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# Moving to Mulhouse

**Ted and Joan Doleman were amongst the first customers to move to Mulhouse Court, after downsizing from their three bedroom house in Norwich Road, Alumwell.**

This is not the first time that Ted, 88 and Joan, 84 have moved into a brand new property. Their previous home in Norwich Road had just been built by Walsall Council when they moved in with their two children back in 1950.

Joan says: 'The house and garden were just getting a bit too much to look after. We loved our house, but Ted was having trouble getting up and down the stairs. The apartment is a lot easier to get around and it is quieter here as all the residents are over 55. There is also a beautiful communal garden that is cared for by whg.'



## Number of homes let from 1st October 2007 to 31st March 2008

KEY	Color	Property Type
	Light Blue	Bungalows
	Yellow	Low rise flats (age 60+)
	Light Green	Low rise flats
	Dark Red	Multi-storey flats
	Pink	2 bedroom house/maisonette
	Orange	3+ bedroom house/maisonette
	Dark Blue	Bedsit

Aldridge & Brownhills Housing Trust - total homes let 177



Bloxwich Housing Trust- total homes let 178



Central Walsall Housing Trust- total homes let 174



Darlaston Housing Trust- total homes let 117



Willenhall Housing Trust- total homes let 144



# Shared ownership firsts



**whg's first shared ownership properties were successfully sold earlier in the year. But there is still one property, a two bed apartment at Beacon Wood in Leamore, available priced at just £51,250 for a 50% share. For further**

**details, and to find out about future shared ownership opportunities with whg, call Shirley Gooch on 0300 555 6666.**

Shared ownership is an ideal way for people who cannot afford a full mortgage to get onto the property ladder. It

means buying a stake (normally 50%) of a property while whg owns the other half. Rent is paid on the half that is not owned, until a time when you can afford to buy the remaining 50%. However, you do not have to buy the remaining share, and can increase your holding only when you can afford to. whg cannot sell the other share or do anything else with it.

Many people have already benefitted from the scheme, including 26-year-old Graeme Cook and 20-year-old Jodie Nightingale (pictured). They said: 'It's great having a sofa to ourselves instead of sharing with the rest of the family! We saw that whg had been advertising its shared-ownership properties and found the whole application and moving in process very straightforward.'

## Changing our advertising

**As you will be aware we advertise our properties in many different ways including on the internet and local newspapers, as well as in our property shops and offices.**

We are going to be developing ways of encouraging those who do not currently bid to make better use of our services. These plans include providing internet access at our Bridge Street property shop and in all of our offices over the next 12 months. In a recent survey of customers we discovered that your preferred way of finding a property was by visiting our property shop or one of our offices, and that a growing number of people are looking at our website.

The survey also identified that only 20% of applicants looked in the local papers for



information about whg homes available in any given week. This may be because not everyone receives the Chronicle or the Walsall Advertiser.

So we have listened to our customers and we will be changing the way we advertise in the newspaper. We will still advertise a selection of properties, but will be directing people towards our website [www.chooseandmove.co.uk](http://www.chooseandmove.co.uk), to our property shop or to one of our offices where details of all properties will be available (contact details are given on the back page of this newsletter).

If you have any comments about this change you can comment via our website [www.chooseandmove.co.uk](http://www.chooseandmove.co.uk) We are always interested in your views - if you do not have a computer at home you can use the terminals at our Brownhills and Willenhall offices.

## Registering with choose & move if you own your own home

whg is a registered charity which means that if you own your own home you can only register with choose & move if you meet the eligibility criteria that whg has set – contact details are given on the back page of this newsletter, so please get in touch if you need more information about this policy.

## Check it out

**– make sure you want the property and like the area before placing a bid.**



It is a good idea to visit the area at different times in the day or on a weekend to have a look around and make sure that you would be happy living there. If you bid for and refuse three properties in a 12 month period you will not be allowed to bid again for a year.

## Have you noticed?

Some customers told us that they had difficulty reading the text on our website, so you can now change the size of the text by clicking the text size button.

# HomeSwapper helps Debra



**A Willenhall customer has been the first to successfully undertake a mutual exchange with a Wolverhampton Homes customer through HomeSwapper.**

Debra Jones had been living in a whg property in Willenhall with her four children, and wanted to move into a home that offered more space for her growing family, which includes two children under the age of 18 months. At the beginning of the year Debra registered with HomeSwapper, a mutual exchange service which allows whg customers to swap homes with customers of other landlords, giving them a greater chance of finding a suitable property.

Within days almost 100 customers expressed their interest in swapping properties with her. After careful consideration of the properties and the areas they were in, Debra contacted four of them before choosing to exchange with a Wolverhampton Homes customer.

Debra said: 'The HomeSwapper scheme is brilliant; I was amazed when so many people were interested in swapping properties with me. I would definitely encourage anyone who wants or needs to move to join up.'

# Your questions answered

## **Q How do you decide which band a property will be in?**

**A** We have rules about which band we put a property in and we have different rules for different kinds of property. The band is not based on the popularity of the area.

Houses, for example, are given a band using a set formula. Low rise flats are also banded in the same way.

Ground floor flats are available to all bands but, because they are ideal for applicants with a medical need, preference is given to the Gold band. If we do not have any bids from applicants in the Gold band, then we look for bids from applicants in the Silver band and finally for bids from the Bronze band.

Bungalows and some flats are only available to applicants over the age of 60.

## **Q My circumstances have changed – do I have to let you know?**

**A** Yes – you should contact us as soon as possible. Most changes have to be reported in writing and you might have to fill out a new form or provide proof of the change.

This means that most changes cannot be dealt with through the online registration system but you can contact us by email at [chooseandmove.enquiries@whgrp.co.uk](mailto:chooseandmove.enquiries@whgrp.co.uk)

## **Q How do you decide which band I am in?**

**A** Details are given in the 'How to apply for a home' leaflet - ask for a copy at your local property shop or office. You can also download this leaflet from our website.

## **Q Can I find out how long I may have to wait for a property?**

**A** It is difficult for us to give accurate timescales because the waiting time depends on the type of property and the popularity of the area. The wait for a 3 bedroom house, for example, will probably be longer than the wait for a 2 bedroom flat. You can get some idea of the waiting time if you check the results published every week on the website and in our offices. These will tell you how many bids we received for each property, the band of the successful applicant, and their effective date.



**Q Where else can I go for housing advice?**

**A** Walsall Council offer a comprehensive housing advice and information service at: Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 XU, telephone 01922 653405 or email [housingadvice@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@walsall.gov.uk)

**Q Can you tell me how many people are in the Gold band, the Silver band and the Bronze band?**

**A** We can tell you how many people there are in each band, but the numbers change daily. For example at the 31st March 2008 there were:-  
341 applicants in the Gold Band  
4753 applicants in the Silver Band  
7940 applicants in the Bronze Band.

On 31st March 2008 we found that less than 20% of applicants in each of the bands had placed a bid in the previous 4 weeks.

**Q Can you tell me how many people bid for each property?**

**A** The number of bids we get for each property will vary and will be dependent on the band, area and type of property.

On average we receive:

- 100 bids for a 3 bedroom house in the most popular areas and an average of 70 bids for a 2 bedroom flat in the most popular areas.
- 20 bids for bungalows and flats reserved for applicants aged 60 or over. You can check the results on a specific property by visiting our website at – [chooseandmove@whgrp.co.uk](mailto:chooseandmove@whgrp.co.uk) or by calling into one of our offices. Contact details are given on the last page.

**Q If I move into a whg home can my pets come with me?**

**A** We usually allow a small dog, a cat or any other small domestic pet, but you must to check if you have a large dog and are thinking of moving into a flat. You must also ensure that your pet does not cause annoyance or nuisance to neighbours or cause damage to the property.

**Q What type of property can I bid for?**

**A** We decide which family size is most suited to each property. Generally, properties are advertised as available to specific groups. Check the second column below to find out what size and type of property you may bid for.



Type	Family Size
Bedsitter / studio flat	Single applicant
1 bedroom flat	Single applicant,couple
2 bedroom flat or maisonette	Single applicant,couple, families with 1 child, expectant families
3 bedroom flat or maisonette	Families with 1 or 2 children
2 bedroom house	Families -1 child or 2 children of same sex
3 bedroom house	Families - 2 or more children
3 bedroom parlour type house	Families - 3 or more children
4 or 5 bedroom house	Families with 3 or more children
Pensioner bungalow or flat	Single applicant or couple - aged over 60
Pensioner bedsitter	Single applicant - at least 60 years old

# New Faces



**If you have called into the choose & move offices you may have noticed some new faces. This is because the choose & move service is now delivered by three teams:**

**Team 1**, based at Blakenall Village, offer and let properties in Aldridge, Brownhills and Bloxwich

**Team 2**, based at King Street, Darlaston, offer and let properties in Central Walsall, Darlaston and Willenhall

**Team 3**, based at the property shop in Bridge Street Walsall and at Beechwood House, Willenhall, arrange the property adverts, promote the service and deal with enquiries sent via the website.

**Photo shows from left to right the Bridge Street team Heather Townsend, Emma Parkin, Gemma Breakewell and Chris Whitten.**

## Have we got it right?

Let us know straight away if you think that the information we have about you is incorrect. Our contact details are given on the back page.

## Local Information – what do you think?

When we advertise properties on our website we try to give information about the local area. However, we would be interested to know from you whether we are giving enough information or too much – please let us know what you think.

## Did you know?

That choose & move services in Willenhall are now being provided at our newly refurbished office at Beechwood House, New Road – this is just round the corner from the old shop and just across the road from Lidl.

## Bidding tips



**Tip 1** Applicants 40+ are reminded that they may be successful for properties restricted to their age group regardless of the band they are in. This is because the restriction on age means that there are fewer bids for these properties and they are sometimes offered to applicants in Silver and Bronze bands or to applicants who have not waited very long.

**Tip 2** General bidders need to make sure that they check that they are eligible before they place their bid.

# Mystery Shopping

Each year we employ customers to assess our services by using Mystery Shopping.



## What is Mystery Shopping?

Mystery shopping helps us to measure the effectiveness of services and identifies where further improvements are required.

Customers were asked to apply for housing with whg using our choose & move service by visiting our three choose & move offices. They were then asked to record their individual experiences.

Once the project was completed the exercise allowed us to compare customer experiences against our 'service standards' and highlighted any areas of the service that require improvement.

Our customers told us: -

- 97% were seen within 5 minutes of their arrival.
- 97% said that the office they

visited dealt with their enquiry.

- 80% said they understood how the banding system works.
- 75% said the type of property they could bid for had to be explained.
- 80% said they were told how to place a bid.
- 70% said they were told about bidding timescales.
- 80% said they were told where properties are advertised.
- 70% said that they felt the property adverts were clear and precise.

The exercise also provided us with some useful information

about what customers thought about the choose & move service. It also allowed plenty of opportunities for customers to comment about different aspects of the service, and we will be using this information to develop and improve the service in the future.

If you would like to become a mystery shopper and assist whg in improving its services please contact our Resident Engagement team on **0300 555 6666** and ask for Sarah Coke.

## Contact us

### Aldridge & Brownhills Housing Trust

13 Silver Court, High Street, Brownhills WS8 6HA

### Bloxwich Housing Trust

Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road,  
WS3 1LZ

### Central Walsall Housing Trust

Property Shop at 10-12 Bridge Street, Walsall, WS1 1EW

### Darlaston Housing Trust

45 King Street, Darlaston, WS10 8DE

### Willenhall Housing Trust

Beechwood House, 22 New Road,  
Willenhall, WV13 2BG

visit our website at

[www.chooseandmove.co.uk](http://www.chooseandmove.co.uk)

**Tel: 0300 555 6666**

[chooseandmove.enquiries@whgrp.co.uk](mailto:chooseandmove.enquiries@whgrp.co.uk)

### English

For interpretation, translation large print, Braille or audio formats, ask an English speaking friend to help you contact your local housing trust

### Bengali

ভাষান্তর, অনুবাদ, বড় হ্রস্ব, ব্রেইল কিংবা অডিও ফরম্যাটের জন্য, ইংরেজী বলতে পারেন আপনার এমন কোন বন্ধুকে আপনার স্থানীয় হাউজিং ট্রাস্টের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য সাহায্য করতে বলুন।

### Punjabi

ਵਿਆਖਿਆ, ਅਨੁਵਾਦ, ਵੱਡੇ ਫਿੰਟ, ਬ੍ਰੈਲ ਜਾਂ ਆਵਾਜ਼ੀ ਫਾਰਮੈਟਾਂ ਲਈ, ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਕੋਈ ਦੋਸਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਹੋ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰੇ।

### Gujarati

અર્થઘટન, ભાષાંતર, મોટી પ્રિન્ટ, બ્રેઈલ અથવા ઓડિયો ફોર્મેટ માટે, તમારા ઈંગ્લીશ બોલતા મિત્રને તમારા સ્થાનિક હાઉસિંગ ટ્રસ્ટનો સંપર્ક કરવા મદદ માટે કહો.

### Hindi

भाषांतरण, अनुवाद, बड़े फिंट, ब्रेल अथवा ऑडियो फॉर्मेटों के लिए, अंग्रेजी बोलने वाले किसी दोस्त से कहें कि वह आपकी स्थानीय हाउसिंग ट्रस्ट से संपर्क करने में आपकी मदद करे।

### Urdu

اشرح، ترجمہ، بڑے چھاپے، بریل یا آڈیو فارمیٹ کے لیے انگریزی بولنے والے کسی دوست سے دریافت کریں کہ وہ آپ کو مقامی ہاؤسنگ ٹرسٹ سے رابطہ کرنے میں آپ کی مدد کرے۔

### French

Pour toute demande d'interprétation, de traduction, ce document en gros caractères, en braille ou en format audio ; veuillez demander à l'une de vos relations parlant anglais de contacter le bureau local de l'association de gestion de votre logement.

### Turkish

Sözlü ya da yazılı tercümesini, ya da büyük puntolu a. körlere tabiiyle ya da sesli kayıt halinde edinmek için İngilizce bilen bir tanıdığınızdan bölgenizdeki konut vakfıyla temas kurmamıza yardımcı olmasını isteyin.