

Housing Services Newsletter



Issue 4

April 2006

This Newsletter is designed for people on the Isle of Wight Housing Register. We hope that you find it useful and would welcome any feedback that you may have. Please feel free to write to us at the address on the back page with any suggestions.

Inside this issue:

Council revises system for allocating housing

Homeless Prevention and Basic Legal Rights

2 In Autumn 2005 we revised our points system for the Housing Register. The main change that took effect was that you can now receive 250 points if you have been living on the Island for ten years or more.

Housing Support and Statistics

3 We have also increased the points available to those who have been in temporary accommodation for longer than one year; and additional points for people with a medical condition which is affected by their accommodation.

Housing Register

4 For every year that you have been on the Island you can be awarded 25 points if we receive proof of the length of your residence.

Housing Allocations and Homebuy

Homeless Statistics and Qualifying Offers

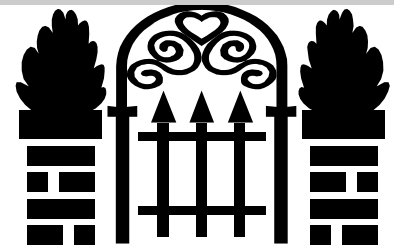
5 The type of proof that you can supply to evidence your residency must include your name and Island address at the time your residency began and can include:-

HMO Licensing and Free/Low Cost Insulation

6 **Utility Bills** Electricity, gas, water, telephone
Official Letters Health professionals, doctor, dentist, social worker, Medical card, school or college records
Benefit Agency Letters Department of Work & Pensions, Council Tax, Housing Benefit

Sanctuary Project and Contact Details

7 **Financial Institutions** Bank/Building Society statements, credit card letters
Housing details Tenancy Agreement, Rent book/card, mortgage a/c



It is important that you supply this information to support your application for housing; so that we can ensure that you receive the correct level of points.

We shall be reviewing the effect of these changes during the course of 2006 as we embark on a fundamental review of how the register works. With over 3,000 applicants on the register and only 350 lettings a year by the Island housing association system can mean very long waits before any offer of accommodation is made.

The review we shall be undertaking will look at how greater choice can be given to those on the register; and this may lead to a move away from applicants having to wait to be offered a property, to a system whereby those on the register can "bid" for vacant properties.

It will be important that we have the views of those who have been homeless or are looking for rented accommodation. If you are interested in joining a group to consider housing issues and would like to take part in the review please contact Laura Rice or Gem Seaward on 01983 823040 or housing@iow.gov.uk

Reduction of homelessness and increase in prevention

The Isle of Wight Council Housing Section has met our target of accepting less than 300 homeless applications in 2005/2006; and this has been met in large by the expansion of the Homeless Prevention Service.

We are now able to offer services to assist persons threatened with homelessness who would previously had no other option but to make a homeless application.

The type of assistance we offer includes:-

Paying deposits to secure private accommodation

We assisted 140 families during 2005-2006 with this service

Arranging removals for people who find private accommodation

We assisted 24 families during 2005 - 2006 with this service

Obtaining second-hand furniture for people who move into accommodation which is unfurnished

We assisted 42 families during 2005 - 2006 with this service

Requiring Mediation for persons being asked to leave parental accommodation to try and resolve issues within the home

We assisted 12 families during 2005-2006 with this service

Undertaking Supported People referrals or assisting in completing Housing Benefit claims

We average 18 Supported people referrals each year through the Prevention Service

Providing information leaflets

We currently have 20 leaflets on various housing issues

Explaining Tenancy Rights and Responsibilities



Tenants Basic Legal Rights

The law gives UK tenants certain rights depending on what sort of tenancy they have. This depends on the type of accommodation they are living in and the date they moved in but the majority of tenants have the right to live in their accommodation and stop other people from entering without permission. They also have the right to the following:

Right to repairs

All landlords have a responsibility to keep the structure and outside of the accommodation in good condition & free from disrepair. Landlords must also keep the equipment for the supply of water, gas and electricity in good repair.

Right to safety

Landlords must have a valid gas safety certificate from a registered gas engineer for each appliance in any accommodation they rent out. Furniture provided by your landlord should be fire resistant.

Right to end tenancy

Both landlords and tenants have to give the correct notice in order to end a tenancy.



Housing Support

Do you think you would benefit from assistance with:

- Budgeting
- Claim benefits and form filling
- Liasing with professionals
- Gaining greater confidence to live independently



If so, there are a number of agencies operating across the Island specialising in Housing Related Support that could help you manage your tenancy in the short or long term, Housing Services have undertaken more than 120 referrals over the past year to assist people with this service.

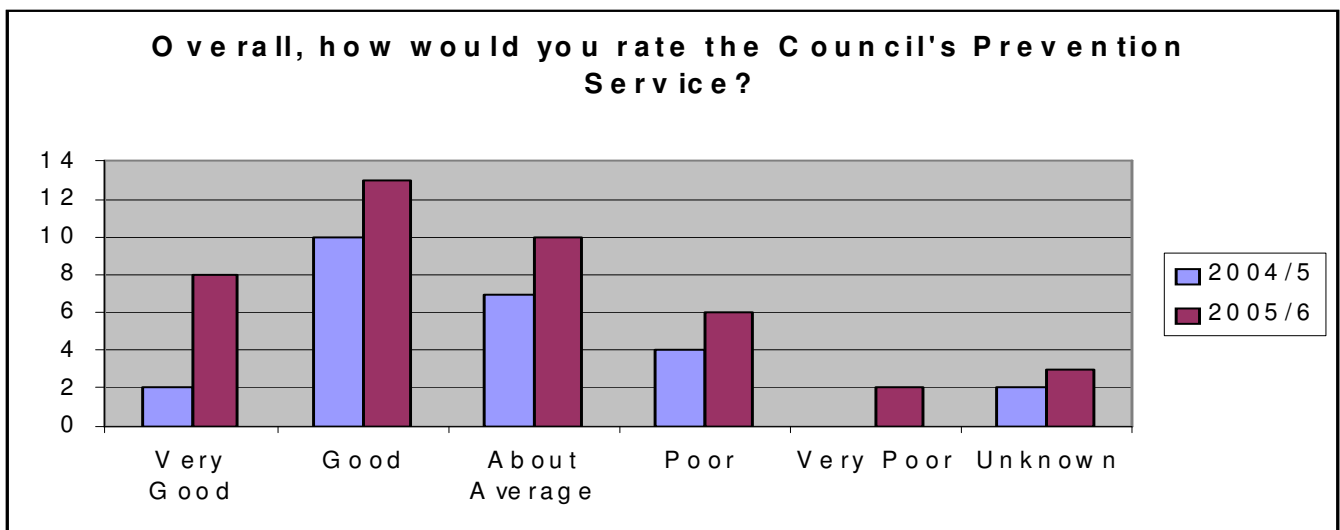
If you would like more information please contact Housing Services on 01983 823040 or email housing@iow.gov.uk

Results of Consultation to persons assisted through prevention service

We recently undertook a consultation of all people who have used the Council’s Prevention Service over the past 2 years, how they felt about the service, ideas for improvement, prevention measures used and how they rated the advise given. We have dealt with 555 clients over this time and had a 9% response rate for the year 2004/2005 and a 14% response rate for 2005/6 of returned questionnaires.

One person was randomly selected to receive a £25 voucher of their choice as an incentive to return the questionnaire, and the winner was Mr R from Ventnor.

Below is a graph which shows how our service was rated



Since the service began in January 2003 we have dealt with over 1,000 people to try and prevent them from becoming homeless, and there are now three Homeless Prevention Officers who can advise and assist on ways to prevent homelessness.

If you would like to view the responses in full to the 26 questions please contact us at Housing Services.

If you have any issues with your tenancy or you are threatened with losing your home please contact us to see if we are able to assist.

Housing Register

As I am sure you are aware, the Isle of Wight has a shortage of affordable housing, this newsletter has been aimed at people on the Island Housing Register, which means that we have sent this to over 3,000 of you – all of whom wish alternative accommodation.

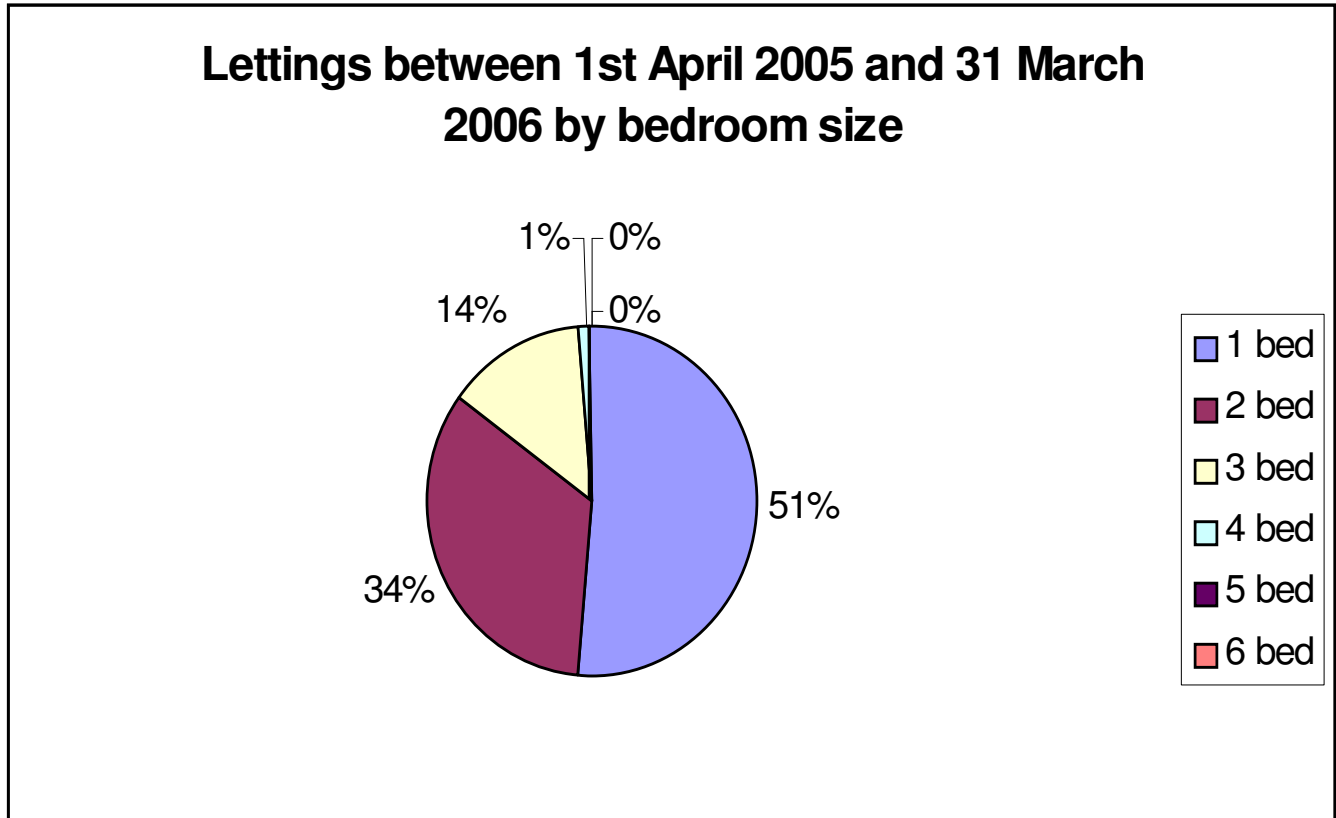
We have recently compiled an up to date register of all the social housing stock through the three main housing associations:- Medina, South Wight and Vectis.

As at March 2006 there are 6,273 social housing units for general and sheltered housing on the Isle of Wight, which are split into:-

Area	1 bed & Bedsits	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Sheltered
Apse Heath/Winford	9	15	15	0	0	0	No
Arreton	4	2	5	0	1	0	No
Bembridge	37	58	13	0	0	0	No
Binstead	4	93	77	2	0	0	Yes
Bouldnor	0	10	15	0	0	0	No
Brading	27	75	42	0	0	0	No
Brighstone	4	20	7	0	0	0	No
Calbourne	2	1	4	0	0	0	No
Chale/Chale Green	19	31	25	3	0	0	No
Chillerton	2	15	5	0	0	0	No
Cowes	65	101	156	13	0	0	Yes
East Cowes	49	116	234	3	0	0	Yes
Freshwater	96	147	86	2	0	0	Yes
Godshill	25	25	23	0	0	0	No
Gurnard	0	0	0	0	0	0	No
Havenstreet	7	0	1	0	0	0	No
Lake	127	79	80	0	0	0	Yes
Merstone	0	5	2	0	0	0	No
Nettlestone	0	0	10	0	0	0	No
Newbridge	5	13	3	0	0	0	No
Newchurch	0	8	8	0	0	0	No
Newport	281	436	468	40	1	0	Yes
Niton	13	16	5	0	0	0	No
Porchfield	0	0	1	0	0	0	No
Rookley	0	0	11	0	0	0	No
Ryde	263	257	308	21	0	0	Yes
Sandown	48	114	145	13	0	0	No
Shalfleet	3	9	6	0	0	0	No
Shanklin	106	145	121	5	0	1	Yes
Shorwell	6	10	5	0	0	0	No
St Helens	24	1	9	0	0	0	No
Thorley	0	0	6	0	0	0	No
Totland	25	69	13	2	0	0	No
Ventnor	109	117	84	5	0	0	Yes
Wootton	5	17	14	0	0	0	Yes
Wroxall	13	32	70	0	0	0	Yes
Yarmouth	9	27	9	0	0	0	No
	1387	2064	2086	109	2	1	624 flats

Housing Allocations

Last year 2005-2006 there were 410 Lettings made through the three main Housing Associations, of these 110 were transfers and 60 were made to Sheltered accommodation



Is there another way?

If you cannot afford to buy a house on the open market, but would like to get on to the property ladder then Homebuy may be an option for you.

Swaythling Housing Society are offering two products on the Island:

Open Market Homebuy

This is mainly aimed at Key Workers and Housing Association tenants

New Build Homebuy (which replaces the shared ownership scheme)

This scheme allows you to buy a share of a property (usually with a mortgage) and then pay rent for the remaining share owned by the Housing Association. After 12 months if you can afford to, you can buy further shares until you own the home yourself outright.

Swaythling Housing Society will be operating a waiting list for Homebuy properties for the Island and have a call centre to deal with enquiries.

If you are interested in these or any other shared ownership schemes please contact Swaythling Housing Society on 02380 628000 or email www.homesinhants.co.uk

Swaythling Housing Society are holding an Affordable Housing Home Ownership Event at the Seminar Room, Quay Arts Centre, Sea Street, Newport on Monday 24th April 2006 from 2.00pm to 6.00pm
All Housing Associations will be there.

Homeless Statistics

Between 1st April 2005 and 31 March 2006, 325 people applied as homeless, of these 214 were accepted

Categories of people who were accepted during this period

Family with one child	58
Family with two children	43
Family with three children or more	19
Pregnant, no children	35
Elderly	12
Mental Illness	14
Physical Disability	16
16/17 year old	9
Special—Domestic Violence	1
Having been in care	0
Households homeless in emergency	1
Formerly in care, aged 18-21	2
Special—other	0
Fleeing home due to violence	3
Having served in HM Forces	0
Having been in custody/on remand	1
Drug or alcohol dependency	0
Former Refugee	0
TOTAL	214

Reasons for homelessness in persons who were accepted as homeless during this period

Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	65
Reason for loss of rented accommodation—other	22
Parents not willing to accommodate	36
Friends not willing to accommodate	20
Relationship breakdown—Non Violent	18
Relationship breakdown—Violent	21
Other—homeless in emergency/abroad etc	8
In institution/care	6
Other forms of harassment	1
Other forms of violence	1
Violent breakdown—associated persons	2
Racially motivated violence/harassment	1
Private sector rent arrears	9
Mortgage arrears	4
Registered Social Landlord rent arrears	0
Local Authority rent arrears	0
Required to leave NASS accommodation	0
TOTAL	214

Qualifying Offers

The Council is running a new scheme where we can assist people who have been accepted as homeless and are living in Bed and Breakfast or Temporary Accommodation to secure Private Rented accommodation, by paying a deposit on accommodation of your choice. We can also arrange an interest free loan to cover the cost of removal expenses.

We have decided to implement such a scheme due to the long periods of time those in temporary accommodation are waiting before securing permanent accommodation.

This assistance would be seen as a qualifying offer under Housing Act 1996 Pt VII Section 193 (7B) and the Council would then discharge its' duty to provide you with further temporary accommodation.

Your name will remain on the housing register but your points will be reassessed to reflect your new circumstances. If you are interested in this scheme please contact your Homeless Officer.



Protecting Tenants under a new HMO Licensing Law

FROM THE 6TH APRIL 2006 LANDLORDS HAVE TO APPLY TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY FOR A LICENCE TO RENT OUT A HOUSE IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) OF 3 OR MORE STOREYS, WITH 5 OR MORE OCCUPIERS IN 2 OR MORE HOUSEHOLDS (AND WHERE THE HOUSE IS NOT IN SELF-CONTAINED FLATS.

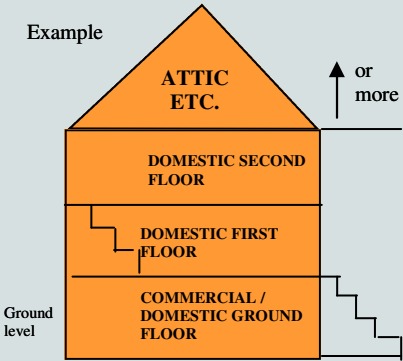
Licences shall only be granted if houses and landlords meet certain conditions, these are that the landlord/manager is a fit and proper person and that the house is reasonably suitable for occupation by the number of persons permitted under the Licence.

Suitability; includes that the property has sufficient standards of amenities and facilities for cooking and bathing; and satisfactory management standards in such things as cleanliness, good repair and health and safety are provided.

If you are renting in a property of 3 or more storeys and there are other people living in the same building who aren't related to you, it may be in your own interests to contact the Isle of Wight Council Housing Renewal Section on 01983 823056 or 823057 to advise that this is the case.

The Housing Renewal Section will work with your landlord by inspecting the HMO to ensure that the property is maintained in a suitable condition for normal day-to day living and that it provides a safe living environment.

Example



Mandatory HMO licensing starts from April 6th 2006.

Q1. Are you renting in a property of three or more floors?

Q2. Are there other people living in the house who aren't related to you?

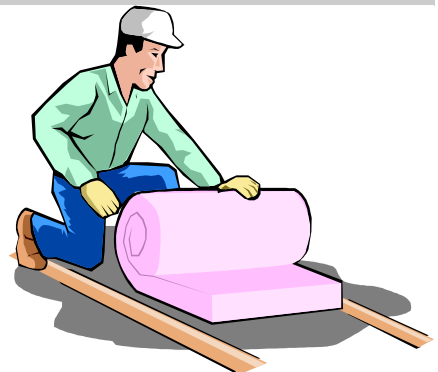
If you answered **YES** to both questions, your landlord may need a licence.

Low Cost/Free Insulation

If your loft and walls are not insulated you could be losing over half the valuable heat from within your home. Home insulation can help save you up to 1/3rd off the cost of your annual heating bills.

The Government and power companies are encouraging households in the UK to insulate their homes by providing grants towards the cost of insulation.

For further information call the Grants Team on 0800 592 200 quoting ref: BG-IOW

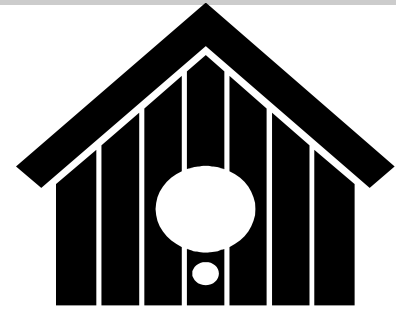


Sanctuary Project

We are planning to provide extra protection for victims of domestic violence through a scheme called Sanctuary which is an initiative to provide additional security measures to the homes of domestic violence sufferers.

The aim is to allow victims remain safe in their own home, prevent homelessness thus the need for temporary accommodation and reduce the disruption to family life that relocating can cause.

We plan to develop the sanctuary support scheme on the Island and training programmes for workers.



Domestic Violence Facts

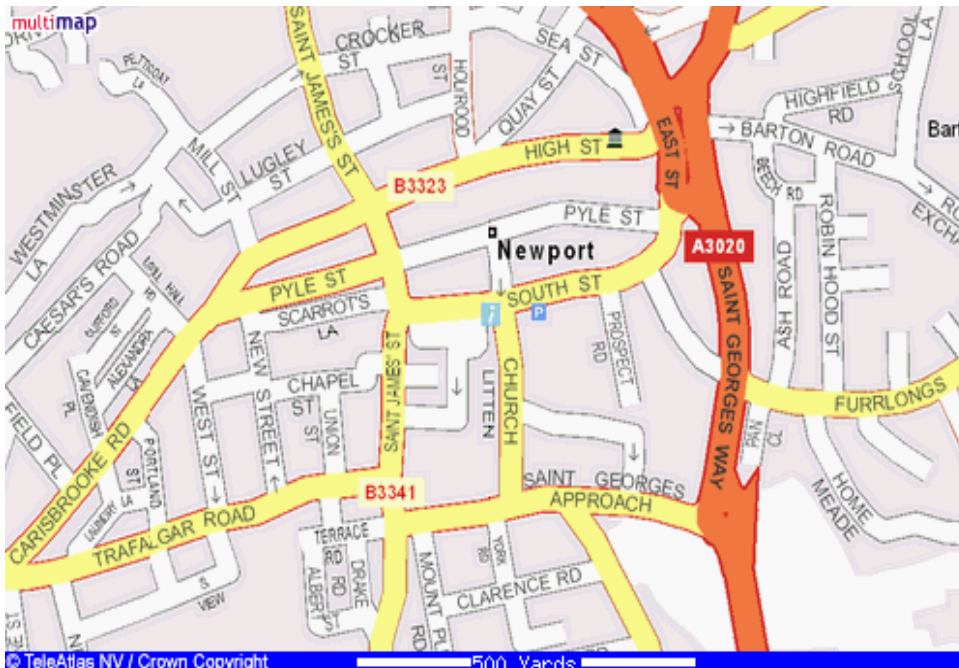
- * Estimated national cost of Domestic Violence is £23 billion annually (Home Office)
- * Domestic Violence is the leading cause of morbidity for women aged 19-44 (Home Office)
- * 69% of Domestic Violence results in injury (British Crime Survey)
- * On average there will be 35 assaults before a victim calls the Police (Home Office)
- * Approximately 90% of victims are female (Home Office)
- * 15% of those accepted as homeless on the Isle of Wight in 2004/2005 were fleeing Domestic Violence

Useful telephone numbers:-

Women's Aid 24 hour helpline 0808 2000 247
Island Women's Refuge 01983 825981
Police 0845 0454 545 - (999 emergencies)
National Domestic Violence Helpline for Men and Children 0870 9744 124

Contacting Us

Housing Services is located in Newport opposite the main council building.



Opening Times

Monday	08:30 – 17:00
Tuesday	08:30 – 17:00
Wednesday	08:30 – 17:00
Thursday	08:30 – 17:00
Friday	08:30 – 16:30

For out of hours emergencies please call 01983 821105

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