

Your guide to applying for a home through Durham Key Options



Working together to deliver quality homes and a better environment for all

Our vision

“Working together to deliver quality homes and a better environment for all”

To achieve this we will be:

- **P**roviding quality homes
- **R**egenerating estates and communities
- **I**nvolving customers to improve services
- **D**elivering excellent services to all
- **E**mployer of choice and financially stable

Introduction

This leaflet explains the Durham Key Options choice-based letting service, which is the way we let our homes.



Homes from other organisations, such as housing associations and private landlords, are also let through the Durham Key Options letting service.

We aim to:

- ensure we let our homes to those who need them the most
- offer you choice about where you live
- be easy to understand.

If you would like to see a full copy of the Durham Key Options lettings policy, with full details of this service, visit our website www.eastdurhamhomes.co.uk or contact us (our details are at the back).

Durham Key Options is a partnership between Durham County Council (including Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Teesdale areas) and:

- Dale and Valley Homes
- Derwentside Homes
- East Durham Homes
- Sedgefield Borough Homes
- Teesdale Housing Association.



Providing services fairly



We aim to ensure that all our customers can use our services regardless of age, race, gender, disability, religion or sexuality.

We will do this by training our staff to understand people's different needs, and will monitor our services to make sure they are provided fairly to everyone.

Our 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
- use plain English
- take into account any special needs you may have
- provide you with support if you need it
- take calls using Typetalk
- 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 you can't get to our office
- provide you with a sign-language service if you need it.

About applying for a home through Durham Key Options

How does Durham Key Options letting service work?

1. You need to complete an application form. You must do this to be able to apply for a home.
2. We will assess your application within 10 working days after you have given us all the information we need.
3. Each week we advertise any available homes.
4. If you see a home you like, you can apply for it. We call this bidding. We will tell you what type of applicant is suitable for the home and which application band will be given preference (see page 6). We will also tell you when the bidding for the advertised home will close.
5. You can bid for as many homes as you like each week.
6. We will offer the home to the person in that band who has waited the longest.
7. If we don't contact you within one week of the closing date, then you have been unsuccessful. You can bid for another home next time.
8. We publish details of how we let previously advertised homes at our customer outlets and on the website www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk. For example, this may include how long the successful applicant had been waiting and what application group they were in.



How do I apply?

1. You will need to complete an application form. You can get this from our customer outlets, by contacting us, or you can download an application form from our website. You can also complete an online application form on the Durham Key Options website www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk. You can only apply for a home if you have completed this form and we have accepted your application.



2. We will give you an application reference number and a PIN (personal identification number). These will be your personal numbers, so please keep them in a safe place. You will need to quote these numbers when you log on to the website and when you make a bid for a home.

3. When you apply you will need to provide proof of identity for you and any joint applicant. You must show us one kind of proof for each of the items in the left-hand column:

<p>Identity/date of birth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate, or • Passport, or • Driving licence.
<p>Current address</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility bill (from within the last six months), or • Bank statement (from within the last six months), or • If you live at home, are a lodger or in residential accommodation, we may accept a letter from the person running the home, which says you live there.
<p>National insurance number</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI card, or • Payslip, or • P45/P60, or • Benefit book.

Who can apply?

Anyone can apply to join Durham Key Options for housing; however, not everyone will be eligible. We will consider all applications from people aged 16 years and over.



How will you assess my application?

We must give priority to people who are in most housing need. We cannot let our homes on a first-come, first-served basis.

We place applicants into one of 6 bands according to their needs and entitlement.

Within bands A, B and C below, we give priority to applicants in the ‘+’ category. For example, we give applicants in band A+ priority over those in band A.

Band	Qualifying criteria
Band A+ High priority need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regeneration schemes in County Durham (applicants who are losing their property permanently as a result of demolition/disposal in a designated regeneration area).
Band A High priority need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urgent medical reasons. Supply and demand transfers (tenants who are under-occupying their property may be placed in Band A to help them move more quickly to release their current property). <p>Urgent medical reasons have priority over supply and demand transfers.</p>
Band B+ Multiple housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants we accept as homeless under law and who we have a full duty to house under homelessness law because of violence or threat of violence. <p>Or you must have one of the following needs and at least one need from the list for Band B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who have a high medical need to move. Applicants overcrowded by at least 2 bedrooms.
Band B Multiple housing need	<p>Applicants with 2 or more housing needs from the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants we have accepted as homeless under law and who we have a full duty to house under homelessness law. Applicants who are in housing that is overcrowded by at least one bedroom or that is unsanitary, or otherwise unsatisfactory. Applicants who need to move because of medical or welfare reasons in line with the framework for medical priority in appendix 2 of the lettings policy. Applicants who need to move to a particular area to avoid hardship.

<p>Band C+ Single housing need</p>	<p>Applicants in one of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who need to move because of high medical need (see appendix 2 of the lettings policy). • Applicants overcrowded by at least 2 bedrooms. • Applicants we accept as homeless under law and who we have a full duty to house under homelessness law but who do not have multiple housing needs. • Applicants living in intensive supported housing whose support plan states they will be able to successfully move into an independent tenancy. • People leaving care.
<p>Band C Single housing need</p>	<p>Applicants who are in one of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who are in housing that is overcrowded by at least one bedroom or that is unsanitary or otherwise unsatisfactory. • Applicants who need to move because of medical or welfare reasons in line with the framework for medical priority in appendix 2 of the lettings policy. • Applicants who need to move to a particular area to avoid hardship. • Applicants who are homeless but who we do not have a legal duty to house.
<p>Band D General housing need</p>	<p>Applicants who have a housing need that does not put them in one of the preference groups mentioned in bands A, B and C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants leaving the armed forces who are not homeless under law and have served at least 3 years, or who have been discharged for medical reasons. • Applicants wishing to live independently and who have no other housing need. • Applicants needing larger accommodation (outside the overcrowding criteria) and who have no other housing need. • Relationship breakdown with no other housing need. • Applicants threatened with homelessness within 3 months, to prevent actual homelessness.
<p>Band E No housing need</p>	<p>Applicants who are adequately housed and have no housing need.</p>
<p>Band F Reduced priority</p>	<p>Applicants whose housing priority has been reduced because of rent arrears (not caused by exceptional hardship) or unacceptable behaviour.</p>



Can you refuse my application or reduce my priority?

Yes. The law does not allow us to offer homes to the following groups of people:

- Anyone who is subject to immigration control
- Anyone who is not regularly and normally resident in the European common travel area
- EU nationals required to leave the UK.

We may also refuse applications from people who have behaved in an unacceptable way. Unacceptable behaviour may include:

- violence, including domestic violence
- drug-dealing
- racial harassment
- noise nuisance
- intimidation
- rent arrears.

If you do not accept my application, can I ask you to reconsider?

Yes. If we don't accept your application, we will write to tell you why. You can then ask us to review our decision within 21 days.

A panel will deal with your review. We will let you know their decision within 10 days.

If you are still unhappy about this decision, you can ask the Council to review it.

You or your representative can attend the meeting where this happens.

Can I ask for a review of any other decisions?

Yes, you can ask for a review if we:

- reduce your priority because of unacceptable behaviour, or
- move you into a lower priority band.

We will always tell you about your right to ask for a review.



Do I need references?

Yes. If you are or have been a tenant, we will ask your landlord(s) if you have kept to your tenancy conditions by, for example, paying your rent and not behaving in an anti-social way.

You must tell us about all the tenancies you have held and any criminal convictions. If you don't, this may slow down your application, and we may even cancel it.

Once we have received satisfactory references from your landlord(s), you can start bidding for a home.

Where can I find out about homes that are available?

We will advertise all available homes each week:

- in the free Durham Key Options property paper, available from a number of places across the area
- on the Durham Key Options website, www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk
- at our customer outlets.

What if I need help?

If you need help applying through the Durham Key Options letting service or making a bid for a home, we can help you.

Our staff will:

- 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 will I know which homes are suitable for me?

Our adverts will tell you which homes you may bid for.

The advert may say if there is a minimum age limit or household size.

We will also tell you how many bedrooms there are, how much the rent is, and other useful information, for example the likely heating costs or council tax band.

The following tables give a rough idea of which homes you can bid for:

Property type	Household type
Bedsit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single person
1-bedroom flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single person or couple
1-bedroom flat for older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 60+ • Single applicant with a medical condition (we may reduce the age limit if demand is low)
2-bedroom flat or maisonette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single person/single person or couple with a child
2-bedroom flat for older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples where one or both are aged 60+ • Couples where one or both has a medical condition (we may reduce the age limit if demand is low)
2-bedroom house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples • 1 or 2 adults and 1 child • 1 or 2 adults with 2 children of different sex under 10 • 1 or 2 adults with 2 children of the same sex
3-bedroom house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 or 2 adults with 2 children regardless of age • 1 or 2 adults with 3 children

How will I know which homes are suitable for me?

4-bedroom house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 or 2 adults with at least 4 children
1-bedroom bungalow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 60+ • Single applicants with a medical condition where ground-floor accommodation is needed (We may reduce the age limit if demand is low)
2-bedroom bungalow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair users • Couples where one or both have a medical condition and need ground-floor accommodation • Couples where one or both are aged 60+ • Single applicants with a dependant whose medical condition means they need ground-floor accommodation • Single applicants with a live-in carer (for a certain number of nights per week)
3-bedroom bungalow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants with a medical condition who need ground-floor accommodation and have children of different sex aged 10 and above • Applicants who need a carer (for a certain number of nights per week) and have 1 or more children
Sheltered housing units: Donnini House – Easington Primrose Court – Blackhall Robinson House – Horden Jubilee Centre – Seaham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants with a support need, subject to assessment and the completion of a support plan • We will use our discretion if few people want this kind of property



How do I bid for a home?

You can bid for as many homes as you like each week. You only need to make one bid on each home.

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

To find out more, please see our leaflet, 'Your guide to bidding for a home through Durham Key Options'.

You can make bids:

- on our website
- by phone
- at any of our offices
- by text
- by assisted bidding (only for applicants with additional support needs).



How do I bid for a home?

How much time do I have to make a bid?

We advertise our homes each week. The advert will give a closing date, and you will need to apply before this date.

What will happen to my bid?

Once the deadlines for bids have passed, the following will happen:

1. We will sort the bids for each home into order according to the priority band and earliest date of application.
2. If you make more than one bid in the same week and you are top of the list for more than one property, we will ask you which property you prefer.
3. Once we have made you an offer, we will not consider your bids for any other homes until you have decided whether or not to accept that offer.

When will I know if my bid has been successful?

If your bid is successful, we will contact you as soon as possible after the close of bidding. This is usually within 24 hours. If we don't contact you within a week, you have not been successful this time. Keep bidding on homes you like until we contact you with an offer.

What are my chances of success?

As there are many more bidders than homes available, you may have to wait some time before we make you an offer.

You can get an idea of how long you may have to wait by checking the details of the successful bidders, which we publish on the Durham Key Options website and at our customer outlets.



We'll also publish information on properties we have advertised and the average number of bids we have received for the property type and area.

We'll include this information in Durham Key Options application packs, in our customer outlets, on our website, and in the letter we send you about your band and reference number. We'll update this information monthly.

This will help you see where most properties are becoming available and where the highest demand for properties is.

Other housing options

We can give you advice and help on other housing options. This includes information on housing associations and private landlords.

We also advertise homes on behalf of housing associations and private landlords.

If you would like free and independent advice on your housing rights, you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau. They can advise you on many problems, particularly those affecting private and housing association tenants and owner-occupiers – including possession proceedings, repairs, housing benefit, harassment and illegal eviction.

Our Durham Key Options letting service – our promise to you

We are committed to providing you with excellent services.

We will regularly review our standards and say how far we have met them. This will help us ensure we continue to provide high-quality services.

We will improve our services where we do not meet our standards.

We will:

- explain clearly how we let our homes
- assess your application within 10 working days, after you have given us all the information we need
- tell you how to appeal if you disagree with our decision
- let you know the result of your appeal within 10 working days
- advertise our available homes every week
- refer you to the Council within one working day, and in emergency cases immediately, if you tell us you are homeless
- make offers over the phone within one working day of the close of bidding
- contact you once every year to check if you still need a home
- give you one working day after you have viewed a home to decide if you want to accept it
- arrange a convenient appointment with you to sign your new tenancy agreement
- give you good information and advice about your new home, the services we offer and how to get involved in what we do.



Spending money wisely



We aim to get the most out of the money we have available for our customers.

You can help us by:

- providing all the information needed when applying for a property
- keeping any appointments we make with you
- paying your rent on time
- leaving your home in good condition.

Improving our service



We will always try to provide the best services that we can, so we make sure we learn from any complaints and compliments.

If you are not satisfied with our service, please let us know and we will try to sort out your complaint immediately. Our leaflet 'Your guide to making complaints, compliments or suggestions' gives you further details of how to complain.


We also welcome your comments and suggestions and regularly ask for your views on our services.

Our Customer Service Panel will consider suggestions to improve services for customers. If we use your suggestion we will give you £100 in high-street shopping vouchers. For more information please see our leaflet 'Your guide to making complaints, compliments or suggestions'.



For more information, please contact us at:

 East Durham Homes
2 Meridian Court
Whitehouse Business Park
Peterlee
County Durham
SR8 2RQ

 Freephone: 0800 032 0835

 Direct dial: 0191 518 5497

You can use this low-cost, direct-dial number from your mobile phone to avoid premium charges, which your network provider may charge for calling freephone numbers.

 Text: 'enquiry' to 07786 207 745

 Tynetalk: 18001 then the telephone number you require

 Fax: 0191 518 5349

 Email: enquiry@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk

 Website: www.eastdurhamhomes.co.uk

Our contact centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 12 noon on Saturday.

Please note: for emergencies outside normal office hours, you can contact us on 0800 032 0835.

Our contact centre can deal with most of your enquiries. If you prefer, you can visit us at one of our customer outlets in Peterlee or Murton, or if necessary our head office.

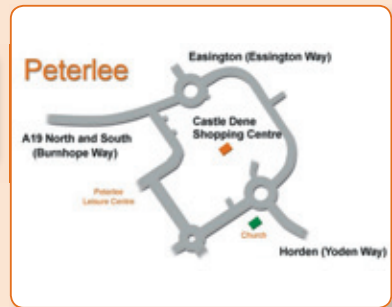
How to find us:

Peterlee Customer Outlet

29 Yoden Way
Castle Dene Shopping Centre
Peterlee
SR8 1AL



Opening times:
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – 8.30am to 5pm
Wednesday – 10am to 5pm
Friday – 8.30am to 4.30pm
Saturday – 9am to 12 noon

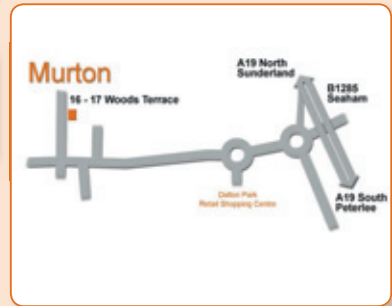


Murton Customer Outlet

16-17 Woods Terrace
Murton
SR7 9AD



Opening times:
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – 8.30am to 5pm
Wednesday – 10am to 5pm
Friday – 8.30am to 4.30pm



Head Office

2 Meridian Court
Whitehouse Business Park
Peterlee
SR8 2RQ



Opening times:
Monday to Thursday – 8.30am to 5pm
Friday – 8.30am to 4.30pm



Remember – we can also arrange to visit you at home if you can't get to one of our offices.

All our publications 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 visits if required. Please contact us on 0800 032 0835.

This leaflet contains information about applying for a home through Durham Key Options. If you would like us to provide this information in your first language, or you would like us to provide a translator and meet with you to discuss its contents, please contact us on 0800 032 0835. We can also provide same-gender interviews and home visits when required.

Arabic تحتوي هذه النشرة على معلومات حول التقدم بطلب للحصول على منزل عن طريق دور هام كي أوبشونز Durham Key Options. إذا أردت أن نقدم لك هذه المعلومات بلغتك الأولى، أو أردت أن نوفر مترجماً ونقابلك من أجل مناقشة محتويات هذه النشرة، يرجى الاتصال بنا على الهاتف رقم 0800 032 0835. كما يمكننا أيضاً أن نعد مقابلات من نفس النوع وزيارات منزلية عندما يتطلب الأمر.

Bengali এই পুস্তিকাটিতে ডারহাম কী অপশনস এর মাধ্যমে একটি বাড়ির জন্য আবেদন করার ব্যাপারে তথ্যাবলী রয়েছে। আপনি যদি চান যে, আমরা এই তথ্যাবলীকে আপনার ভাষায় প্রদান করি বা আমরা একজন অনুবাদকের ব্যবস্থা প্রদান করি ও আপনার সাথে এর বিষয়সূচী নিয়ে আলোচনার জন্য সাক্ষাৎ করি, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে 0800 032 0835 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন। এছাড়াও প্রয়োজন হলে, আমরা সমলিঙ্গের ব্যক্তি দ্বারা সাক্ষাৎকার ও বাড়িতে সাক্ষাৎকার ব্যবস্থা করতে পারি।

Chinese 本宣传册介绍如何通过达拉谟关键选房机构 (Durham Key Options) 申请住房。如果您希望我们用您的母语为您介绍这些信息，或者希望我们为您提供一名译员与您讨论本宣传册的内容，请拨打电话0800 032 0835联系我们。如果需要，我们还可以安排与您相同性别的工作人员与您面谈和上门拜访。

French Ce dépliant contient des informations pour l'aménagement d'une maison avec les options de Durham Key. Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans votre langue maternelle, si vous souhaitez un traducteur ou nous rencontrer pour discuter du contenu de ce dépliant, merci de nous contacter au 0800 032 0835. Nous pouvons également fournir le même genre d'interviews et de visite lorsque c'est nécessaire.

Hindi इस पत्रक में डरहम प्रमुख विकल्पों (Durham Key Options) के माध्यम से घर के लिए आवेदन करने के बारे में जानकारी शामिल है। अगर आप चाहते हैं कि हम यह जानकारी आपकी प्रथम भाषा में प्रदान करें, या आप चाहते हैं कि हम एक अनुवादक प्रदान करें और इसकी सामग्री पर चर्चा करने के लिए आपसे मिलें, तो कृपया हमसे 0800 032 0835 पर संपर्क करें। जरूरत होने पर हम समान लिंग साक्षात्कार और घर पर विज़िट भी प्रदान कर सकते हैं।

Polish Niniejsza ulotka zawiera informacje na temat składania wniosku mieszkaniowego poprzez program Durham Key Options. Jeśli chciałby Państwo, abyśmy zapewniili informacje w Państwa języku ojczystym lub pomoc tłumacza, z którym mogliby Państwo się spotkać, aby porozmawiać o treści ulotki, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem 0800 032 0835. Możemy również zapewnić Państwu rozmówcę tej samej płci lub wizyty domowe, jeśli to konieczne.

Punjabi ਇਸ ਖਿਤਾਬਚੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਡਰਹਮ ਕੀ ਐਪਸ਼ਨਜ਼ (Durham Key Options) ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਘਰ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਅਰਜ਼ੀ ਦੇਣ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਾਈਏ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇੱਕ ਅਨੁਵਾਦਕ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਾਈਏ ਜੋ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਮਿਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਖਿਤਾਬਚੇ ਵਿੱਚਲੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਟਾਂਦਰਾ ਕਰੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0800 032 0835 'ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। ਜਦੋਂ ਲੋੜ ਪਵੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਪੁਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਪੁਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਅਤੇ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਇੰਟਰਵਿਊਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੁੜਾਕਾਤਾਂ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

Urdu اس ورقچہ میں درہام کی آپشنز کے توسط سے گھر کے لئے درخواست دینے سے متعلق معلومات درج ہیں۔ اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں کہ ہم یہ معلومات آپ کو آپ کی مادری زبان میں مہیا کریں، یا چاہتے ہیں کہ آپ سے اس کے محتویات پر بات چیت کرنے کے لئے کسی ترجمان کا بندوبست کریں تو، براہ کرم ہم سے 0800 032 0835 پر رابطہ کریں۔ ہم بات چیت کے لئے آپ ہی کے جس کے افراد فراہم کر سکتے ہیں نیز اگر ضرورت پڑی تو آپ کے گھر کا دورہ بھی کر سکتے ہیں۔

Turkish Bu broşür Durham Key Options aracılığı ile bir ev başvurusunda bulunmak hakkında bilgiler içermektedir. Bu bilgileri size ana dilinizde sağlayamıyız, veya içeriğini görüşmek üzere bir tercüman ayarlamamızı isterseniz lütfen bizi 0800 032 0835 no'lu telefondan arayınız. Ayrıca gerektiğinde aynı cinsiyetten görüşmeler ve ev ziyaretleri de düzenleyebilemeyiz.

