

# Devon Home Choice affordable Housing information

## Do you want an affordable home?

Do you think you or someone you know might have an affordable housing need? If you do, then the way to find out about vacancies and to apply for any home that would suit your needs is to register with Devon Home Choice. Devon Home Choice is the Devon-wide register for affordable housing.

The definition of 'housing need' can be found on the Devon Home Choice website, but you could be in housing need if, for example, you are an adult but living with your parents because you cannot afford to rent locally. Many people don't think they qualify if they are in work or are not on benefits. However, it may be worth applying even if you are earning. The high cost of renting privately means that you could qualify for an affordable home if you are earning a regular salary.

Many affordable homes in rural areas like your village have a local connection restriction. This means that only households with a strong local connection to the parish will be considered in the first instance. This connection could be through residency, employment or a strong family connection to the parish. At each re-let the homes will be advertised through Devon Home Choice and applicants in housing need with a strong local connection to the parish will once again be given priority.

The definition of local connection to your village is set out by Mid Devon District Council as the planning authority. Typically a person or household has a local connection to a village if they have one or more of the following connections:

- a) residents or a household including someone living or working in a parish or nearby parish currently in overcrowded or otherwise unacceptable accommodation.
- b) newly formed households with a person living or working in the parish or nearby parish.
- c) households including a retired or disabled person who has lived or worked in the parish or nearby parish for a total of 5 years or more, and
- d) former residents of the parish or nearby parish with strong local connections;

If think you are in housing need and would like to be considered for an affordable home in your village the first step is to register with Devon Home Choice. You can register either online on [www.devonhomechoice.com](http://www.devonhomechoice.com) or contact the Housing Needs Team at Mid Devon District Council on 01884 255255.

Once you are registered on Devon Home Choice you will be given a banding from A to E. This will indicate your level of housing need. The higher your band the more priority for housing you are deemed to have. But your local connection to your village is a very important factor in whether you will be allocated a home in your village. Local people with a low housing priority will be considered over a household without a local connection but a higher need.

If you are registered on Devon Home Choice and have any queries about your application please ring Mid Devon District Council to talk to a member of the Housing Need Team.

You can download a user guide at :

[www.devonhomechoice.com/Devon\\_Home\\_Choice/PDF/DHC\\_UserGuide2015.pdf](http://www.devonhomechoice.com/Devon_Home_Choice/PDF/DHC_UserGuide2015.pdf)

**In order to apply for affordable housing you MUST register with Devon Home Choice.**

## **DEVON HOME CHOICE FAQs**

### **Q1. What is Devon Home Choice?**

A. Devon Home Choice is the choice based lettings system for the allocation of affordable housing across Devon. All affordable rented homes are advertised on Devon Home Choice and those households who are registered on the system are eligible to bid for those homes.

### **Q2. How do I apply?**

If you believe you are in need of affordable housing, or just not sure, you should register on Devon Home Choice by visiting [www.devonhomechoice.com](http://www.devonhomechoice.com) or by contacting your Local Authority Housing Options Team. You will then complete an application form.

### **Q3. What happens after my application?**

Your application will be assessed by Devon Home Choice staff at your Local Authority and you will either be accepted onto the register or your application will be rejected. If your application is rejected, you will receive a clear explanation from Devon Home Choice staff as to why. If you are accepted onto the register, you will be given a Banding between A and E<sup>1</sup> which indicates your level of housing need.

A = Emergency need

B = High need

C = Medium Need

D = Low Need

E = No Housing Need - you can still be included on the register if you fall within Band E although it is classified as no need.

### **Q4. How is my application assessed?**

You are eligible to be included on the Devon Home Choice register if you are in housing need. This means that you are living in unsuitable accommodation and cannot meet your housing needs without assistance. Unsuitable accommodation covers a number of criteria - i.e. if you are living in overcrowded accommodation, if you are living in a property that is too large for your current needs, if your current property is in poor condition, if you have specific medical or mobility needs that make your current property unsuitable or if you are living in a short term insecure private let and are in danger of becoming homeless.

### **Q5. I am working and earning an average salary and/or I am on benefits. Am I still eligible for affordable rented housing?**

House prices are so high in Devon that you could be earning an average household income and still be eligible for affordable housing. If you are unsure it is always worth registering with Devon Home Choice to check.

### **Q6. What is local connection?**

In order to be eligible for affordable housing in rural communities you need a local connection to the Parish in which you wish to live.

This varies between Local Authorities -Mid Devon District Council typically states the local connection means one or more of the following connections:

- a) residents or a household including someone living or working in a parish or nearby parish currently in overcrowded or otherwise unacceptable accommodation.
- b) newly formed households with a person living or working in the parish or nearby parish.
- c) households including a retired or disabled person who has lived or worked in the parish or nearby parish for a total of 5 years or more, and
- d) former residents of the parish or nearby parish with strong local connections;

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<sup>1</sup> In Teignbridge, households are banded into Bands A – D only.

**Q7. How are the properties advertised?**

All properties are advertised on Devon Home Choice between 12:00am on Wednesday morning to 11:59pm on the following Monday night. No homes are advertised on a Tuesday. Properties are only advertised for 6 days and are not re-advertised unless they are not let after the first attempt.

New developments are also publicised by the Local Authority, the Housing Association and the Parish Council notice boards in the months leading up to their allocation. This is to make everyone in the community aware that the homes are coming up for allocation and to ensure that all of the eligible households are registered with Devon Home Choice and know when to bid for the homes.

**Q8. How do I look for properties and make a bid?**

When you register with Devon Home Choice you are given a unique reference number and password. You can log on using these details and can search for suitable properties. You are also told what size property you qualify for (number of bedrooms) and can only bid for properties that are the relevant size. If there is a local connection requirement you will be told in the advert.

**Q9. What happens once I have made a bid?**

When the bidding process ends, all bids are ranked electronically by Banding and then by the length of time that the household has been on that particular Band. The applicant who has come at the top of the list is contacted and if the property is suitable for their needs they are invited to view the home. If they accept the home, the process ends. If not, the second applicant on the list is contacted and so on until the property is let.