

DHC Policy Review Consultation Form

Devon Home Choice is a choice based letting scheme that covers the whole of Devon. It is a partnership between the 10 Devon local authorities and 23 housing associations operating in Devon.

Please note that although the consultation form is hosted by Exeter City Council this process is for all of the Devon Home Choice partners.

This consultation seeks views on the Devon Home Choice Policy and proposed changes which are due to come into effect from 1st April 2021. The consultation will be open from 1st November 2020 until 31st January 2021.

The Devon Home Choice Policy sets out the Devon housing authorities' collective social housing scheme which determine priorities, and details the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation as required by the Housing Act 1996.

The consultation aims to obtain feedback from (including but not limited to) Statutory agency workers, Voluntary agency workers, existing tenants of a DHC partner landlord and Other DHC applicants.

The current policy wording and details of the proposed changes can be found at www.devonhomechoice.com/consultation. These changes have been proposed following an initial review of the policy by the Devon Home Choice partners. A paper version of the consultation form is available from your local authority on request.

The Devon Home Choice Policy must meet legislative requirements.

All feedback provided will be considered by the Devon Home Choice Management Board and the outcomes will be published on the website but please note that we will not be able to provide individual responses or feedback.

Section 1 - About you

1) Are you (please tick one):

- Statutory agency worker
- Voluntary agency worker
- Existing tenant of a DHC partner landlord
- DHC applicant
- Other

If you have answered this question 'Other' please provide details.

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2) If you answered question 1 either 'Existing tenant of a DHC partner landlord' or 'DHC applicant':

Which local authority area do you live in? (please tick one)

- East Devon
- Exeter
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Plymouth
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Torbay
- Torridge
- West Devon
- Outside Devon

3) If you are a DHC applicant, which local authority area are you seeking to live in? (please tick one)

- East Devon
- Exeter
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Plymouth
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Torbay
- Torridge
- West Devon

Conditional questions if question 1 is answered 'Statutory agency worker'
'Voluntary agency worker'

4) Which local authority area(s) do you work in? (please tick all that apply)

- East Devon
- Exeter
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Plymouth
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Torbay
- Torridge
- West Devon

Section 2 – Priority and how it is awarded

Applications on the Devon Home Choice register are awarded a band depending on their level of housing need and a bedroom need to determine the size of home which they will normally be eligible to bid for.

1) I understand how Devon Home Choice applications are prioritised/banded. Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

2) Devon Home Choice uses the 'bedroom standard' to assess the size of home applicants need (see section 3.18 of the policy). This means that children of the opposite sex can share a bedroom up to the age of 10, children of the same sex between the ages of 10 and 16 can share a bedroom and anyone over the age of 16 is allocated their own bedroom need.

Do you agree that this is a fair way of deciding the size of home applicants can bid for?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional)

3) Do you think that households who are lacking at least 2 bedrooms should be allowed some flexibility to decide which household members they are happy to share a bedroom (e.g that 2 siblings of the same sex over the age of 16 can share a bedroom)?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

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Section 3 – Rent Arrears

Applicants who have rent arrears or tenancy related debt above £500 will usually be placed in the No Housing need Band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in the Local Authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. Each case will be considered individually (see section 2.6.3 of the policy).

This sanction will apply unless:

- there are exceptional circumstances or
- they clear their debt or
- the landlord is satisfied that the applicant is entitled to an amount of benefit sufficient to clear the arrears or
- the applicant has shown a clear intention to pay. That payments are made in accordance with an agreed repayment schedule during a period of at least 3 months or
- there are exceptional circumstances relating to need.

(see section 2.6.4 of the policy).

Applicants who have had their rent arrears included in a Debt Relief Order, bankruptcy declaration or individual voluntary agreement (IVA) will still have their applications placed into Band E or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need, unless there is some additional and exceptional reason for not doing so.

Applicants with rent arrears or tenancy related debt to a social or private landlord that were accrued in the previous two years on their current or previous tenancy will not normally be offered a property. (section 2.6.2 of the policy).

1) It is reasonable to exclude those with rent arrears above £500 with no payment plan as it does not demonstrate a change of behaviour if they do not address former debt therefore increasing the chances of a risk of tenancy failure.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

2) It is reasonable to exclude applicants with rent arrears included in a Debt Relief Order (unless the debt has been paid in full) or Bankruptcy Order which includes Rent Arrears or Tenancy Related Debt for 2 years.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

3) Do you have any comments relating to applicants with rent arrears section of the policy?

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

Section 4 – Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing priority can be awarded if it is assessed that an applicant's health and/ or wellbeing is made worse by their current home, or lack of a home, or that an applicant's health means that their current home is unsuitable or if an applicant has health and wellbeing needs arising from domestic abuse (see section 3.19 of the policy).

There is a Health and Wellbeing Assessment Framework in the policy (see section 3.20 of the policy) which contains information on how an applicant's health and wellbeing priority is assessed. Local authorities will often request supporting evidence from a suitable medical or support professional to enable them to assess an applicant's needs.

1) I understand how priority (banding) for health and wellbeing needs is assessed.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

2) Do you have any comments relating to the provision of supporting evidence?

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

3) The Health and Wellbeing Assessment priority award criteria is fair.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

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Section 5 – Local connection

People who do not have a local connection to Devon are allowed to join the housing register but in most cases their application will be limited to Band D unless there are special circumstances (see section 3.9 of the policy).

1) I agree that applicants with no local connection should be able to join the Devon Home Choice register.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

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Some homes may be advertised on Devon Home Choice with a requirement that the successful applicant has a local connection to a specified area, or applicants who have a local connection may be prioritised over those who do not. This may be due to a planning requirement (called a Section 106 agreement), or a Local Lettings Plan, or because a local authority has reached their limit for moves between areas – these are referred to as cross border moves (see section 4.2 of the policy)

2) It is right that Devon Home Choice monitors ‘cross border moves’ between local authority areas and that a limit capped at 2% of lets for ‘cross border moves’ is reasonable (see section 64 of the procedures manual).

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely disagree) to 10 (Completely agree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

Section 6 – Armed Forces

The Devon Home Choice Policy is compliant with the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant and Government guidance on improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces (see section 3.10 of the policy).

The local connection provisions do not apply to members of the armed forces and some former service personnel. In addition, the local connection criteria will not be applied to divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

1) The exemption from local connection provisions should also be applied to the adult children of members of the armed forces who are no longer able to stay in the family home.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*)

Section 7 – Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is unacceptable. Perpetrators of domestic abuse will not be eligible to register with Devon Home Choice. Some special provisions have been made within the Devon Home Choice policy to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are treated sensitively and fairly (see section 3.11 of the policy).

1) People who have served with a domestic abuse protection notice or order in the last 2 years will not be eligible to join the housing register. Do you agree that this is fair?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments *(optional)*

Section 8 – Advertising and allocation of homes

Homes are advertised on Devon Home Choice from midnight on Wednesday until midnight on the following Monday. Applicants may bid for up to 3 homes per week.

At the end of each letting cycle applicants who have bid for a property will be prioritised, firstly by their band (e.g applicants in the High housing need band (Band B) will be listed above applicants in the Medium housing need band (Band C)) and secondly within each band in order of their band start date, with the applicant with the earliest band start date at the top.

Adapted or accessible homes may be prioritised by the accessibility need of the applicant (e.g applicants who require a wheelchair accessible home will be prioritised for that type of property over those who do not require a wheelchair accessible home). See section 62 of the Procedures Manual for more information on the shortlisting process.

1) I understand how applicants are prioritised for homes?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments *(optional)*.

2) Do you use the Devon Home Choice App to place bids?

- Yes
- No

Comments (*optional*).

3) Are you aware that you can set up property alerts to send you an email when a property which might be suitable for you is being advertised?

- Yes
- No

Comments (*optional*).

4) The Devon Home Choice Management Board may consider introducing flexible letting cycles. This may mean that some homes may be advertised whenever they become available and would not be advertised in accordance with the current advertising cycle (from midnight on Wednesday until midnight on the following Monday). This is something which I would like to see introduced.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1	2	3	4	5
Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Comments (*optional*).

Section 9 - Reviews

Any applicant has the right to request a review of decisions taken in regard to their application (see section 4.21 of the policy).

1) I am aware of how an applicant can request a review of their application.
Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

2) I understand the different roles of local authorities and landlords with regard to requesting a review.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

Section 10 – Proposed Change to the current policy

Following discussions and consideration by the Devon Home Choice Management Board it is proposed to make the following changes to the current DHC Policy:

1) That the Band C for applicants with children under 8 living above the third floor (see section 3.6.3 of the policy) is not awarded in blocks of flats with lifts where improvement works have been carried out which include windows having been fitted with restrictors. This would enable landlords to allocate

homes to applicants with young children in the future. Do you agree that the band reason should be removed in these circumstances?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

Section 11 – General

1) Do you have any comments with regard the changes which are currently being proposed and which are detailed in the [proposed policy changes](#)?

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

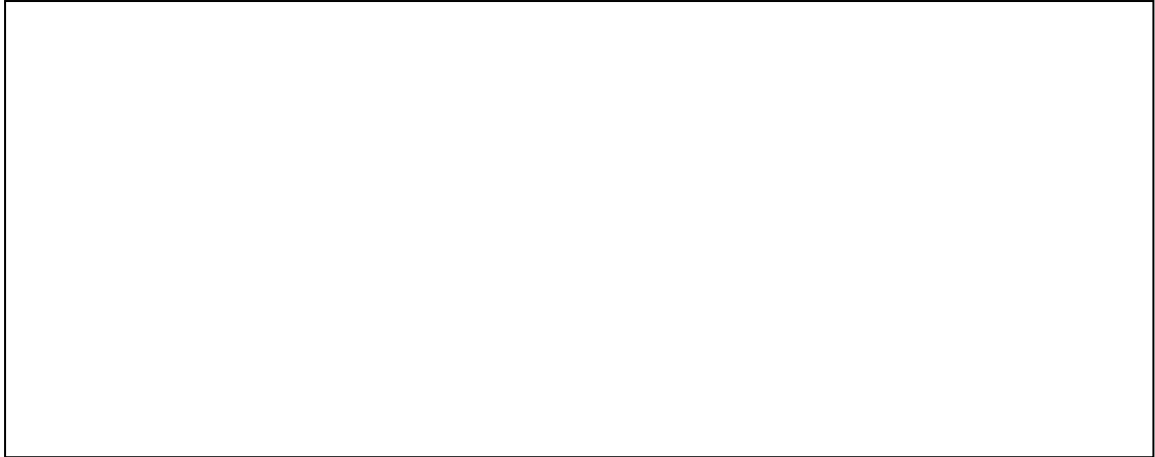
2) Are there any banding reasons which you consider to be unfair? If yes please provide details.

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

3) Are there any other areas of the Devon Home Choice Policy which you think should be reviewed? Where possible please refer to the specific section of the policy.

Comments (*optional*).

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