 400 of which are in

East Ayrshire, 378 factored properties in management and is a "not for profit" non distributing organisation with any surplus being reinvested in its housing stock and services.

CHA operates in the local authority areas of North and East Ayrshire. The Association is run by a voluntary Board of Management of 16 members and is a Charity Registered in Scotland.

The voluntary Board of Management is responsible for adopting a clear business strategy for the organisation and its governance. The Association employs its own professional staff team of 80 who, through its Chief Executive are responsible for the operations of the business and advising the voluntary Board of Directors on strategic, policy and governance issues.

## Riverside Scotland

Riverside Scotland was established in 1993 and is a non-profit making housing association. The Association is a progressive and efficient organisation, working in partnership to deliver excellent homes that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of its customers, and the communities it serves throughout south west Scotland. The Association is continually exploring potential regeneration and development opportunities in all of its areas of operation and has a wide portfolio of new build properties. Its 2000 plus properties cover a wide spectrum of customer requirements and are continually invested in.

The Association is run by a voluntary Board of 10 tenant, community and business members. The staff team, led by the Association's Chief Executive and Executive Team, are truly committed to providing quality services to the Association's customers.

## Shire Housing Association

Shire's vision of Great Homes, Great People, Vibrant Communities is firmly engrained in its values to provide great rented housing and services to tenants in East Ayrshire.

Based in Cumnock, Shire own almost 1,000 homes in fifteen communities as far North in Kilmaurs to Patna in the South. They offer a wide range of quality housing, a great repair service and opportunities for tenants to help shape the services tenants deserve. They invest rents back into their homes and services and have an ambitious home improvement programme to continue to deliver high quality energy efficient homes well into the future. For over 20 years, Shire have put Customers at the heart of what they do. They work in partnership with communities and others, listen to tenants and embrace innovation to continue to offer great housing services to the people of East Ayrshire.

# What will this booklet tell you?

**This booklet will tell you how the application process works and how your application is pointed and prioritised. Remember that this is a summary and you can request a full copy of the Common Allocation Policy from any of the partner landlord's offices.**

## Who can Apply for Housing?

Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and a UK resident. Applications from members of the British Armed Forces serving overseas will also be accepted. You can apply in your own right as a single applicant or together with someone else and have a joint application.

## How do I apply?

You need to complete a SEARCH application form. These forms can be obtained from any local Council office or any one of the partner housing providers offices (see page 10). You should complete the form and return it to any

of these offices. If you require assistance with completing the form this will be provided for you upon request.

## How is my application processed?

As soon as your application form is received it will be placed on the housing register and a number of checks regarding the details you provided in the form will be carried out. Once these checks have been completed a decision regarding the status of your application will be made and you will be advised accordingly.

The information you have given will be accessed by the partner housing providers.

We aim to process all completed Housing Application Forms within 10 working days. Please make sure that you have completed the form and have included as much information as you can.

We will ask you for documents to verify the information you have provided in your application. This will include proof of identification and residence for the applicant(s) and anyone else to be re-housed with you. We may also visit your home to check your circumstances.

Within the housing application, we will ask you for the contact details of any landlords you have had during the last 3 years. We will contact your current and former landlords before we offer you a property and ask them to fill in a tenancy reference form. If your landlord tells us you owe them rent above a certain amount, have behaved unacceptably or have broken your tenancy agreement, then you may be suspended from our housing list. If this is the case we will tell you what you need to do to get the suspension removed from your application.

## Why do we need a Housing Allocation Policy?

The Housing Allocation Policy is a clear set of rules which local social landlords have agreed to follow when letting their houses.

The Housing Allocation Policy is supported by the five SEARCH partner landlords.

## How does the Housing Allocation Policy work?

We operate a group plus points system where applicants are divided into groups. This means that you will be placed in the most suitable group and awarded points based on your personal circumstances.

## What group will I be on and how many points will I have?

Your circumstances will be assessed in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy and your groups and points detail will be dependant on your own circumstances.

## Which group relates to you?

### 1. Homeless Group

To be placed in this group your personal circumstances will have to be assessed by a Homeless Persons Officer at your local Council and you will have to meet the criteria.

### 2. Strategic Needs Group

This group includes applicants whose home is subject to demolition as part of a wider regeneration programme, those who have left or are about to leave residential accommodation or long term hospital care and looked after and accommodated children. Those applicants who are leaving the Armed Forces will be placed within this group for a period of 6 weeks before and 6 weeks after they are discharged.

Foster Carers and Kinship Carers may also be added to this group if they require larger size accommodation than they currently occupy to enable them to foster or care for extended family and this need can be met through social rented housing.

### 3. Transfer Group

Applicants placed within this group will be a tenant of one of the SEARCH partners and will be resident within East Ayrshire.

### 4. Waiting Group

This group includes applicants who are not eligible for inclusion within one of the other groups. It also includes those who do not currently live in East Ayrshire and wish to move to the area and who:

- are employed or have been offered a job in the area
- have a special social, health or disability reason for being re-housed
- wish to move near a relative or carer
- live under the threat of harassment or domestic violence

### 5. Outwith the District Group

Applicants who live outside East Ayrshire and do not meet the qualifying criteria as above which is contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 will be placed in this group.

## Allocating Houses

When allocating empty houses each of the partner landlords will use Lettings Plans which identify the number of lets they aim to allocate to each group. The number of lets made to each group will vary between the SEARCH landlords.

## Your application - what you need to know

### Suspending your application

If you are aged 16 or over you have the right to be on a housing register but we can suspend your application in certain circumstances.

### We will suspend your application:

- if you have tenancy debt including current and former rent arrears, rechargeable repairs and legal fees for court action which is over the value of one month's rent and you have not made an arrangement to pay or have not fulfilled an agreement to pay
- for serious anti-social behaviour
- if you have requested your application to be deferred
- if you are in the armed forces or are a tied tenant and not able to occupy any tenancy as your main home
- if we have been unable to contact you and we have started the lost contact process
- If you provide us with false information
- If you refuse 2 offers of housing

We will contact you if your application is suspended, and we will explain the reasons behind your suspension and what you need to do to remove the suspension.

## Cancelling your application

Your application will only be cancelled:

- if you ask us to
- if we lose contact with you
- if you have been re-housed either by us or through a Nomination Agreement with one of our partners.
- if you do not respond to an annual review of your application

If your application has been cancelled because we have been unable to contact you it may be reinstated if you can provide a good reason why you didn't respond on time.

Applicants are entitled to appeal to the Sheriff Court if at the point you submit the application we impose a minimum period before offers of housing can be made. In respect of other suspensions, applicants may use our internal appeal process (see page 9 for further information).

# The Points System

We will award points depending on the situation of the entire household living within a property.

<b>Overcrowding</b>	<b>15 points</b>								
<p><i>You will be awarded 15 points for each bedroom lacking. For the purpose of assessment, points will be calculated on the following rules:</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">Single Person</td> <td>Own bedroom</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">Couple</td> <td>Own bedroom</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">2 children under 8</td> <td>Can share a bedroom</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">Children over 8</td> <td>Own bedroom</td> </tr> </table>		Single Person	Own bedroom	Couple	Own bedroom	2 children under 8	Can share a bedroom	Children over 8	Own bedroom
Single Person	Own bedroom								
Couple	Own bedroom								
2 children under 8	Can share a bedroom								
Children over 8	Own bedroom								
<b>Under-occupation</b>	<b>15 points</b>								
<p><i>If you are a tenant of the social rented sector i.e. you live in a house owned by a Local Authority or a Registered Social Landlord and you wish to move to smaller accommodation, you will be awarded 15 points for each bedroom you are under-occupying.</i></p>									
<b>Health &amp; Disability</b>	<b>15 to 30 points</b>								
<p><i>Points may be awarded based on an assessment of your needs carried out by a Housing Occupational Therapist. Further information can be found on page 8 of this booklet and within the Health and Disability Application Form available from your local housing office.</i></p>									
<b>Care and Support</b>	<b>15 points</b>								
<p><i>Care and Support points may be awarded to applicants who require a move of property to allow them to either provide or receive care and support from a relative or Carer. Additional information can be found on page 8 of this booklet and within the Care and Support Application Form available from your local housing office.</i></p>									
<b>Sharing</b>	<b>6 to 8 points</b>								
<p><i>Depending on your circumstances, if you share a bathroom, kitchen or both, with others who are not members of your household.</i></p>									

<b>Residence &amp; Contact</b>	<b>7 points</b>
<i>If you have overnight residence and contact with any children up to and including 3 nights each week and in doing so are in an overcrowded situation.</i>	
<b>Below Tolerable Standard</b>	<b>25 points</b>
<i>If your house has been declared as below a suitable standard by a representative from your Local Authority.</i>	
<b>No Fixed Abode</b>	<b>5 points</b>
<i>If you are unable to provide us with an address where you stay. Please note that if you state that you are no fixed abode you will only be entitled to 5 points and will not receive any other points.</i>	
<b>Extenuating Circumstances</b>	<b>up to 75 points</b>
<i>If you have a severe and urgent housing need then your case may be referred to Senior SEARCH Managers for consideration for additional points.</i>	

# What size of house can I apply for?

Household Size	Bedsit	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
Single Person	■	■	■		
Couple		■	■		
Family with 1 child regardless of age			■		
Family with 2 children both under 8			■		
Family with 2 children if either is aged 8 or over				■	
Family with 3 children all under 8				■	
Family with 3 children and 1 is over 8				■	
Family with 3 children and 2 are over 8				■	■
Family with 3 children all of whom are over 8				■	■
Family with 4 children regardless of age				■	■
Any larger size family					■

In certain circumstances, it may be possible to vary the size of house you can have.

*Please contact your local housing office for details*

# Additional Information

## Health and Disability

If you need to move because of your health or a disability then you will need to complete a separate Health and Disability Application Form which is available from your local housing office.

## Care and Support

If you need to move to provide or receive care and support either to or from a relative or carer then you may be entitled to additional points. You will need to complete a separate Care and Support Application Form which is available from your local housing office.

## Housing for Older People

If you wish to be considered for housing which is designated specifically for older people you will need to complete an application for Housing for Older People which is available from your local housing office.

*Please note that applications for Health and Disability, Care and Support and Housing for Older People will be assessed by our 'in house' Housing Occupational Therapists within 15 days of receipt. Further information is contained within the relevant Application Form.*

## Nomination Agreements

East Ayrshire Council has Nomination Agreements in place with Registered Social Landlords who have not signed up to the common policy and you may be nominated for housing with landlords who operate within the area.

## Mutual Exchanges

If you are currently a tenant of a Registered Social Landlord or the Council you can apply to exchange your home with another tenant. You must get written permission from your landlord before you move house.

The Council operates a Mutual Exchange Forum and tenants of the social rented sector in East Ayrshire can register their details. The forum is designed to assist tenants in finding a suitable person to exchange with and is available at: [www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/mutualexchangeforum](http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/mutualexchangeforum)

If you find someone to exchange with you should complete a mutual exchange application form, which is available from your local housing office. You will not be allowed to exchange homes if either party will worsen their housing conditions as a result of the exchange.

## What happens next?

When your application has been processed you will be notified of which Group you have been placed in and the number of points you have been awarded. Please check these carefully and get in touch with us and tell us if you think any of the details are wrong.

## Changes to your Housing or Personal Circumstances

You must tell us immediately if there are any changes in your circumstances, e.g. if you move address, or, there are changes to the number or circumstances of any people who are to be re-housed with you.

## Annual Review

We will write to you once a year to confirm that your circumstances have not changed and that you are still interested in housing. If you do not return your review form within the required timescale then your housing application may be cancelled.

## Offer of Housing

When your housing application nears the top of your Group we will contact you again to verify your circumstances to make sure that your points are correct and that your circumstances have not changed, you may be visited so that we can verify this. If you are an existing tenant of one of the SEARCH partners we will carry out an inspection of your property to make sure that you have maintained your tenancy in a satisfactory manner.

We will be in touch with you again when you are matched for a property of the size and type requested within your application to offer you the property and find out if you are interested in viewing it. During this process you will not be considered for any other properties that may become available.

## Refusal of Properties

Applicant placed on the Waiting, Transfer and Outwith the District Group who refuse 2 offers of housing from any of the SEARCH partners will have their application suspended for a period of 3 months. You will not be considered for any other properties during this time.

Applicants placed on the Homeless and Strategic Needs Groups who refuse 2 offers of housing from any of the SEARCH partners will be removed from these groups and placed on one of the other Groups most appropriate to their circumstances at the time. The status of the application on the housing list i.e active or suspended will be determined in accordance with the framework of the Common Allocation Policy.

## Appeals and Complaints

### Right of Appeal

You may appeal decisions concerning the policy. For example, you may appeal if you consider that points are not awarded accurately or if you wish to appeal a decision to suspend your application. We have established a common appeals system that applies to all the partner landlords. There are two stages to this appeal process as follows:

**Stage 1** - An appeal can be made either in writing, or verbally, to a designated officer within 28 days of the decision to the organisation who made the decision. We will respond to your appeal within 10 working days.

**Stage 2** - If you remain dissatisfied with the decision, a written appeal can then be lodged within 28 days of the decision with another more senior officer within that organisation. Assistance will be provided with a written appeal if required. We will respond within 15 working days.

### You Have A Right to Complain

If you think you have suffered injustice or hardship as a result of maladministration, service failure or other action by East Ayrshire Council. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (THE OMBUDSMAN) may investigate your complaint.

## Who Can Complain?

You may complain in person or you may authorise in writing someone to complain on your behalf (e.g. MSP, local Councillor or anyone you consider suitable).

## When Can You Complain?

A complaint must be made within 12 months from the date after you became aware of the problem. Your complaint may be considered after that period if there are special circumstances for the delay - THE OMBUDSMAN will advise you.

## How to Complain

You can complain in writing, or by e-mail.

THE OMBUDSMAN can accept telephone complaints in special circumstances (if the complainant has difficulty reading and writing or there is exceptional urgency).

Your complaint should be sent to:

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman  
4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS  
Tel: 0870 011 5378 Fax: 0870 011 5379  
Email: [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk)  
Website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk)

## Appeal to the Sheriff Court

If we notify you that your housing application has been suspended for a specific period of time, you have a right of appeal to the Sheriff Court. You have 21 days from the date of the decision and any appeal to a Sheriff should run consecutively with the SEARCH appeal process which is outlined above. You should seek independent legal advice on this matter

# SEARCH Landlords Contact Details

## Area Housing Offices

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### **Northwest Area Team**

North West Kilmarnock Area Centre  
Western Road, KILMARNOCK, KA3 1NQ  
Tel: 01563 555 670

**Areas Covered:** *Altonhill, Bonnyton, Dunlop, Fenwick, Kilmaurs, Knockinlaw, Longpark, Lugton, Onthank, Stewarton, Waterside.*

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### **Kilmarnock Central and South Area Team**

Council Offices, John Dickie Street  
KILMARNOCK, KA1 1HW  
Tel: 01563 576618 & 576 620

**Areas Covered:** *Bellfield, Crosshouse, Gatehead, Knockentiber, London Road, New Farm Loch, Riccarton East, Riccarton West, Scott Road, Shortlees, Town Centre, Woodstock.*

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### **Irvine Valley and Ballochmyle Area Team**

Council Offices, John Dickie Street,  
KILMARNOCK, KA1 1HW  
Tel: 01563 554664 & 554653

**Areas Covered:** *Catrine, Crookedholm, Darvel, Galston, Hurlford, Mauchline, Moscow, Newmilns, Priestland, Sorn.*

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### **Cumnock and Doon Valley Area Team**

1 Greenholm Road  
CUMNOCK KA18 1LH  
Tel: 01290 427868 or 427867

**Areas Covered:** *Auchinleck, Cumnock, Dalmellington, Dalrymple, Drongan, Drumsmedden, Hayhill, Hollybush, Logan, Muirkirk, New Cumnock, Ochiltree, Patna, Rankinston and Skares.*

## SEARCH Partner Landlords

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### **Atrium Homes**

14 Central Avenue  
KILMARNOCK, KA1 4PS  
Tel: 01563 528 816

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### **Cunninghame Housing Association**

42 Campbeltown Drive,  
KILMARNOCK, KA3 1JX  
Tel: 01294 607 550

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### **Riverside Scotland**

44-46 Bank Street  
Irvine, KA12 0LP  
Tel: 0345 112 6600.

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### **Shire Housing Association**

Netherthird House, Netherthird,  
CUMNOCK KA18 3DB  
Tel: 01290 421 130  
*Mixed family housing.*

# Other Housing providers in East Ayrshire

In addition to the SEARCH Landlords there are a number of other housing providers operating in East Ayrshire. The following is a list of housing associations, some of which take nominations from the Council and some that have their own waiting lists. Further details of specific developments may be obtained from your Local Housing Office.

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## Ayrshire Housing

119 Main Street  
AYR KA8 8BX

Tel: 01292 880 120

*Mixed development of general needs housing and housing for those with disabilities.*

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## Bield Housing Association

Craighall Business Park,  
7 Eagle Street, GLASGOW, G4 9XA

Tel: 0141 270 7200

*Supported accommodation for older people.*

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## Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association

Pavillion 5 (Ground Floor)  
Watermark Business Park  
345 Govan Road, Glasgow, G51 2SE

Tel: 0141 553 6300

*Supported accommodation for older people.*

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## Horizon Housing Association

Leving House, Fairbairn Place,  
Kirkton North, LIVINGSTON, EH54 6TN

Tel: 0330 303 0089

*Mixed developments of family housing and housing for those with physical disabilities and for tenants requiring extra support.*

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## Key Housing Association

The Square, 70 Renton Street  
GLASGOW, G4 0HT

Tel: 0141 342 1890

*Mixed developments of family housing and flats for people with learning disabilities.*

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## Link Housing Association

Watling House  
Callendar Business Park  
FALKIRK FK1 1XR

Tel: 08451 400 100

*Mixed Family Housing.*

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## Margaret Blackwood Housing Association

1 Belses Gardens  
Cardonald  
GLASGOW, G52 2DY

Tel: 0141 883 4477

*Mixed developments of family housing with housing for people with disabilities.*

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## Trust Housing Association

1st Floor Pavillion 5  
Watermark Business Park  
345 Govan Road, G51 2SE

Tel: 0131 444 1200

*Supported accommodation for older people.*

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## West of Scotland Housing Association

40 Barrowfield Drive  
GLASGOW, G40 3QH.

Tel: 0141 550 5600

*General needs housing, supported accommodation for older people and amenity housing.*

## East Ayrshire Council Housing Offices

### North West Kilmarnock

Western Road  
KILMARNOCK, KA3 1NQ  
Tel: 01563 555 670

### Kilmarnock Central and South

Council Offices  
John Dickie Street  
KILMARNOCK, KA1 1BY  
Tel: 01563 576 618

### Irvine Valley and Ballochmyle

Council Offices  
John Dickie Street  
KILMARNOCK, KA1 1BY  
Tel: 01563 554 664 or 554 653

### Cumnock

Rothesay House, 1 Greenholm Road  
CUMNOCK, KA18 1LH  
Tel: 01290 427 727 or 01290 427 728

### Doon Valley

Dalmellington Area Centre, 33 Main Street  
DAMLELLINGTON, KA6 7QL  
Tel: 01292 552 887

## SEARCH Partner Landlords

### Atrium Homes

14 Central Avenue, Shortlees  
KILMARNOCK, KA1 4PS  
Tel: 01563 528 816

### Cunninghame Housing Association

42 Campbeltown Drive  
KILMARNOCK, KA3 1JX  
Tel: 01294 607 550

### Riverside Scotland

44-46 Bank Street  
IRVINE, KA12 0LP  
Tel: 0345 112 6600

### Shire Housing Association

Netherthird House  
Netherthird  
CUMNOCK, KA18 3DB  
Tel: 01290 421 130