

Your unique reference number

Your memorable date

Your guide to Homefinder

Helping you find the home of your choice in the Ashfield and Mansfield districts



Welcome to Homefinder

Contents

Step 1: Registering with Homefinder	3
Step 2: Assessing your application	5
Step 3: Searching for properties	8
Step 4: Bidding for properties	9
Step 5: Shortlisting and offers	11
Other housing options	12
Recent lets	14
Change of circumstances	14
Need more help?	15
How to contact us	16

Homefinder is a social housing lettings scheme which has been developed in partnership with Ashfield District Council, Ashfield Homes, Mansfield District Council and local housing associations.

The scheme gives you more choice and control over where you live by allowing you to search and bid for council and housing association properties within the Ashfield and Mansfield districts.

You only need to complete one form to be able to apply for housing in both districts.

Homefinder also advertises other housing options, such as mutual exchanges, garages, shared ownership and private rented properties.



Step 1 : Registering with Homefinder

If you want to join our Housing Register you will need to register with Homefinder.

Visit **www.amhomefinder.co.uk** to register online. If you do not have access to the internet, contact your local Homefinder office (see page 16 for details) to request a paper copy of our Social Housing Application form.

Registering online

-  **Step 1** Go to **www.amhomefinder.co.uk**
-  **Step 2** Click on the Online Registration tab at the top of the page
-  **Step 3** Complete your details on the New Household Registration page



Make sure you select a memorable date as you will need it each time you login

-  **Step 4** Click on the Create Login button at the bottom of the page and your login reference number will be created
-  **Step 5** Write down your login reference number as you will need this each time you login, along with your memorable date

You will now need to complete a Social Housing Application. Click on the Social Housing link and complete all relevant sections of the form.



All questions with an * are mandatory so you must complete them or you will not be able to submit your application



Not everybody is eligible to join Homefinder. If you are subject to immigration control or you do not live in the United Kingdom on a full time basis you may not be able to join. We will write to you if you are not eligible to join Homefinder.

Normally, you will not qualify to join the Housing Register if you do not have a local connection to the Ashfield or Mansfield Districts.

You may be exempt from needing to establish a local connection if you are one of the following:

-  in HM Armed Forces
-  fleeing violence for outside the area
-  taking up an offer of employment
-  a tenant of another social housing landlord who is seeking to downsize
-  interested in a flat which is prioritised for elderly tenants

Supporting information

You will need to send us a copy of any paperwork we require, for example proof of pregnancy or a Notice to Quit. It is important that you send these as soon as possible as we will not be able to assess your application until we receive them. Please send your paperwork to the local authority you selected to process your application.



Please do not send important documents such as a passport or birth certificate through the post

If we need more information, we may write to you to ask you to complete an additional form, for example a Medical Assessment Form.



Step 2 : Assessing your application

Once we have received your application, we will assess your current housing needs.

If you are eligible to join Homefinder you will be placed in one of five housing needs bands. These bands will reflect how urgently you need to move.

If you have an emergency need to move, such as being homeless, you may be placed in Band 1. If you have no housing needs you may be placed in Band 5.

This table gives you an idea of how we will prioritise your application:

BAND 1	Applicants with a severe or emergency need for rehousing, for example homeless families
BAND 2	Applicants with urgent housing needs, for example if you are overcrowded by two or more bedrooms
BAND 3	Applicants with low housing needs, for example if you are overcrowded by one bedroom
BAND 4	Applicants with a housing need' who are unsuitable to hold a tenancy, for example someone with a history of antisocial behaviour
BAND 5	Applicants who are suitably housed, for example owner occupiers and applicants with no local connection needing a 60+ flat

If you do not agree with the assessment of your application, you may ask for it to be reviewed.

For more information about how we assess applications, please see our Lettings Policy at www.amhomefinder.co.uk or contact your local Homefinder office to request a copy.

Once we have completed your assessment, we will write to you to tell you what housing needs band you have been placed in and the reason(s) why.

Once you have registered we will advise you of the following details:

Your reference number

This number is unique to your housing application and you will need to quote it when bidding for properties.

Your effective date

This is the date your completed application was received. Your effective date is important as it is used to prioritise applicants in the same housing needs band.

If you move into a higher housing needs band because of a change of circumstances, your effective date will be updated to reflect the date that your new band was awarded.

Your household type

This is the household type we have classed you as. This is important as all properties advertised specify the type of household that can bid.

Your local connection

This is the local connection we have identified you as having. You have a local connection if you live or work in the district, or if you have close family living in the district. You may have a connection to the Ashfield or Mansfield district, or both.

The type and size of properties you are eligible to bid for

This is determined by the number of people in your household and your household type.

Under changes to Housing Benefit introduced in April 2013, working-age households who claim housing benefit and have a spare bedroom will have their housing benefit award reduced. The reduction will be by 14% for one spare bedroom and 25% for two or more spare bedrooms.

The Homefinder policy allows for applicants to apply for property with a spare bedroom, but a financial assessment will be carried out to assess whether the applicant is able to afford the rent.

Current Housing Benefit rules allow a bedroom for the following:

-  each adult couple
-  any other person aged 16 years or over
-  two children of the same sex under the age of 16
-  two children under the age of 10, regardless of sex
-  any other child
-  a carer (who does not normally live with you), if the applicant needs overnight care

The following tables outline your household's eligibility for different property types:

Bungalows	
Type of household	Properties you are eligible for
Single person, Couple	One bed bungalows
Single person, Couple, Sharer, Family with 1 dependent child	Two bed bungalows
Sharer, family with two or more additional members, (either children or adults)	Three or more bed bungalows
<p>Applicants will need to be a minimum age of 60 to bid for most bungalows. Only a small number are advertised to applicants below that age.</p> <p>Applicants below the age of 60 will be eligible to bid for bungalows advertised for applicants aged 60 plus if they have been assessed by Homefinder as having a specific need for a bungalow.</p>	

Flats and houses	
Type of household	Properties you are eligible for
Single person Aged over 16	Studios (bedsits) One and two bed flats One bed houses
Couple Two adults who live together as partners or are married	One and two bed flats One bed houses
Sharers Two adults who are not a couple	Two bed flats
Family with 1 dependent child	Two bed flats Two bed houses
Family with 2 dependent children	Two and three bed flats Two and three bed houses
Family with 3 dependent children	Three or four bed flats Three or four bed houses
Family with 4 or more dependant children	Three or more bed houses
Family with dependant children Where an applicant's household has a member aged under 16, or aged between 16 and 18 if they are in full time education.	
Family with non dependents Where the applicant's household has all other members aged over 16, or aged over 18 if they are in full time education.	<p>The criteria for these households will be set by the individual landlord. Generally households will be eligible for flats and bungalows. Ashfield District Council allows families with non dependents to also bid for houses.</p> <p>The eligibility for property sizes will be set by the number of bedrooms required. For example, households with a co-habiting couple and 2 non dependent adults will only be eligible for three bedroom properties.</p>

Households containing pregnant women

If a member of the household is pregnant the number of children in the household is increased by one. For example, if a family has one child and the mother is pregnant, the household will be classed as a family with 2 children.

Step 3 : Searching for properties

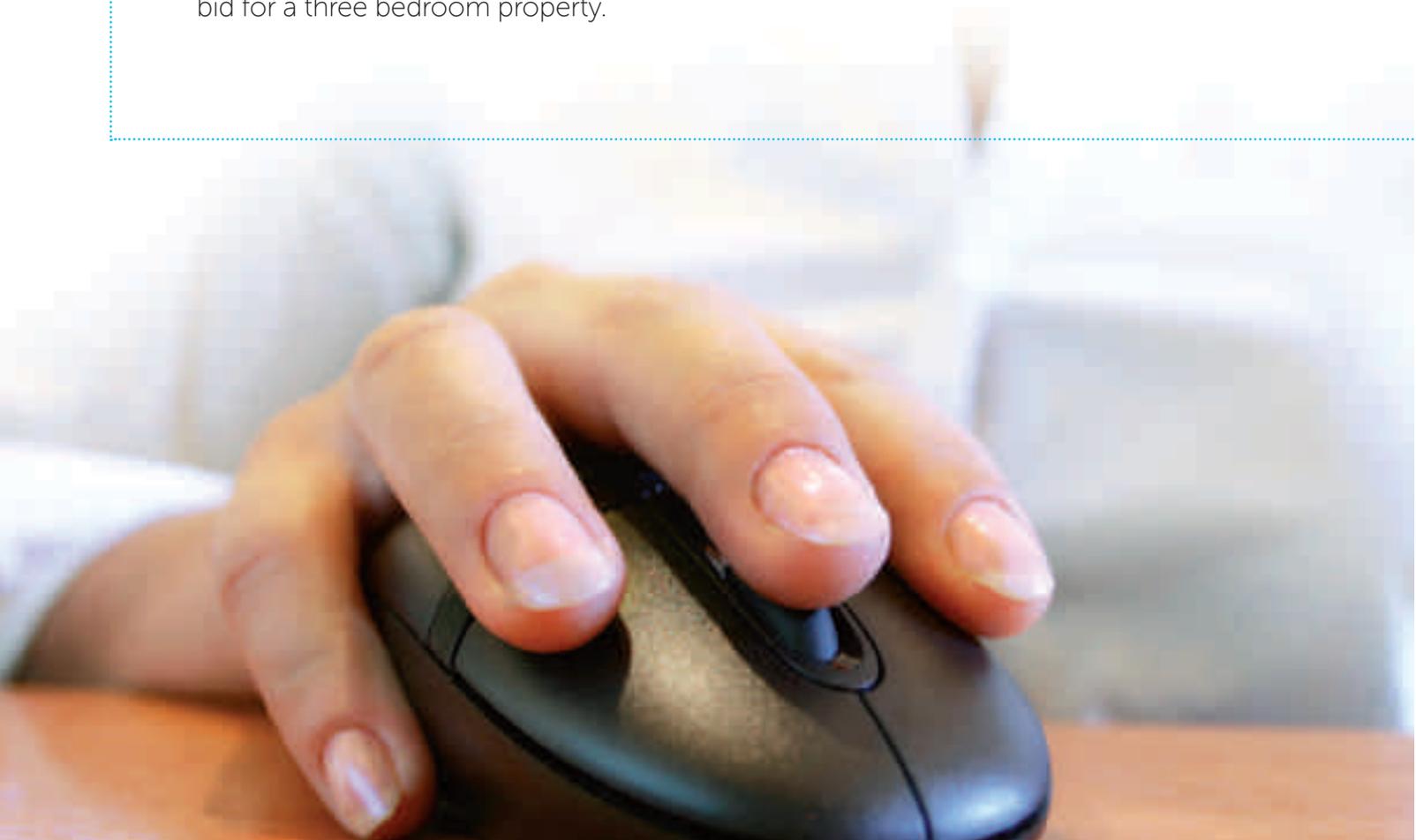
All available properties will be advertised each week online at **www.amhomefinder.co.uk** and in our Homefinder offices. Our weekly property magazine, Letterbox, will also be available at a number of community outlets, such as local libraries, across both districts (please see our website for details).

Properties will appear on the website each Wednesday at 00:01am, and are available for bidding until 11:59pm on the following Monday.

Each advert will include basic property details, for example the name of the landlord, property location, size and rent. It will also include details of any requirements which may apply, for example some properties may have an age restriction.

If you login to your online Homefinder account you will be able to see details of the properties you are eligible for and see where you would be on the shortlist at that time.

You can only bid for properties where you match the eligibility criteria, for example if you only need one bedroom then you will not be able to bid for a three bedroom property.



Step 4 : Bidding for properties

You can bid for up to two social housing properties that you are eligible for at any time during each bidding cycle (Wednesday 00:01am to Monday 11:59pm).

You can bid for a property online at www.amhomefinder.co.uk or by calling our 24 hour automated bidding line on **0300 999 2399** (see page 10 for details). If you are unable to bid online or by phone, please contact your local Homefinder office for further help and assistance.

All bids must be placed before the cycle ends as late bids will not be accepted.

We only look at a property's shortlist after the bidding cycle has closed so it does not matter if the bid is placed at the start or end of the cycle.

Bidding online

-  **Step 1** Go to www.amhomefinder.co.uk
-  **Step 2** Click on Login/My Account
-  **Step 3** Enter your unique reference number and memorable date and click on Login

-  Don't forget to include the forward slashes when entering your memorable date – dd/mm/yyyy
-  If you have forgotten your memorable date you can reset it online. If you have forgotten your unique reference number, please contact your local Homefinder office

-  **Step 4** Click on the properties you are eligible to bid for
-  **Step 5** Click Apply Now on the property you want to bid for
-  **Step 6** Review your contact details and click to continue
-  **Step 7** Click I wish to be considered for this property

-  Your current shortlist position will be shown – this may change as other people bid



Bidding by phone

- 📍 **Step 1** Identify the properties you want to bid for
- 📍 **Step 2** Ring our 24 hour automated bidding line on **0300 999 2399**
(calls are charged at local rates from a landline but mobile rates may vary)
- 📍 **Step 3** Enter your unique reference number
- 📍 **Step 4** Enter your memorable date
- 📍 **Step 5** Enter the property reference number
- 📍 **Step 6** Your current shortlist position will be confirmed
- 📍 **Step 7** Confirm that you wish to bid for the property
- 📍 **Step 8** Your bid will be confirmed

Withdrawing bids

If you bid for a property by mistake or change your mind, you can withdraw your bid and use the bid for another property as long as the bidding cycle has not closed.

You can withdraw bids online, over the phone or by contacting your local Homefinder office.

Withdrawing bids online

Login to your account at www.amhomefinder.co.uk and select My Bids. Select the property you want to withdraw and click Withdraw Bids.

Withdrawing bids by phone

Ring **0300 999 2399** and login as instructed above. Select the option to review or cancel a bid, choose the property you want to withdraw and confirm the cancellation.

Step 5 : Shortlisting and offers

All bids received are recorded and put in priority order of bands to produce a shortlist of all interested and eligible applicants.

If more than one applicant in a band applies for a property, these applicants will be sorted by their effective date.

Example shortlist

SHORTLIST POSITION	BAND	EFFECTIVE DATE
1	1	2010
2	1	2011
3	2	2008
4	2	2010
5	3	2007

All successful applicants will be checked to make sure they are eligible for the offer before we contact them. If you are the successful applicant we will invite you to view the property.

If your bid is unsuccessful we will not be able to contact you but you can check your final shortlist position by logging into your online Homefinder account after the bidding cycle has finished. To do this click on My Bids and view the Historic Bids section.

If a shortlisted applicant refuses the offer of accommodation, we will offer the property to the next eligible person on the list. We will repeat this process until the property is let. We will only readvertise a property if all eligible applicants refuse the property.

Multiple offers

We may contact more than one applicant at a time, but the highest placed applicant on the shortlist will be offered the property first.

Other housing options

Homefinder also offers a variety of other housing options.

The following options will be advertised online at www.amhomefinder.co.uk, in our Homefinder offices and our property magazine Letterbox.

Mutual exchanges

A mutual exchange is where one social housing tenant finds another social housing tenant and they agree to move into each other's property. The social housing tenants may live anywhere in the country but most of the mutual exchanges we advertise will be in the Homefinder area.

If you want to advertise your property for a mutual exchange you will need to have completed a Social Housing Application and be on the Homefinder Housing Register.

You will need to create a mutual exchange advert. Simply login to your online Homefinder account, click on My Mutual Exchange and complete a Mutual Exchange Application. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact your local Homefinder office.

Your mutual exchange will be advertised for a maximum of three months.

If you find a property you like, you will need to contact the tenant to see if they would consider an exchange. If you both agree to move, you will need to contact your local housing office to get permission to exchange.



You will need permission to move from your local housing office before a mutual exchange can take place

Garages and garage plots

Council garages and garage plots are available to rent. For further details please contact your local Ashfield Homes or Mansfield District Council Housing Office.

Private rented properties

Homefinder will advertise affordable properties from private landlords within the area. You will be able to place as many bids for these properties as you wish but you will need to have completed a Social Housing Application.

All private rented properties advertised in the Mansfield district will have been approved by Mansfield District Council's Multi Agency Rented Solutions (MARS) team.



For more details about the MARS scheme
contact **01623 463 121**

We will pass details of suitable applicants who bid to the property's landlord.

The landlord is not obliged to offer the property to the applicant in the highest housing needs band.

In some cases, Ashfield District Council and Mansfield District Council may be able to provide applicants with financial assistance to access suitable private rented accommodation, for example help with your rent deposit.

Shared ownership

Shared ownership properties allow you to buy a share in the property and pay a subsidised rent on the remaining share.

You will be able to make an expression of interest for a shared ownership property but the normal shortlisting rules do not apply.



Recent lets

Information about all properties that have been successfully let will be published on www.amhomefinder.co.uk in the Recent Lets section and in our property magazine Letterbox. We will tell you the number of applicants that bid for a property, and the housing needs band and effective date of the successful applicant.

Example

AREA	ADDRESS	BEDROOMS	PROPERTY TYPE	BAND	EFFECTIVE DATE	NUMBER OF BIDS
Oak Tree Lane	Foston Close, Mansfield	3	House	Band 3	20/03/2015	57

The information will give you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and what the successful applicant's effective date was. You can then decide whether to look for other types of properties or areas.

Change of circumstances

If your circumstances change, for example you move address or another person joins your household, you must let us know as soon as possible so that we can reassess your application and, if necessary, make changes to your band and effective date.

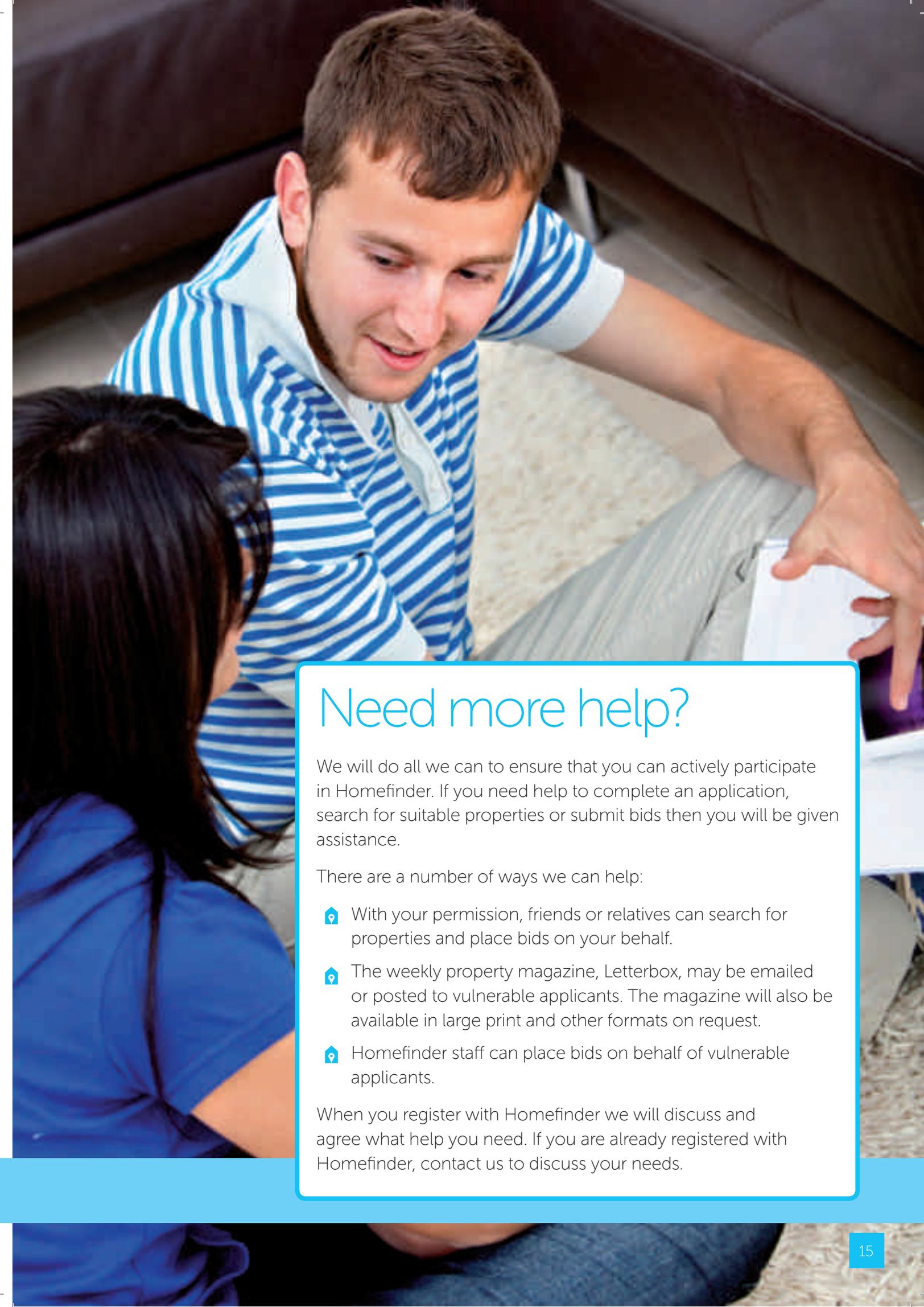
You can tell us about any changes by amending your Social Housing Application online or by contacting your local Homefinder office.

We will need to verify any amendments to your application.

The changes may affect your housing needs band and the properties you can bid for. If you do not advise us of any changes then you may have an offer of a property withdrawn.

Making changes online

-  **Step 1** Go to www.amhomefinder.co.uk
-  **Step 2** Login into My Account
-  **Step 3** Click on My Social Housing
-  **Step 4** Select update your application and make your changes. You will need to go through all stages of the application and submit your application at the end of the process



Need more help?

We will do all we can to ensure that you can actively participate in Homefinder. If you need help to complete an application, search for suitable properties or submit bids then you will be given assistance.

There are a number of ways we can help:

- 📍 With your permission, friends or relatives can search for properties and place bids on your behalf.
- 📍 The weekly property magazine, Letterbox, may be emailed or posted to vulnerable applicants. The magazine will also be available in large print and other formats on request.
- 📍 Homefinder staff can place bids on behalf of vulnerable applicants.

When you register with Homefinder we will discuss and agree what help you need. If you are already registered with Homefinder, contact us to discuss your needs.

How to contact us

For more information or help with Homefinder visit www.amhomefinder.co.uk, or contact your local Homefinder office:

Ashfield Homes Head Office

Broadway
Brook Street
Sutton in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire NG17 1AL

Tel 01623 608 888

Email homefinder@ashfieldhomes.co.uk

Ashfield Homes

Hucknall Property Shop
Council Offices
Watnall Road
Hucknall
Nottinghamshire NG15 7LA

Tel 01159 568 713

Email homefinder@ashfieldhomes.co.uk

Ashfield Homes

Council Offices
Urban Road
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire NG17 8DA

Tel 01623 457 279

Email homefinder@ashfieldhomes.co.uk

Ashfield Homes

Sutton Property Shop
Broadway
Brook Street
Sutton in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire NG17 1AL

Tel 01623 608 950

Email homefinder@ashfieldhomes.co.uk

Mansfield District Council

Civic Centre
Chesterfield Road South
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire NG19 7BH

Tel 01623 463 402

Email homefinder@mansfield.gov.uk

Ashfield District Council

Urban Road
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire NG17 8DA

Tel 01623 450 000

Email info@ashfield-dc.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can login to your online Homefinder account and send us an email.

Meeting your needs

We can provide this information in larger print, in Braille, on audio tape, on CD or in another language. Please contact your local Homefinder office for more information.