

## **VOLUNTARY RIGHT TO BUY**

### **FAQS**

#### **WHAT IS THE MIDLANDS VOLUNTARY RIGHT TO BUY?**

The Voluntary Right to Buy (VRTB) is a scheme agreed between the Government and the National Housing Federation to give housing association tenants the chance to buy their homes at the same discount level as council tenants have under the Right to Buy. We, along with nearly 50 housing associations in the Midlands, are taking part in a major pilot to test some technical aspects of the scheme that will address issues that housing associations face but councils do not.

#### **I AM ONE OF YOUR TENANTS. CAN I REGISTER TO BUY MY HOME UNDER VRTB?**

If you live in our local authority then you can. Your local authority area is the council you pay your council tax to. *(See Annex 1 below to review all participating local authorities)*

You also need to have all the following ticked off. Do all of these apply to you?

- You are over the age of 18
- You have the right to reside in the UK
- You have been a public sector tenant in social or affordable housing (usually of a council or a housing association) for at least 3 years (this need not have been with the same landlord, or continuous)
- You have been the tenant of the property that you would like to purchase for at least 12 months (and anyone hoping to buy your home with you has been living there 12 months as well)
- You are not eligible for the Statutory Right to Buy or the Preserved Right to Buy scheme (which could be the case if your home was owned by your local council and was sold to you while you were living in it)
- The property is your only home at the point of sale, and you do not own another property anywhere else

- You (and anyone hoping to buy the home with you) occupy the whole property; that is, you are not occupying a room or rooms in a shared house or flat
- You do not owe any outstanding money to your housing association, and can keep clear accounts with them until you have bought the home in question
- You are not currently subject to the mortgage rescue scheme
- You don't have any outstanding possession orders
- You are not subject to bankruptcy proceedings or unfulfilled credit arrangements, and nor is anyone else hoping to buy your home with you
- You are not subject to an anti-social behaviour order or notice of intent to seek possession for breach of tenancy conditions
- You are not subject to any legal proceedings
- Your home is not let under the following tenancies:
  - Rent to Buy / Shared Ownership
  - Starter / One year fixed term probationary
  - Assured Shorthold Periodic Temporary
  - Assured Shorthold (except Localism Act Fixed-Term Tenancies)
  - Licence (i.e. you are a "Licensee")

### **Is your home outside the scope of the pilot?**

If so, you cannot register for the scheme. Please review our [helpful guides](#) and [policy](#) to review which properties are not eligible to be bought under this scheme. We may have to decline to sell other homes as well, for a number of reasons. If we cannot not sell you your home but it is not one of the properties above, you may be able to "port" your discount to buy another property in your area. Please review our [policy](#) and [helpful guides](#) to review our "porting" policy. The [policy](#) also contains a published a list of the categories of home that we cannot sell.

### **Suggested information for tenants on funding the rest of their purchase:**

- Remember to think very carefully about how you will afford this purchase. You need to ensure that you look at all the costs of home ownership, not just the purchase price and mortgage requirements.
- If you are successful in the ballot, as part of the application process you will need to provide your housing association with evidence of your current income and your

ability to fund the purchase.

- You will also need to think about the cost of stamp duty, legal fees and possible removal costs. And there will be ongoing costs for repairs and maintenance after you have bought. The Money Advice Service can help you work out what these costs might be for you.

If you purchase your home under the scheme, and then sell or sublet it within five years, you may have to re-pay all or some of your discount.

## HOW DO I REGISTER?

1. Visit the Government's Right to Buy website at [www.midlands.righttobuy.gov.uk](http://www.midlands.righttobuy.gov.uk)  
The gateway for registering your interest will be open from 16th August to 16th September.
2. Complete the online form to register your interest, and to enter the ballot for a unique reference number (URN). You cannot contact us to go any further with the purchase unless you are successful in the ballot and are given a URN. To register, you will need to provide your name, full address, local authority, and the name of your landlord. You will receive an email confirming that your registration has been received.
3. ***Because this is a pilot, the number of sales is strictly limited. Not everyone who enters will be able to receive a URN. Successful entrants will be selected at random through a computer ballot.***
4. Shortly after the ballot closes, you will receive an email informing you if your entry has been successful in the ballot.
5. If successful, you will be emailed within 4 weeks with a URN, which you will need to make your application to us. Your URN will last for 4 weeks from the date of receipt. After this it will no longer work.
6. If successful, you can apply to us, quoting your URN, to start the process of buying your home. You cannot apply to your housing association unless you have a valid URN.
7. To apply to us please download the [application form](#) from our website, and attach all relevant documents when submitting the application. The application will be made available prior to the portal closing.

8. Please note that you will have to pay us a **£250 administration fee**. This will be refunded either when the sale is completed or if we have to turn you down because you do not meet the eligibility requirements. You will not be refunded if you decide to stop proceeding with the sale – for example, due to difficulty of raising the funds.
9. Please note that having a URN is no guarantee that you will be able to buy your home. You as a tenant and your home must also be eligible (see above and attached policy, and helpful guides) and you will need to have the finances available to buy your home.

## YOU HAVE SAID YOU WON'T SELL ME MY HOME. WHY NOT?

Only “general needs” housing is in the scope of the pilot. If you live in specialist housing for older people or those with additional needs, you may not be able to apply. Please review our exclusions policy before making any applications, to review what options are available for you and your discount. Remember, we may be able to “port” you and your discount into another suitable property.

We are allowed to decline to sell other homes as well. You can find a list of the types of homes that we have chosen not to sell on our website within our policies. These can include those built with charitable funding, those which have to remain affordable in perpetuity because of planning conditions, and some properties in rural areas. Housing associations will also exclude the sale of leasehold houses.

## WHAT IS “PORTABILITY/PORTING A DISCOUNT”

If you are eligible but we have declined to sell you the home that you live in, we will offer you a portable discount to buy another property owned by us or another housing association in your area at a discount.

We have called this “porting” your discount.

To review our porting process, and which properties we will offer a porting opportunity please review our policy and helpful guides.

## CAN I APPEAL YOUR DECISION NOT TO SELL ME MY HOME?

You cannot appeal against the policies we have set up about exclusions and portability, but you can complain to the Housing Ombudsman if you think we haven't properly followed those policies.

More information about the Housing Ombudsman can be found at

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

You can call them on **0300 111 3000** or write to them at: **Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ**

## WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME FOR £250? WILL I GET IT BACK?

All housing associations taking part in the pilot are charging a **£250 administrative fee**. This will be refunded either when the sale is completed or if we turn your down. You will not be refunded if you decide to stop proceeding with the sale – for example, due to difficulty of raising the funds.

## I MISSED THE WINDOW FOR ENTERING THE BALLOT FOR URNS. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

There are no immediate plans to reopen the ballot. However, any decision by Government on this would depend on the level of demand. You can sign up for more information on the Government's website at [www.righttobuy.gov.uk](http://www.righttobuy.gov.uk) and you will receive any new information.

## WHY ARE YOU PICKING PEOPLE BY BALLOT? THAT'S NOT FAIR.

The decision to allocate places on the pilot via a ballot was made by the government. The government is allocating places through a ballot because they believe this is the fairest way of allocating the limited number of places available in this pilot project.

The alternative would have been to allocate spaces on a first come, first served basis. The Government felt that this would have disadvantaged tenants with accessibility issues or those who could not get onto the internet in the first few days of opening.

## HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE LET INTO THE PILOT?

The pilot has a budget of £200m, which is funded by the government. It is for Government to determine the numbers of places it can fund.

## WILL THE BALLOT EVER BE REOPENED OR IS THIS ONE MONTH PEOPLE'S ONLY CHANCE?

There are no plans to reopen the ballot, but the government have advised that they will keep this under review, depending on the levels of demand and drop-out.

## I HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THE BALLOT RESULTS. WHAT DO I DO?

Government are using a ballot because they believe this is the fairest way of allocating the limited number of places available in this pilot project.

Firstly, check the timescales on the Government's website to see when you should expect to be contacted about the ballot. Not everyone will be contacted at the same time, and as it takes time to administer the ballot you will not know your result straight away.

If you have not received an email with your results after you expected to, make sure you check your junk mail folder.

**If you are still concerned, the Government's Right to Buy agents will available to answer any queries, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm (except bank holidays). They can be called on 0300 123 0913 or emailed at [enquiry@righttobuyagent.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@righttobuyagent.org.uk)**

## WHY HAVEN'T I BEEN SELECTED BY THE BALLOT?

A limited number of places are available on the pilot and not everyone who has entered the ballot will be able to participate. Applicants were selected at random by ballot after the Government Gateway has closed. This decision was taken by government, who believed this is to be the fairest way of allocating the limited number of places available in this pilot project.

## I WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN THE BALLOT. CAN I APPEAL?

Unfortunately not. The number of sales in the pilot is limited and URNs were allocated to entrants via a random ballot.

### **ANNEX 1:** **TABLE OF PARTICIPATING LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

These are all the lower-tier local authorities in the West and East Midlands statistical regions. Tenants in homes outside these areas are not able to apply to participate in the Midlands pilot.

Amber Valley Borough Council	North West Leicestershire District Council
Ashfield District Council	Northampton Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council	Nottingham City Council
Birmingham City Council	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Blaby District Council	Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
Bolsover District Council	Redditch Borough Council
Boston Borough Council	Rugby Borough Council
Bromsgrove District Council	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Broxtowe Borough Council	Rutland County Council
Cannock Chase District Council	Sandwell Council
Charnwood Borough Council	Shropshire Council
Chesterfield Borough Council	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Corby Borough Council	South Derbyshire District Council
Coventry City Council	South Holland District Council
Daventry District Council	South Kesteven District Council
Derby City Council	South Northamptonshire Council
Derbyshire Dales District Council	South Staffordshire Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	Stafford Borough Council
East Lindsey District Council	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
East Northamptonshire Council	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
East Staffordshire Borough Council	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Erewash Borough Council	Tamworth Borough Council
Gedling Borough Council	Telford and Wrekin Council
Harborough District Council	Walsall Council
Herefordshire Council	Warwick District Council
High Peak Borough Council	Wellingborough, Borough Council of



Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	West Lindsey District Council
Kettering Borough Council	Wolverhampton – City of Wolverhampton Council
Leicester City Council	Worcester City Council
Lichfield District Council	Wychavon District Council
Lincoln – City of Lincoln Council	Wyre Forest District Council
Malvern Hills District Council	
Mansfield District Council	
Melton Borough Council	
Newark and Sherwood District Council	
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	
North East Derbyshire District Council	
North Kesteven District Council	
North Warwickshire Borough Council	