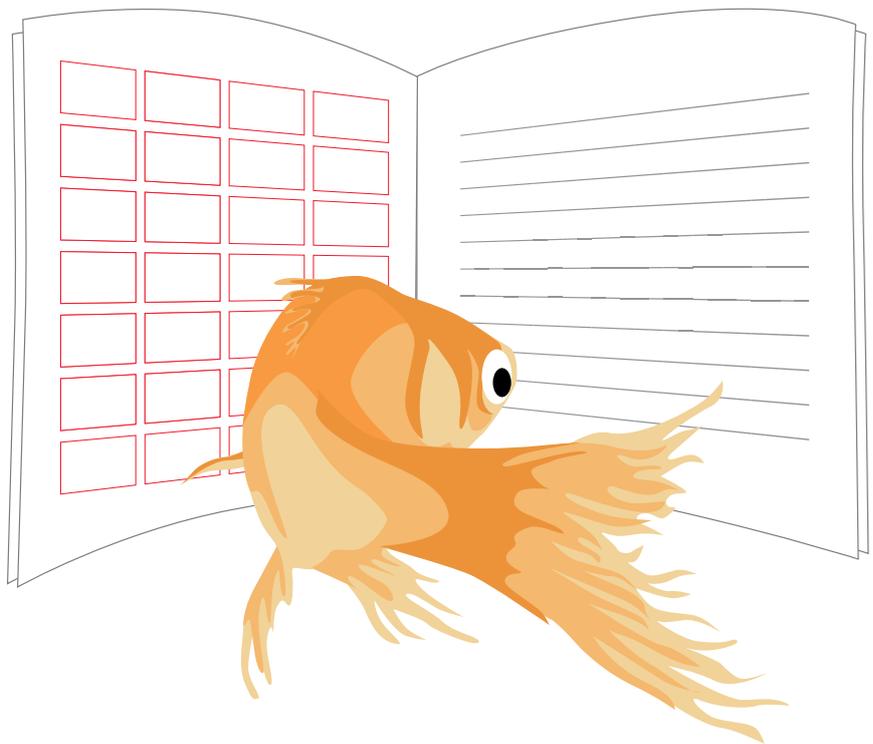




# Your Guide to **Under One Roof**





## Section 1 – Applying to Under One Roof

### What is Under One Roof?

Under One Roof is the service for letting rented homes in St Helens. It has been developed by St Helens Council, Helena Partnerships and all other housing associations who operate in St Helens. The service, known as 'choice based lettings', had been developed to give people more choice about where they want to live and to provide opportunities for people to apply for homes they want to live in.

### How does Under One Roof work?

Under One Roof is for people who want to rent a home from a housing association in St Helens. Many housing association properties are now let in this way. This means that if you want to rent a home from a housing association that is part of Under One Roof, you will need to join the scheme so that your need for housing can be assessed.

Helena Homes, Arena Homes and Riverside are full partners of Under One Roof and do not have their own housing waiting lists. Under One Roof also works with other housing associations in St Helens who have agreed to advertise some of their properties through Under One Roof but do have waiting lists of their own, which you can apply to directly. A list of the housing associations we work with is available on our website – [www.under-one-roof.org.uk](http://www.under-one-roof.org.uk) – or you can call us on **01744 63 63 63** for more information.

Homes that are available for rent in the Under One Roof scheme will be advertised every two weeks.



## What are the advantages of Under One Roof?

Under One Roof gives you a more active role in choosing a new home that is right for your circumstances. Under One Roof will advertise all available homes in a number of ways and when you are a member it is up to you to let us know which properties you are interested in. Each time we advertise you can make up to three bids for properties you are interested in.

- You can see which homes are available every two weeks, in local newspapers, local housing offices and on our website.
- You will have more choice about where you live.
- There is less wasted time offering an available home to someone who does not want it.
- The scheme is fair and transparent.
- The scheme is easy to understand and there is more information available about who is eligible for each property. This information is in the Allocations Policy, available on request.
- There are published service standards so you know what you can expect from Under One Roof.
- Our adverts in newspapers, websites and local housing offices will contain feedback on lettings to help you make better bids in the future.
- You will be given the support you need if you require extra help to find a suitable home. The Under One Roof team is a single point of contact for all enquiries, and they have all the information at their fingertips to provide an excellent service. You can call the team on **01744 63 63 63** or email them at **info@under-one-roof.org.uk**

## Who can join?

**If you are interested in becoming a member of Under One Roof you will need to complete an application form. There is no cost to join Under One Roof.**

On the application form we will ask you some questions about your current housing circumstances, for example whether you are homeless or living in a house that is too small, whether you have a medical need such as a physical disability, information about your financial circumstances, who else lives with you and the reasons you would like or need to move. We ask these questions to make sure that those in the greatest housing need are given priority.

## 16/17-year-old applicants

If you are 16 or 17 you can apply to Under One Roof but we don't usually make anybody a member of the scheme until they are 18. This means that you cannot be offered a home. There are some exceptional situations where these rules don't apply which are detailed in our Allocations Policy.

You can get a copy of this policy visiting our website, **www.under-one-roof.org.uk**, by calling the team on **01744 63 63 63** or by emailing **info@under-one-roof.org.uk**



## **Applicants aged under 24**

All applicants who are under the age of 24 and apply to Under One Roof will need to complete an interview before they are eligible to become an active member. This is to help you settle in as a new tenant, ensure you can access any support you may require and make sure you understand your responsibilities as a tenant.

## **Applicants from outside the St Helens Borough**

Applicants who don't live in St Helens at the moment but would like to join Under One Roof can do so in the usual way. The band you will be placed in will depend on your housing circumstances, as well as any local connection you might have to St Helens. By local connection we mean if you have lived in St Helens in the past five years, if you work in St Helens or if you have any other responsibilities, such as looking after a relative in St Helens. You must provide clear information about this.

For further details of the rules around local connection see the Allocations Policy.

## **Applicants with rent arrears or previous housing debts**

Applicants who owe landlords money at the time they apply to join Under One Roof, or have previous housing debts, may not be allowed to become a member of the scheme. This will depend on the level of debt and the circumstances of the applicant. For further details please see the section in the Allocations Policy on Eligibility.

Applicants with current rent arrears or previous housing debts who are allowed to become a member of Under One Roof will normally be put in a lower band than usual unless there are special circumstances. The reduction in banding will depend on the level of debt.

Further details can be found in the section of the Allocations Policy headed 'Current and Previous Housing Debts'.

## **Owner occupiers**

If you own your home now or have owned one in the past and have savings or equity over £16,000, you will be placed in Band D. However, there are some exceptional circumstances to this rule and these are set out in the Allocations Policy.

## **Getting help with your application form**

We want to make sure that everyone has equal access to Under One Roof.

Under One Roof has an Access and Support Officer who is available to offer assistance to people to access the Under One Roof Scheme. The Access and Support Officer can offer advice in completing the application form, accessing the advert, placing bids and answering any other queries. The Support Officer can also communicate with any support agencies or advocates you may have.

If you think you would benefit from this service please contact a member of the Under One Roof team on **01744 63 63 63**.

## Can a friend or relative help me if I'm struggling to complete my application?

Yes. You may already have a member of your family, or a friend, who you would like us to contact regarding your application. If so, you will need to tell us who they are on the application form and give us permission to speak to them.



## What happens after I have filled in my form?

This is what happens when we receive your application form:

- We check that you have provided all of the information we need including proof of identification, address etc. If you have then we will start processing your application and you will receive membership information within 10 working days of the receipt of all necessary proofs and information. If there is any missing information we will write to you.
- If you are a current tenant or have held a tenancy in the past we will write to your landlord for a reference. If you haven't held a tenancy before we will need you to provide two character references.
- If you have told us that you have been involved, or are still involved with any support agencies such as Social Services or the Probation Service, we will write to them for more information.

If you have included children on your application form, you need to provide proof of child benefit (e.g.) child tax credit award letters or proof of a formal legal arrangement in order for us to consider them in the application. Any proof provided will need to show your details and the children's names.

## What if my circumstances change?

You must tell us straight away if your circumstances change, for example a change of address, a new baby or a medical condition that might affect your need for housing. Also inform us if you no longer want to be an Under One Roof member. Failure to inform us of a change in your circumstances could result in an offer of accommodation being withdrawn.

## What if I have a medical need?

If you have told us that you need to move for medical reasons, your details will be passed to our Advice and Support Officers so that they can contact you to complete a medical assessment. The officers will discuss your circumstances and also look at any other options that may be available to you. The medical assessment will look at how your current housing situation is affecting your health and how a move would help to alleviate or reduce the problems you are experiencing. We will write to you to tell you the outcome of your medical assessment.



## What happens if I need specialist accommodation?

If you are over the age of 55 and have indicated that you are interested in accommodation for older people, we may ask you to provide further information about your circumstances. We would have to assess your needs before we could offer you any specialist accommodation.

## Banding

Once you have sent us your application form and supporting information, we will assess your application and place you within a band based on your current housing need. We will write to you and tell you which band you are in.

Banding has been developed to ensure that people with the biggest need for housing are given priority. We have developed four bands which are:

**Band A** Urgent housing need, for example those who have been assessed as being priority homeless, and therefore in priority need to get somewhere to live, whose circumstances are life-threatening or those whose current home is going to be demolished.



**Band B** Significant housing need, for example those ready to 'move on' from supported housing, those suffering from domestic violence or people with a number of housing needs.



**Band C** General housing need, for example those with a single housing need such as non-urgent medical needs.



**Band D** Applicants with no housing need who do not fall into the above categories or those who have been demoted in accordance with the Allocations Policy.



For further information regarding banding and how they are assessed, refer to the Allocations Policy.

## What if I'm not happy with the banding decision?

You can ask us to review the band you are in by contacting the Under One Roof team on **01744 63 63 63**.

You will need to tell us why you think that your banding is wrong and provide supporting evidence so we can look at your application again. We will notify you in writing of our decision within 10 working days.

## Under One Roof Service Standards

We will:

- Let you know who you are speaking to.
- Be prompt, polite, helpful and well-informed.
- Answer the phone within 5 rings.
- Respond to standard emails within 24 hours.
- Respond to standard letters within 5 working days.
- Respond to letters or emails about which band you are in within 10 working days.
- Provide an out-of-hours message service. We will return calls by the next working day.
- Process your application within 10 working days of receiving all of the required information.
- Process your change of circumstances information within 10 days of receiving the required information.
- Treat you in a fair and consistent manner, which will be sensitive to your situation and your need.
- Deliver all services in line with our Equality and Diversity policy.
- Keep any information we have as confidential in line with our Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.
- See you in your own home if you are unable to visit one of our local offices or access points.
- Give you full reasons in writing and the right to appeal if you cannot be placed on the membership list.
- Review every membership annually.
- Publish results of recent lettings on a regular basis.
- Welcome feedback about our services and give you every opportunity to comment.





## Section 2 – What happens when I become a member of Under One Roof?

You will receive a letter containing your Under One Roof membership number, the band you are in and details of the types of homes you can bid for.

It is important to keep your membership number safe as you will need to use it everytime you bid for homes or contact us.

### How will I know which homes are available?

We will advertise available homes every two weeks in the following places:

- On our website [www.under-one-roof.org.uk](http://www.under-one-roof.org.uk)
- In the property pages of the St Helens Star and St Helens Reporter
- Displayed in all Helena Homes offices and offices of Arena and Riverside (addresses on the back page of this leaflet)
- You will soon be able to see properties on an Under One Roof digital TV site, available through Virgin Media, Sky, Nintendo Wii and smart mobile phones.

### What does bidding mean?

Bidding is expressing an interest in a home that is advertised. Here is a quick bidding checklist:

- See a home you like
- Check it is in an area you want to live in
- Check it is the type of home you are able to bid for\*
- Place your bid

Remember, you can have up to three bids every two weeks but cannot bid for the same home more than once.

**Please note: you should only bid on properties you are genuinely interested in – you do not need to use all three bids.**

If you are interested in a home you see in our advert, which is in an area you want to live in and is the type of home you are eligible to bid for, then you are able to bid. You are advised to only bid for properties that you would like to live in. It is up to you to contact us to tell us which homes you are interested in.

### How do I bid?

When you have looked at what is available and chosen a home you are interested in, you can bid:

- Through the website at [www.under-one-roof.org.uk](http://www.under-one-roof.org.uk)
- By text on **07700 38 63 63**
- By calling the Under One Roof team on **01744 63 63 63**

You will need your Under One Roof membership number and the reference number of the home or homes you are interested in. You will need to quote both of these when you make a bid.

\*Please check the 'Bedroom Standards' section of the Allocations Policy for the types of properties you can bid for.



## Local Lettings Policies

From time to time we will advertise properties with slightly different lettings arrangements for that area. That means that there might be other things you need to tell us to qualify for a home in that area. For example we might ask that you show you have a local connection to a particular estate. When we advertise homes with Local Lettings Policies we will tell you which extra things you need to tell us about to qualify to bid.

## Higher Demand Neighbourhoods

Some parts of St Helens are more popular than others and we simply don't have enough homes in these areas to meet demand. In the most popular neighbourhoods, Under One Roof will reserve a quarter (one in four) of homes to members in Bands C and D with a local connection. We will show clearly on our adverts which homes are for these bands only.

If you are already a member of Under One Roof and have been moved from a higher band to either Bands C or D, or you do not have a local connection, you will not be able to bid for these homes.

## What happens to my bid?

The closing date for bids will always be shown in the advert. Make sure you place your bids in time or we won't be able to consider you for the home you want.

When the closing date has passed, we will look at all the people who have bid for each property. The successful person will be the one who meets the property criteria, is in the highest band and who has been on the waiting list in that band for the longest amount of time. Because we receive so many bids, we only contact the person who has made the successful bid for a particular home.

If you successfully bid on a property larger than your needs and you are in receipt of benefits, you may be worse off in the future due to proposed changes to benefits.

If you have told us any information that isn't true, or not told us about changes to your circumstances, then we can withdraw your offer.

## How do I know if I have been successful?

Only the successful applicant will be contacted. If you haven't heard from us by the time the next advert is published, then you will need to bid again.

Please note that once you have accepted a home with one of the housing associations through Under One Roof, you will no longer be a member of Under One Roof and your membership will be cancelled.

## Feedback on recent lettings

Information about recent lettings can be found on our website and in the feedback table in the advert. The table will show the property, the band that the successful person was in and how long they had been in that band for. This may help you when you are making future bids. We will only publish the results once a tenant has signed a tenancy agreement for a home.

# underoneroof



## Getting in touch

To find out more information about any of the issues in this leaflet, or for any other reason, you can contact Under One Roof in a number of ways:

Call

**01744 63 63 63**

or visit

**[www.under-one-roof.org.uk](http://www.under-one-roof.org.uk)**

Address:

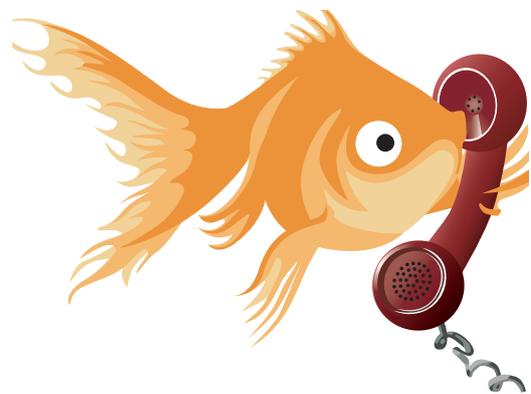
**Under One Roof Team**

**Alexandra Park**

**Prescot Road,**

**St. Helens**

**WA10 3TT**



The Under One Roof team are available between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

The Under One Roof advert is available on our website as well as in the St Helens Star and St Helens Reporter and at the following locations:

### **Helena West**

70/72 Thatto Heath Road,  
Thatto Heath,  
St Helens WA10 3QS

### **Arena Homes**

Hardshaw House,  
Tolver Street,  
St Helens WA10 1EW

### **Helena East**

193 Newton Road,  
Parr, St Helens WA9 2JR

### **Riverside**

Century House,  
Hardshaw Street,  
St Helens WA10 1QU

### **Helena Town Centre**

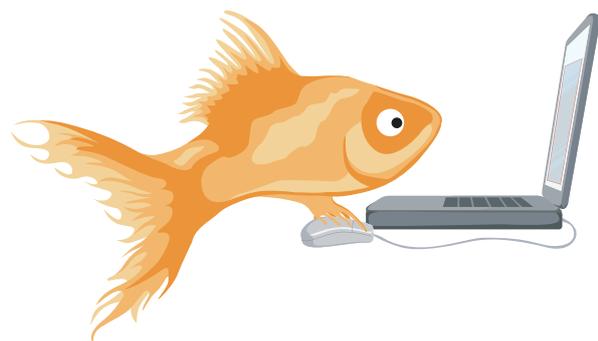
144 Duke Street,  
St Helens WA10 2JL

### **The Regenda Group**

East Area Office,  
Atherton House,  
41 Haydock Street,  
Newton-Le-Willows WA12 9DW

### **St Helens Council**

Housing Options & Advice Service,  
2nd Floor, Millennium Centre,  
Corporation Street,  
St Helens WA10 1HJ



### **To view the Allocations Policy**

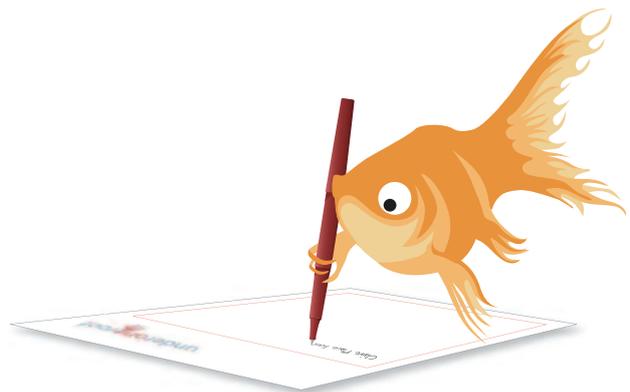
You can download a copy of the full Allocations Policy via our website: [www.under-one-roof.org.uk](http://www.under-one-roof.org.uk) or call us on **01744 63 63 63** and we can send you a copy in the post.

### **Are the leaflets available in different formats?**

Our leaflets are available in a number of formats upon request. These include audio tape, large print or in different languages. If you need information in a different format, contact us on 01744 63 63 63, ask at one of the offices mentioned above or send us an email at [info@under-one-roof.org.uk](mailto:info@under-one-roof.org.uk)

Translations available on request - call **01744 63 63 63**.

If you would like a copy of this document in large print, Braille, audio tape or in another language, please call **01744 63 63 63**.



under**one**roof  
HOME  
SWEET  
HOME

Under One Roof Team,  
Alexandra Park, Prescot Rd, St. Helens WA10 3TT  
Telephone: 01744 63 63 63  
Web: [www.under-one-roof.org.uk](http://www.under-one-roof.org.uk)  
Email: [info@under-one-roof.org.uk](mailto:info@under-one-roof.org.uk)