

New Help to Buy scheme open for business

The new [Help to Buy: Equity Loan \(2021-2023\)](#) scheme is now open for business.

Homes England has announced that first-time buyers interested in new-build homes can apply for the new Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme from Wednesday 16 December 2020.

With a Help to Buy: Equity Loan, the government lends homebuyers up to 20% (40% in London) of the cost of a newly built home. Customers pay a deposit of 5% or more and arrange a mortgage of 25% or more to make up the rest. The equity loan is interest-free for the first five years.

Homebuilders are getting into contract for the new scheme and starting to market their new build homes. Eligible first-time buyers will be able to reserve their homes from mid-December and get the keys to move in from 1 April 2021.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The Government is providing more ways to help families onto the housing ladder, and provide that life-changing moment when you get the keys to your own home.

Alongside First Homes, Shared Ownership and our £12bn investment in affordable housing, our new Help to Buy scheme will help thousands more families take their first step into a home of their own.

Will German, director of Help to Buy at Homes England, said:

Help to Buy has already helped more than 270,000 people into home ownership and 82% are first-time buyers. The new Help to Buy builds on this success with first-time buyers in front of mind.

We're pleased we can help homebuyers with smaller deposits to own a home, at a time where there are fewer options open to them. Housing, like most sectors, has experienced a slowdown during the Covid-crisis. But Help to Buy continues to give homebuilders the confidence to keep on building at a more crucial time than ever.

The new Help to Buy: Equity Loan (2021-2023) helps those who need it most, first-time buyers. Help to Buy will keep supporting first-time buyers so that more people are helped to make their first step on the housing ladder.

Help to Buy (2021-2023) has regional price limits, set at 1.5 times the

average first-time buyer price in each region in England. This keeps the prices of new homes closer to the average regional first-time buyer property prices, reducing the amount that first-time buyers need to borrow.

Homebuilders selling Help to Buy homes under the new scheme must comply with more stringent conditions that aim to drive quality and consistent building standards. Help to Buy homebuilders must agree to follow Consumer Code for homebuilders, the New Homes Ombudsman, the Building Safety Charter and fulfil planning permissions and building regulations. They must also display their Home Builders Federation (HBF) star ratings when they advertise homes and give homebuyers a new home warranty before they complete their purchase.

Homebuyers interested in Help to Buy: Equity Loan (2021-2023) are encouraged to read the recently published [homebuyers guide](#) to know how the scheme works and how to apply.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- Over 270,000 properties were bought with the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2020. First-time buyers accounted for 82% per cent of total purchases.
- A quarter of first-time buyers who have bought with the scheme are from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared to less than a fifth of all first-time buyers nationally.
- Two-third (63%) of the first-time buyers were aged 34 and under.
- As well as reserving their property, homebuyers need to apply for their equity loan but they will not be able to legally complete their purchase until 1 April 2021 onwards.
- In England, the mean equity loan was £58,128 for first-time buyers and each of these mean equity loans were around 20% of the value of the corresponding mean purchase price. Most completions in the scheme used the full 20% equity loan available to them.

Help to Buy: Equity Loan (2021-2023), England.

First-time homebuyers who meet affordability and lending terms can borrow an equity loan of up to 20% (40% in London) of the sale price of a new build home. How much you can spend on your home will depend on which region it is in. North East £186,100; North West 224,400; Yorkshire and the Humber £228,100; East Midlands £261,900; West Midlands £255,600; East of England £407,400; London £600,000; South East £437,600; South West £349,000. You must fund at least 80% (60% in London) of the sale price with a mortgage and at least a 5% deposit.

Pay no interest on the loan for the first 5 years. Interest fees start at 1.75% and rise each year in April by the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) plus 2%. You pay a monthly management fee of £1 for the life of the loan. Homes England, the lender, secures the equity loan as a second charge on your Help to Buy home. You must repay the equity loan when you sell the home, pay off your mortgage or reach the end of your loan term. But, you can repay all or part (10% at a time, or if you have a 40% loan, 20% or 30%) of the loan any time before then.

An independent financial adviser and a solicitor may be able to help you decide if Help to Buy is right for you.

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage, equity loan or other loans secured against it.

www.helptobuy.gov.uk/equity-loan

For further information, please contact the Help to Buy media team at media_helptobuy@homesengland.gov.uk

United Kingdom and Canada announce recipient of first Media Freedom Award

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dominic Raab, the United Kingdom's First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, today announced the winner of the first Canada-United Kingdom Media Freedom Award to recognize the journalists, individuals and organizations that actively promote and protect media freedom.

This year's winner, the Belarusian Association of Journalists, was singled out for its ongoing commitment to journalistic ethics and principles and its perseverance and self-sacrifice in the face of increased targeted crackdowns on media in Belarus.

The announcement was made jointly during this year's Global Conference for Media Freedom, held virtually today, November 16 2020, and hosted by Canada and Botswana. The conference builds on the success of its inaugural session, held in London, United Kingdom, in 2019.

Attendees discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on media freedom, the increasing damage of disinformation to public trust in journalism and the prevalence of physical threats to journalists.

The establishment of the Media Freedom Award is one part of Canadian-UK efforts to drive international action on improving the safety of journalists around the world.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

It is vital that journalists, wherever they work in the world, can shine a light on what is going on, without fear of retaliation, censorship or punishment. I pay tribute to the Belarusian Association of Journalists for their dedication to reporting human rights and electoral fraud in the face of violence, threats and

intimidation. The work of those who defend media freedoms has never been more important.

François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs said:

At a time when media freedom is increasingly under attack, we commend the Belarusian Association of Journalists as it fights to protect the rights and freedoms, lives and livelihoods of media professionals in that country. Its ongoing efforts to counter repression and disinformation ensure the voices of journalists and citizens are heard, and matter, when it counts the most.

Andrei Bastunets, Chairperson of the Belarusian Association of Journalists said:

It is a great honour for the Belarusian Association of Journalists to receive this award. We regard this award as a high appraisal of the work of our colleagues, who every day honestly cover events in Belarus, risking their freedom and health. Today, journalists in Belarus have to work under gunfire, literally, in a peaceful country. They are victims of police violence and are sentenced to long-term arrests for their work. We thank every voice in the world that speaks out for Belarusian journalists today! This is very important for our colleagues who remain imprisoned.

Notes to Editors

- The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) is the only independent journalists' union in the country.
- For the last 25 years, the BAJ has supported independent journalism in Belarus and has reached 1,300 members in Minsk.
- In 2003, the BAJ was awarded the Golden Pen of Freedom prize at the World Newspaper Congress and the World Editors Forum in Dublin, Ireland.
- In 2004, the European Parliament awarded the BAJ the Andrei Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.
- The BAJ also received the Atlantic Council Freedom Award in 2011.

Associated links

[Advice on net-zero energy challenges](#)

This letter summarises main points arising from briefing sessions on considerations for applying science and technology to retrofitting to

decarbonise homes and developing a hydrogen economy.

The briefing was requested by the Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and builds on previous CST advice to the Prime Minister on 'achieving net zero carbon emissions through a whole systems approach'.

[Tackling modern slavery in DRC: call for bids](#)

World news story

The British Embassy Kinshasa is seeking for projects to tackle modern slavery in the mining sector in DRC for the financial year 2020 to 2021.



UK Government

Overview

The UK aims to combat all forms of modern slavery in key mining sectors in DRC through lobbying, advocacy and awareness raising activities and vocational or educational support. We welcome bids for projects of up to \$77,000.

Selection criteria

When designing your project, please bear in mind that:

- projects should aim to start in late November and end in March 2021
- payments are normally made quarterly and/ after the completion of project activities
- advance payments are not usually possible
- we require monitoring reports, which should include a detailed financial report
- at the end of a project, we require a completion report, including a detailed financial report
- project bids should ensure that the services are designed and implemented in a manner that:
 - respects international human rights norms
 - considers gender impact
 - is designed and implemented in accordance with the 'do no harm' principle
- duty of care for all staff and participants in the engagement activities shall lie with the supplier

We are particularly looking for implementers who can demonstrate:

- a strong track record of successful project delivery in DRC and will be able to draw on previous lessons learned to mitigate against unintended consequences of interventions
- active consideration of gender inequality by ensuring that where possible, women are offered places in any training and capacity building activities funded by HMG and included in training and consultative panels

How to bid

The deadline for submitting concept bids is 26 November 2020 at 23:59 (GMT).

Documents

Disclaimer

Due to the volume of bids expected, it is unlikely we will be able to provide feedback on unsuccessful bids.

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Infrastructure work at York Central given the go ahead

Construction can start at York Central after City of York Council gave planning permission last night (12 November 2020) for infrastructure works backed by £77m of government funding.

The York Central development includes 2500 new homes; up to 1.2 million square feet of commercial development and improved visitor access to the National Railway Museum. The area has enterprise zone status, with around 6500 new jobs are expected to be created and a £1.2 bn boost to the local economy.

This is a major step forward in the development of one of the largest brownfield sites in England following the formation of the York Central Partnership in 2016 by Homes England, Network Rail, the City of York Council and the National Railway Museum. Homes England and Network Rail have supported the development of the site through land acquisition and master planning, and they will now oversee the infrastructure projects.

Government infrastructure investment of £77m was first announced in the March 2020 Budget and confirmed in August 2020. The infrastructure will unlock brownfield land with significant access problems and includes a new bridge over the East Coast mainline railway, as well as new cycling and pedestrian routes; drainage systems; and to allow for a new public park to be built.

The city council approved a reserved matters planning application that allows the infrastructure work to go ahead on Thursday 12 November 2020. Initial site clearance has already started and contractor are due to start on site in early 2021.

Peter Freeman, Chair of Homes England, said:

“York Central is one of the most important brownfield sites in the country and this exciting project will create homes, jobs and a better visitor experience for the city. Starting work on the infrastructure brings this development much closer and we look forward to working with all the project partners on behalf of the government to unlock this challenging site.”

Stuart Kirkwood, Group Property Director for Network Rail, said:

“We’re really pleased this development has taken such an important step forward. With our partners, we are excited to progress such a positive development for York which will deliver housing, jobs and economic growth. Unlocking under-used railway land is a core part of our strategy, helping to create great places for businesses and communities to thrive.”

Councillor Keith Aspden, leader of City of York Council, said:

“This is another vital step towards delivering the York Central scheme and

unlocking a £1.16bn boost to our economy, including a new generation of jobs and hundreds of affordable homes when York needs it most.

“I would like to thank all our partners, including Homes England, Network Rail and the wider York Central Partnership, who have secured funding from West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the York and North Yorkshire LEP. Working together, we are delivering where decades of proposals have failed.”

[ends]

Notes to editors

This is part of a wider £155m funding package pulled together by the council, which also includes £23.5m of a total of £37.2m from the West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund and Leeds City Region Growth Deal, which will also fund the ambitious plans to transform the front of the railway station.

The West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund has been part-funded through the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Deal, a £1 billion package of Government funding to drive growth and job creation across the Leeds City Region. The aim is to create around 20,000 new jobs and add £2.4 billion a year to the economy by the mid-2030s.

City of York Council has also received a Local Growth Fund contribution of £6m from York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and agreed to borrow £35m to be repaid using retained business rates from the York Central Enterprise Zone.