

The Housing (Right to Buy)

(Information to Secure Tenants) (England) Order 2005



Under the Government's Right to Buy scheme you may be able to buy your council home at a discounted price which is lower than the property's market value.

1. Who can buy?

You have the Right to Buy if:

- a) you are a secure tenant of the City of Wolverhampton Council
- b) you have been a public sector tenant for a minimum of three years. The most common public sector tenancies are held with either a council or a registered housing association. However, other periods of occupation may also be included, such as if you have lived in armed forces accommodation. A list of landlords for which tenancies can be counted towards your discount can be found on the Right To Buy (RTB1) form.
- c) your home is your only home and you do not own any other home
- d) the court has not made a possession order which says you must leave your home
- e) you are not subject to bankruptcy or have an arrangement with creditors and you still owe them money
- f) the court has not made a suspended Right to Buy Order because of anti-social behaviour

2. Exceptions to the Right to Buy Scheme

There are exceptions to the Right to Buy scheme. You may be unable to purchase your home if:

- a) your home is a bungalow or has been specially adapted for the elderly, people with disabilities or special support needs
- b) was let to you after your 60th birthday and was first let before 1st January 1990
- c) your home is part of a sheltered scheme designed to cater for the elderly, people with disabilities or special support needs
- d) your home is due to be demolished or has been selected by the City of Wolverhampton Council for future development
- e) if your tenancy forms part of an employment contract with the City of Wolverhampton Council or Wolverhampton Homes
- f) your home forms part of a business tenancy
- g) your home is managed by City of Wolverhampton Council or Wolverhampton Homes on behalf of a private landlord or letting agent

3. How do I claim the Right to Buy?

The procedure for the Right to Buy is very easy. You will find more information on how to apply on our website at www.wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk/buying-your-home

On our website you will also find a link to the Government's website where you can download the (RTB1) form. Alternatively, you can obtain a form by visiting one of our One Stop Shops or by emailing the Home Sales and Leases team at home.sales@wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk or calling Homes Direct on **01902 556789** and asking for a Right to Buy pack to be sent to you in the post.

You will need to return your completed Right to Buy form to the Home Sales and Leases team at the address provided.

The Home Sales and Leases team will then contact you within four weeks of receipt of your form to advise you whether you have the Right to Buy. If you do have the Right to Buy, we will arrange to have your home valued by an independent valuer.

Please note that people employed by us, the council and anyone acting on our behalf carry official identification. Always ask for identification before letting anyone you do not already know into your home. Please also be wary of anyone promoting the Right to Buy, as this could be a scam. If in doubt, please contact us for clarification.

4. How much will my home cost?

If eligible, the Right to Buy scheme will give you a discount on the market value of your home. The longer you have been a tenant, the more discount you will get, up to a maximum of £80,900. Please note that this figure increases each year in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Your discount will be calculated as follows:

- a) if you have been a social housing tenant for three full years, the discount available to you will be 35% if you live in a house or 50% if you live in a flat.

- b) if you are buying a house, you are eligible for an additional 1% discount for each completed year of tenancy up to a maximum of 70% – this is equivalent to 40 years. If you are buying a flat, you are eligible for an additional 2% discount for each completed year of tenancy up to a maximum of 70% – this is equivalent to 15 years. The qualifying period can include years you have occupied different homes and with different public sector landlords.

- c) your discount may be reduced, or you may not be entitled to any discount if:

- your home has recently been built
- your home has recently been acquired by the City of Wolverhampton Council
- we have recently spent money on repairing or improving your home
- you have previously bought another property under the Right to Buy

Once we have valued your property and have applied the discount, we will send you a formal offer known as a Section 125 Landlords Officer Notice. It's important that you read this offer carefully.

If you feel that your home has been valued too high, you have the right to a second independent valuation. Please contact us if you would like to know more about the process.

5. What can I do if I experience delays?

If you feel that the Right to Buy process is taking too long, you can tell us about your concerns by completing and submitting a RTB6 form.

If you do not get a response to the RTB6 form within one month, you can escalate your grievance by completing and submitting an RTB8 form. If your case is substantiated, the rent you paid for the duration of the delay may be taken off the price you are asked to pay for your home.

For more information about the delay procedure, please contact the Home Sales and Leases team.

6. How much will the Right to Buy process cost me?

Although we do not charge a fee for the Right to Buy process, we do recommend you employ a solicitor to take care of the legal side of your purchase. You should always look for the best deal and ensure you're clear about all charges before employing a solicitor.

You should also consider having your home surveyed before buying it. If you are having a mortgage, your mortgage lender will arrange a valuation survey of your home and you will normally be charged for this. You may also want to consider a Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Home Buyers Survey, to determine whether there are any structural problems, such as subsidence or damp, as well as any other issues not apparent from a basic external inspection. Your mortgage lender or solicitor will normally recommend the survey best suited to your needs, though you should always ask about charges before agreeing to any service.

You may also have to pay stamp duty. This is a tax that is payable once someone becomes a homeowner. Your solicitor will be able to advise you whether you are liable to pay stamp duty.

7. Are there any costs once I become a home owner?

You will still be liable for many of the same costs you were liable for when you were a tenant, such as gas, electric, council tax, water, and other services you receive such as phone, internet and television subscriptions.

You will also be liable for:

a) mortgage payments: if you are relying on a mortgage to buy your home you will have agreed terms and conditions, including

monthly repayments, with your mortgage lender. If you do not keep up with your mortgage payments your home could be at risk of being repossessed.

b) insurance: the four main types of insurance relevant to home owners are building insurance, home contents insurance, life assurance insurance and mortgage protection insurance. There are various policies available through different providers. The terms, level of cover and costs involved will vary, so it's important that you research policies that are best suited to your needs.

c) repairs and maintenance: if the home you have bought is a house, you will have to pay for any repairs that are needed to the property, both inside and outside of the building. This is the case regardless of the condition the property was in when you bought it under the Right to Buy.

If the home you have bought is a flat, you will have to pay for any repairs to the inside of your home. You will also have to pay service charges; these include the costs of providing services to the main building and the people who live there, such as our management fee, building insurance, grass-cutting and concierge. The services provided will depend on the type of building and on the estate. You will also have to pay ground rent. Additionally, if we carry out any repairs or improvements to the main building or the grounds in which it is contained, you will have to pay a contribution towards this work.

We hope you have found the information contained in this document useful. If you would like more information about the Right to Buy scheme, please contact the Home Sales and Leases team at home.sales@wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk or by phone on 01902 556789.