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# Devon Home Choice

Member Briefing 15 February 2024

Welcome – Cllr Simon Clist Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Property

Simon Newcombe – MDDC Housing Lead and Corporate Manager

Gary Pitman – DHC Project Lead (Exeter City Council)


Sarah Thomas – MDDC Housing Options Team



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## Aims

The aims of the presentation are to provide members with a better understanding of DHC, including:

- The wider / legal context
  - DHC Policy and how it works in practice
  - Benefits of DHC and choice based letting
  - Local context for Mid Devon
  - Review and updating DHC policy
  - Where to get more information
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# Legal and wider context



## Rules on allocating social housing

- **Legislation and rules around allocating social housing**
- **Housing Act 1996** is key legislation
- Every housing authority (LA) must have an **allocation scheme to determine housing priorities** and this is managed by our Housing Options team
- An LA's allocation scheme must include a statement about how it will offer a **choice of accommodation to applicants** or the opportunity for them to **express a preference** about the accommodation offered – choice based letting
- Requirement for a **transparent, consistent approach**
- Legally, must give reasonable preference to **specific groups**:
  - **Homeless** and those where we have a **homelessness duty**
  - People occupying **unsanitary** and **overcrowded properties** or with **medical** or **welfare** needs
  - Threats of **violence** and **domestic abuse**
  - Former and current members of **Armed Forces**
- Additional responsibilities and housing priorities towards **young homelessness** including Corporate Parenting legislation and **Care Leavers**

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# Choice Based Lettings



## Choice Based Lettings Scheme

- One way LA's can offer the required choice is through **Choice Based Lettings Scheme**
- LA's can adopt different systems of prioritising between applicants, these are principally **points-based** or **banding** approaches
- A **banding scheme is seen as typically easier to understand** for the applicant and easier to administer by the LA
- In addition to needs prioritisation and any points score or banding can still reflect **time waiting** for an allocation
- Need to avoid unnecessary **discrimination**
- Guidance on **right to move** and providing housing for **local people** still applies


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# DHC Overview and Policy



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## Overview of Devon Home Choice (DHC)

- DHC – Devon response to having a Choice Based Lettings Scheme
  - Live since 01.01.2010
  - Partnership made up of 10 Local Authorities in Devon and 24 Registered Partner Landlords operating under a common DHC Policy
  - One Application Form, Housing Register and approach to assessing Housing Needs and awarding priority
  - 27,413 Applicants on the Housing Register across Devon as at 29 Jan 2024, of which 1,752 are on the Mid Devon Register
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## Policy - Banding

### 5 Bands

- Emergency Housing Need Band (**Band A**)
- High Housing Need Band (**Band B**)
- Medium Housing Need Band (**Band C**)
- Low Housing Need Band (**Band D**)
- No Housing Need Band (**Band E**) \* Exeter, Teignbridge and Torbay do not register Band E


## Policy - Bedroom Need

- Ability to bid only for homes that match assessed bedroom needs with some exceptions
- Separate bedroom allocation to each:
  - Married or cohabiting couple
  - Person aged 16 years or more
  - Pair of adolescents aged 10 – 15 years of the same sex
  - Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex

Any unpaired person aged 10 to 15 years is paired, if possible, with a child under 10 years of the same sex or, if that is not possible, given a separate bedroom. The same applies to any unpaired child aged less than 10 years.

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## Policy - Cross Border Moves

- A key aim of DHC is to provide people seeking housing with choice and the ability to move within Devon e.g. to access work or move closer to support networks.
  - Moves across LA borders in Devon, where there is no local connection, is monitored on a monthly basis and where the 2% of lets limit has been met or exceeded based on the calculation for the previous 12 months, Local Authorities may then add a preference to those with a local connection to that local authority area.
  - Exceptions to the calculation of the figures include current tenants of DHC partner landlords, victims of domestic abuse and people who have left the UK armed forces in the last 5 years.
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	No. moved into local authority area, from within Devon, with no local connection	No. moved out of local authority with no local connection to LA moved to	Balance	Jan 23 to Dec 23 Lets	Jan 23 to Dec 23 Limit	Moved in from outside Devon with no <u>local connection</u> to LA moved to
East Devon	39	6	36	449	9	3
Exeter	23	36	-9	561	11	4
Mid Devon	14	11	5	197	4	2
North Devon	19	10	9	241	5	0
Plymouth	13	33	-18	842	17	2
South Hams	25	12	16	261	5	3
Teignbridge	30	15	17	343	7	2
Torbay	8	46	-36	225	5	2
Torrige	6	13	-5	149	3	2
West Devon	9	4	5	145	3	0

## 2022/23 Lets - % of people in LA area moving to a property in same LA

Property LA	Applicant LA									
	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	North Devon	Plymouth	South Hams	Teignbridge	Torbay	Torrige	West Devon
East Devon	80%	15%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Exeter	6%	80%	4%	2%	1%	1%	2%	4%	0%	1%
Mid Devon	2%	5%	86%	3%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%
North Devon	1%	2%	1%	86%	2%	0%	0%	1%	5%	0%
Plymouth	0%	1%	0%	0%	94%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%
South Hams	1%	0%	0%	0%	13%	80%	2%	2%	0%	1%
Teignbridge	4%	5%	1%	0%	3%	3%	74%	11%	0%	1%
Torbay	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	5%	3%	83%	0%	0%
Torrige	1%	1%	1%	11%	3%	0%	0%	1%	81%	1%
West Devon	1%	2%	3%	2%	11%	2%	1%	2%	2%	74%

## Policy - Health & Wellbeing

- **Urgent/Emergency Priority (Band A)** – Current accommodation so completely unsuitable that should applicant return to it the affect on their health would be critical and can only be averted by a move to alternative accommodation in the shortest time possible
- **High Priority (Band B)** – Housing situation severely affects the applicant that results in them being completely housebound, at risk of injury, relapse or unable to live independently. Alternative housing required to prevent serious risks to their health
- **Medium Priority (Band C)** – Housing situation seriously affects the applicant and is having an unacceptable impact to live independently. Alternative housing required to prevent a significant and serious deterioration
- **Low Priority (Band D)** – negative impact on applicant but not causing any significant deterioration to health or ability to live independently
- **No Priority (Band E)** – a health and wellbeing issue recognised but not affected by current accommodation as would not be improved by move to alternative accommodation

## Policy - Bidding

- Bidding Cycle starts on Wednesdays and ends on Mondays
- Bids can be placed on the website by logging into their account, by app, by contacting LAs to place bid on their behalf or by autobids (setting to be put on by LA for vulnerable applicants)
- Maximum of 3 bids per week
- Refusals (includes failure to respond, turn up for viewing or declined initial suggested match when contacted by landlord or declined a formal offer) of 3 or more homes considered reasonable by the LA managing their case may result in their priority being removed from the Exeter Register as no housing need



Q&A



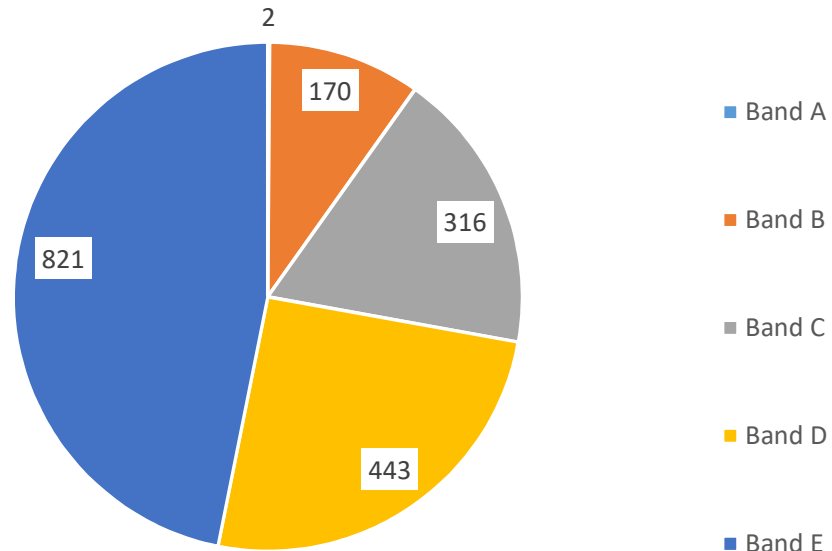


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# Local Context for Mid Devon

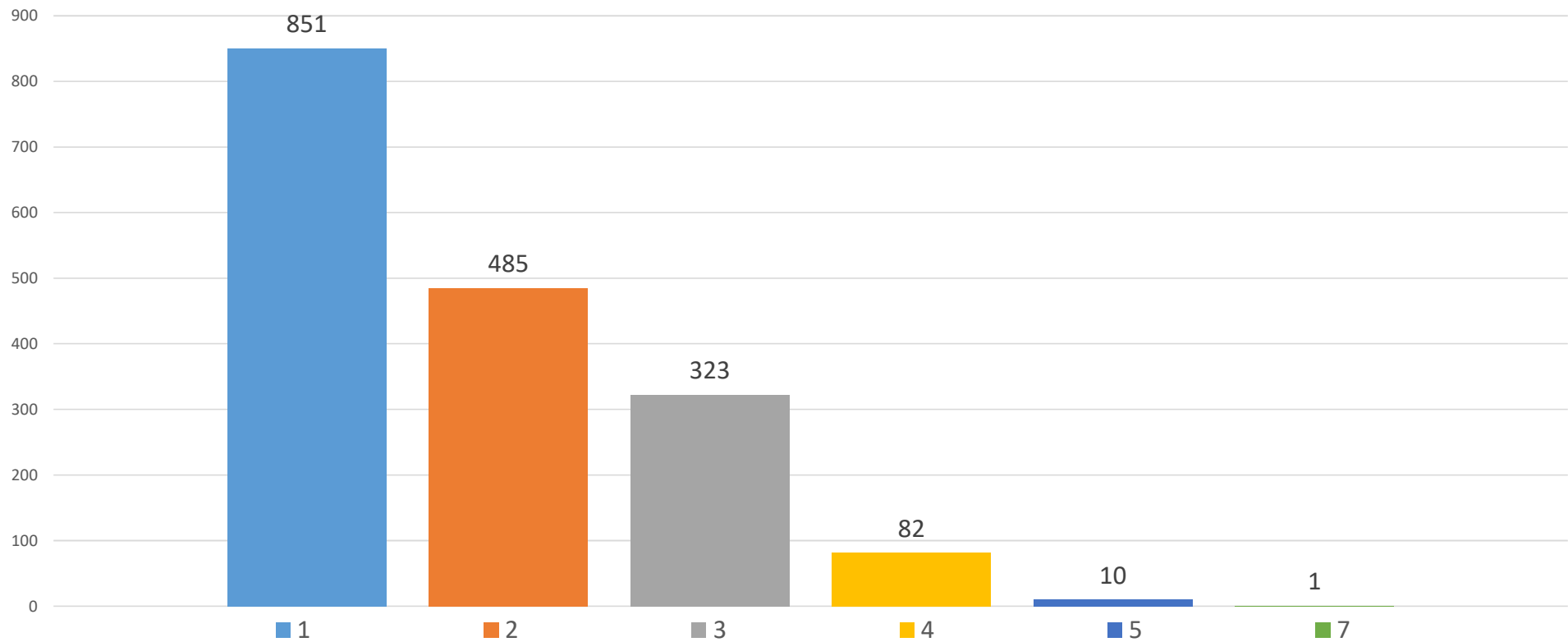


# Mid Devon Housing Register as at 29 January 2024



Total No on Register: 1,752

## Mid Devon register by bedroom need



## Letting numbers over last 5 years

<b>Year</b>	<b>Devon</b>	<b>Mid Devon</b>
<b>2022/23</b>	3188	<b>233</b>
<b>2021/22</b>	3297	<b>213</b>
<b>2020/21</b>	3260	<b>207</b>
<b>2019/20</b>	4204	<b>281</b>
<b>2018/19</b>	4598	<b>310</b>

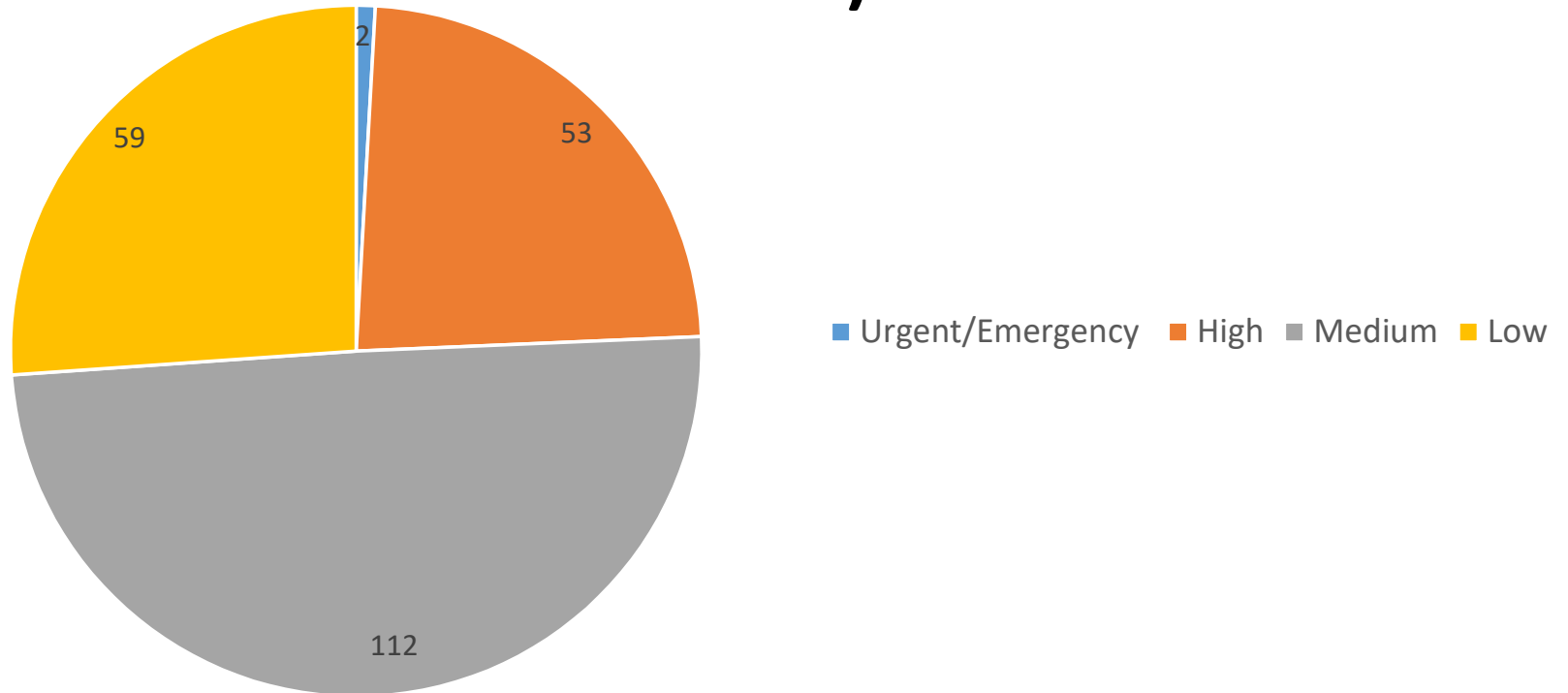
## Lets in Mid Devon area in 2023

<b>Mid Devon</b>	<b>1 Bed</b>	<b>2 Bed</b>	<b>3 Bed</b>	<b>4 Bed</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Band A</b>	<b>5</b>				<b>5</b>
<b>Band B</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Band C</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>28</b>
<b>Band D</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>11</b>
<b>Band E</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>13</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>195</b>

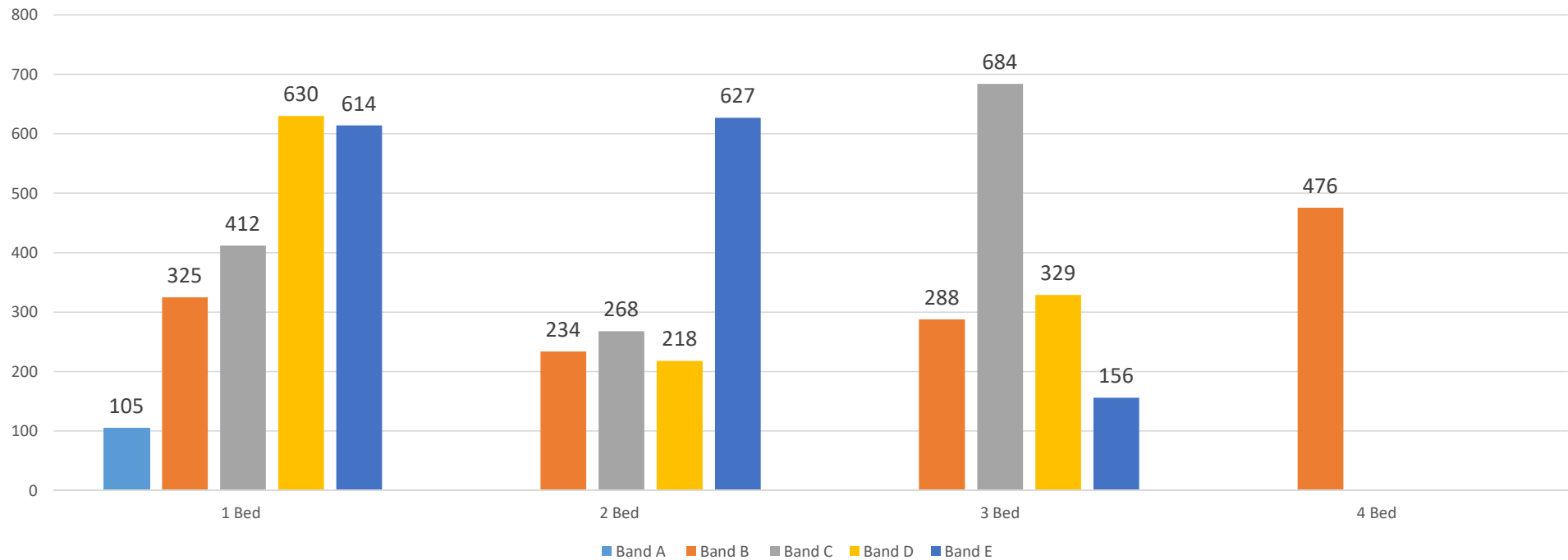
Local Authority	No on register in Bands A - D	No of Lets in LA area in 2023	No of applicants per property let
East Devon	2886	451	6.4
Exeter	2192	576	3.8
<b>Mid Devon</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>4.6</b>
North Devon	1459	266	5.5
Plymouth	5361	896	6.0
South Hams	874	267	3.3
Teignbridge	1494	376	4.0
Torbay	1690	244	6.9
Torridge	1219	160	7.6
West Devon	515	157	3.3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18623</b>	<b>3598</b>	<b>5.2</b>

**Housing  
Supply  
Pressures –  
geographical  
variances**

## Mid Devon H&W Priority (226 Applicants as at 30.01.2024)



## Average waiting time (in days) from band start date to tenancy start date for homes let in Mid Devon in 2023





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# Policy Review



## Policy Review

- **Annual policy review** process – live for 2024/25
  - Application of bandings
  - Priorities and vulnerable groups
  - Technical standards – overcrowding / definitions of bedroom need etc
- **DHC Board – all Registered Provider partners**
- **Member input** in policy changes
- Homes PDG review / recommendation
- Cabinet decision
- Guidance on **right to move** and providing housing for **local people** still applies

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# More information



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## Website [www.devonhomechoice.com](http://www.devonhomechoice.com)

- **Useful Information Page**
  - Monitoring Reports
  - **Common Myths and FAQs**
  - **Guide to Devon Home Choice and FAQs for Council Members**
  - Advice for professionals, family or friends supporting someone with their application
  - **Guidance for applicants** including 'Are you Rent Ready' and 'How It Works' with video guides
- Results (what are my chances is available to applicants when they log in to their accounts)



Q&A

