

Devon Home Choice Consultation

The new way of allocating homes in Devon

Let us know your views on our Questionnaire

East Devon District Council

T: (01395) 517469

W: www.eastdevon.gov.uk

Exeter City Council

T: (01392) 265726

W: www.exeter.gov.uk

Mid Devon District Council

T: 01884 234388

W: www.middevon.gov.uk

North Devon District Council

T: 01271 325757

W: www.northdevon.gov.uk

Plymouth City Council

T: 01752 305950

W: www.plymouth.gov.uk

South Hams District Council

T: 01803 861234

W: www.southhams.gov.uk

Teignbridge District Council

T: 01626 361101

W: www.teignbridge.gov.uk

Torbay Council

T: 01803 208723

W: www.torbay.gov.uk

Torridge District Council

T: 01237 428700

W: www.torridge.gov.uk

West Devon Borough Council

T: 01822 813600

W: www.westdevon.gov.uk

Introduction

Devon Home Choice is a new Choice Based Letting scheme that will cover the whole of Devon. Council and housing association homes available to let in Devon will be advertised through Devon Home Choice each week. You will be able to bid for homes that suit your requirements. Homes will still be offered to those assessed as being in the most need.

The 10 local authorities in Devon are working together to provide people seeking housing the opportunity to move within Devon. For example to take up a new job.

Devon Home Choice will be phased in across Devon from autumn 2009. It will be fully operational across Devon by the end of 2009.

Under Devon Home Choice we will use a common:

- Application form
- Housing register
- Approach to assessing housing need and awarding priority
- Approach to advertising available homes

We have developed a draft policy that sets out how Devon Home Choice will work. Consultation is being undertaken with all stakeholders on the draft policy. The consultation will run until 2 March 2009.

Please take a few minutes to read the following summary of how Devon Home Choice will work and let us know your views on the consultation questionnaire.

The full policy is available from each of the Devon local authorities (see front cover for details).

Aims of Devon Home Choice

The aims of Devon Home Choice are:

- To provide choice for people seeking housing and the ability to move within Devon
- To develop a common scheme across Devon that is transparent, easy to understand and accessible to all

How Devon Home Choice will work

Step 1: Register with Devon Home Choice

To bid for homes, you must join the housing register by completing the Devon Home Choice application form. You can do this:

- Online at the Devon Home Choice website
- By collecting and completing an application form

If you are already registered with a Devon local authority or a housing association, we will write and tell you how your details will be transferred to the Devon Home Choice register. You may be asked to provide some further information.

All applications will be assessed for eligibility to join the Devon Home Choice register. You may be asked to provide further supporting evidence.

An advocate (for example family, friend or support agency) can complete the application form on your behalf if you find this difficult.

You will be asked if you would like any support to:

- Complete the application form
- Take part in Devon Home Choice

Step 2: Your housing need is assessed

You will be placed into 1 of 5 housing need bands. This will be based on our assessment of your housing need, and whether or not you have a local connection to Devon.

The 5 housing need bands are as follows (see full policy for details):

Emergency Housing Need (A)

You will only be placed in the Emergency housing need band (A) if your need for housing is assessed as so exceptional that you must take priority over all other applicants. Substantial evidence must exist to award this priority.

The following are examples of the type of situations that would qualify:

- Urgent health/wellbeing need
- To escape violence or threat of violence, harassment or a traumatic event

High Housing Need (B)

You will be placed in the High housing need band (B) if you:

- Have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority
- Are threatened with homelessness and have been placed in the 'Prevention of homelessness' category by a Devon local authority
- Lack two or more bedrooms
- Are under occupying a council or housing association home by 2 or more bedrooms
- Have been assessed as having a high health/wellbeing need
- Live in a home assessed as being in a state of High disrepair
- Have been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing

You will also be awarded this priority if it is assessed that doing so:

- Meets a social need or supports the delivery of another service
- Leads to effective management of social housing within Devon

Medium Housing Need (C)

You will be placed in the Medium housing need band (C) if you:

- Lack 1 bedroom
- Are under occupying a council or housing association home by 1 bedroom
- Have been assessed as having a medium health/wellbeing need
- Live in a home assessed as being in a state of medium disrepair
- Live above the 3rd floor with children aged under 8

Low Housing Need (D)

You will be placed in the Low housing need band (D) if you:

- Have been assessed as non priority and/or intentionally homeless by a Devon local authority
- Have been assessed as having a low health/wellbeing need
- Live in a home assessed as being in a state of low disrepair
- Share facilities, such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen
- Have parental responsibility for a child/children who stay with you regularly, where the child/children normally lives in another area
- Have received a valid notice to quit from your landlord
- Have a housing need but have no local connection to Devon
- Have been assessed as having deliberately worsened your circumstances

No Housing Need (E)

You will be placed in the No housing need band (E) if it is assessed that you live in a property that is adequate to meet your housing need.

If you are assessed as having more than 1 need this will be dealt with as follows:

- If you have **2 or more needs from different bands**, you will be placed in the band where the highest need is.
- If you have **2 needs from the same band** you will receive a 6-month advance on your 'application date', to recognise your additional need.
- If you have **3 or more needs from same band** you will be placed in the next higher band.

Your application will also be assessed to determine the size of home that your household requires. You will be able to bid for homes as follows:

1 bed homes: If you are single or a couple with no children who normally live with you

2 bed homes: If you have 1 child
If you, or someone you live with is pregnant
If you have 2 children of the same sex
If you have a son and a daughter who are both under 8

3 bed homes: If you have a son and a daughter, and at least 1 is over 8
If you have 3 children

4 bed homes: If you have 4 children

After your application has been assessed you will be sent a letter setting out:

- What band you have been awarded and the reasons for this
- Your effective date
- What size of home you can bid for
- How Devon Home Choice works

Step 3: Advertising of homes

Homes will be advertised:

- On the Devon Home Choice website
- In a weekly newsletter available from a wide range of places throughout Devon

We will send you the newsletter if you:

- Have been assessed as vulnerable
- Have been placed in one of the high priority bands
- Are unable to find information about available homes

Adverts will include a description of the home, including:

- Type of property (for example a house or flat)
- Number of bedrooms
- Location
- Any adaptations (for example disabled facilities)
- Rent

The adverts will make it clear whether there are any restrictions on who can bid for a home. This might include for example because:

- The home has disabled facilities and is being advertised only for people who need these facilities
- A local connection to a particular area is required

We will be monitoring the number of homes let in each local authority area to people from other parts of Devon. If there is a significant rise in the number of lets to people from other parts of Devon in any local authority area, then only people with a local connection to that area will be able to bid for homes. This will be clearly stated in the advert.

Step 4: Bidding for homes

You can bid for homes for which you are eligible:

- Online at the Devon Home Choice website
- Via an automated telephone service
- In person at Council offices

You can apply for up to 3 homes each week.

An advocate (for example family, friend or support agency) can bid for homes on your behalf if you find this difficult.

Bids can be placed automatically on your behalf if you:

- Are unable to bid yourself
- Do not have an advocate to help you

You may not be eligible for a home if:

- Your bedroom requirement is different to the number of bedrooms
- There is local connection criteria that you do not meet
- There are disabled adaptations that you do not need
- There is an age restriction on the home that you do not meet

Any restrictions will be clearly indicated in the advert.

Step 5: Selecting the successful applicant

A list of everyone who bid for a home will be produced after the deadline for bids. The successful person will be selected based on:

- Whether they are eligible for the home
- Their housing need, and the band in which they have been placed
- Their effective date within that band

Step 6: Making/Accepting an offer of a home

If you are successful with a bid for a home you will be invited to view the property. If you have been successful with more than 1 bid in the same week, you will have to choose which home you wish to look at. You will not be able to look at more than 1 home in any 1 week.

If the landlord offers you the home, you will normally be expected to make a decision whether to accept the offer within 48 hours.

Step 7: Feedback

Feedback will be provided on all homes let through Devon Home Choice.

This will:

- Ensure that Devon Home Choice is open and transparent
- Help you make informed choices about which homes to bid for and your realistic chances of success

Feedback will include the:

- Number of applicants who bid for each home
- Band of successful applicant
- Effective date of successful applicant

You will also be able to get personalised feedback on the Devon Home Choice website. This will let you know the outcome of any bids you have made.

Reviews and Complaints

You have the right to ask for a review regarding certain decisions made about your application. Further details are contained in the full policy.

Further Information

If you want to find out more about Devon Home Choice please contact:

- Your local authority (see front cover) or
- The Devon Home Choice Coordinator, Rupert Warren,

rupert.warren@exeter.gov.uk