

Devon Home Choice

Draft Housing Need Assessment Policy

Requires:

- legal check
- plain English check

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Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Devon Home Choice is a choice based letting scheme that covers the whole of Devon.

This Policy explains how local authority and housing association homes across Devon will be let. The Policy sets out:

- How to apply for housing
- Who is eligible for housing
- How applicants will be assessed and prioritised

All applicants are assessed in the same way, using the rules set out in this policy to ensure fairness and consistency.

1.2 Aims of Devon Home Choice

The aims of developing 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

Under Devon Home Choice there will be a common:

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

1.3 The scheme in brief

Local authority and housing association homes available to let will be advertised every week. People with applications on the housing register can look at details of the homes. They can then 'bid' for homes that they are eligible for.

The successful person will be selected from those that applied for a property based on:

- Their housing need, and the band in which they have been placed ([see Section 3.3](#))
- Their effective date within that band ([see Section 3.6](#))

Devon Home Choice will enable people to move within the county. This will greatly help people who need to move to get work or to benefit from support.

1.4 Statement of choice

The Devon Home Choice partnership believes in offering people seeking housing as much choice as possible. There is very high demand for social housing in Devon and the provision of choice has to be balanced with the need to ensure that housing goes to those with the greatest need.

Devon Home Choice has been developed to enable applicants to view the details of available properties across Devon, choose between them and bid for those properties for which they are eligible.

Whilst the aim of Devon Home Choice partners is to provide choice in the allocation of social housing in Devon, there will be a number of limited situations where this will not be possible. For example, where a landlord needs to make an urgent management move.

Devon Home Choice will provide people seeking housing in Devon with an understanding of:

- Their level of priority
- The availability of accommodation which is suitable for them
- The level of demand for social housing in Devon
- Their likelihood of being successful
- Whether to seek alternative housing solutions

1.5 Support for vulnerable people

Devon Home Choice offers many benefits to people seeking a home, but it does require them to be proactive. People will need to:

- Find information on available properties
- Choose between properties
- Bid for properties

The Devon Home Choice partners will work to ensure that everyone can share in these benefits and that people who are vulnerable do not miss out. A separate Participation Strategy sets out how this will be done.

1.6 Equal opportunities

Devon Home Choice must comply with a range of legislation. This includes the following legislation designed to ensure equal opportunities:

- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000

- The Data Protection Act 1998

The Devon Home Choice Participation Strategy sets out how this will be achieved for the Devon Home Choice scheme. It identifies:

- The possible barriers that some people may face in participating in Devon Home Choice
- Solutions to ensure everyone can participate.

Each of the organisations involved in the Devon Home Choice Partnership has an Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that:

- Everyone has equal access to services
- No one is discriminated against on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or for any other reason

Information on ethnicity is asked for as part of the allocation process. This will be used to monitor diversity and equality in the operation of the policy. Information on disability is collected in order that future needs for adapted homes can be assessed and that any home offered is suitable for the needs of the applicant.

Any allegations or concerns that an organisation has not acted appropriately have to be made directly to that organisation. All partner landlords have a complaints policy and an independent Ombudsman.

The following sections set out:

- How to apply for housing
- How applications will be assessed
- How properties will be advertised
- How applicants can bid for available properties
- How the successful applicants will be identified

Section 2

Access to housing

2.1 How to apply

Anyone wishing to bid for a home must apply to join the Devon Home Choice housing register. An applicant can register by any of the following methods:

- Online via our website at www.devonhomechoice
- By collecting an application form from any of the housing offices listed in appendix 2.

Please note that some partners may require applicants to undertake a housing options and assessment interview before completing an application form.

Advice and information on applying for housing is available from housing offices. See the list in appendix 2 for contact details.

2.2 What properties are covered by Devon Home Choice?

All local authority and housing association will be advertised for let through Devon Home Choice. This will include:

- General needs housing
- Sheltered homes
- The majority of disabled adapted properties.

The only exceptions may be some adapted homes, which may be directly offered to a household with matching needs.

However the scheme does not apply to the following types of properties: -

Non-Secure tenancies or 'temporary accommodation' – Any accommodation that is provided to meet an interim duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

Specialist supported accommodation – for example for young people or people with mental health problems

Mutual exchanges – If local authority or housing association tenants exchange properties with each other. Permission to undertake a mutual exchange is dealt with separately by individual partners.

Temporary decants – Secure or introductory tenants of a local authority or assured or assured shorthold tenants of Registered Social Landlords who need to be moved temporarily whilst major work is carried out on their home.

Demoted tenancies - Following a successful application for a demotion order under sections 14 and 15 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Succession – Where the secure tenant dies, the tenancy is a periodic one, and there is someone who qualifies for the tenancy by succession.

Assignment – Where tenancies are ‘assigned’ to another person following a mutual exchange by succession.

Court order – Where a court orders a tenancy to be disposed of/transferred to someone else under:

- The Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, s.24 (property adjustment orders in connection with matrimonial proceedings)
- The Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, s.17(1) (property adjustment orders after overseas divorce)
- The Children Act 1989, Schedule 1, paragraph 1 (orders for financial relief against parents)

Introductory or probationary tenancies – Where an introductory/probationary tenancy becomes a secure or assured tenancy, applicants do not need to re-apply.

2.3 Who can apply for housing?

Anyone over 16 years of age is eligible may apply. This includes people who are already secure, assured, introductory or assured short-hold tenants of any of the member partner landlords.

Partner landlords may have different policies in dealing with persons under the age of 18 and for more details please contact the individual landlord.

2.4 Who is not eligible?

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) states that accommodation can only be allocated to people who are eligible.

Certain people from abroad with limited rights to remain in the United Kingdom are not eligible to be allocated housing. These groups of people are set out in ‘The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006’. People who are in doubt about whether they are eligible should seek detailed advice from their local authority’s Housing Advice Team.

People assessed by Devon local authorities as being guilty of unacceptable behaviour will be registered but will not be awarded any priority within the scheme and/or will not be made an offer of social housing. This will apply where a Devon local authority is satisfied that the applicant, or a member of their

household, have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the applicants unsuitable to be a tenant and who, in the circumstances at the time their application is considered, are unsuitable to be a tenant because of the unacceptable behaviour.

Behaviour is unacceptable if it is behaviour that would, if the applicant had been a secure tenant, allow the housing authority to obtain a possession order under section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to Grounds in Part 1 of Schedule 2 other than Ground 8.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour could include:

- Significant rent arrears or breach of tenancy obligations where no attempt is being made to repay the debt or remedy the breach
- Conduct likely to cause serious nuisance, annoyance or harassment to neighbours
- Using accommodation or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes
- Serious damage or neglect of a property by the tenant or other occupants
- Committing domestic abuse
- Knowingly giving false or misleading information or withholding information that has been reasonably requested

Cases will be considered on an individual basis. The following criteria will be applied in determining whether an individual or household should be registered but not be awarded any priority and/or not be made an offer of social housing:

- There must be reliable evidence from known (not anonymous) sources of violent or anti-social behaviour, or domestic abuse
- The behaviour need not have led to possession, prosecution or other enforcement action by a statutory agency, provided there is reasonable probability that had the applicant been a tenant, possession would have been granted because of that unacceptable behaviour.
- In normal circumstances the behaviour concerned should have occurred within the last two years. In cases of a more serious nature, for example, those involving criminal prosecution, a longer time-scale may be appropriate.
- There must be reasonable grounds for believing that the behaviour could continue or be repeated. For example, the applicant may have issued threats or there might be a history of repeat offending.
- The behaviour in question, if repeated, must represent a real (and not just a perceived) threat to the safety and peace of mind of those already living in the neighbourhood.

Priority within the scheme will also be removed if there was a threat of, or actual, violence or abuse against members of the staff of a partner organisation.

Applicants with rent arrears to any social or private landlord will be registered but not given any preference and/or will not be made an offer of social housing that they have successfully bid for unless there are exceptional circumstances or until:

- 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 the agreement during a period of at least three months. In exceptional circumstances that period may be reduced with the agreement of the local authority

Applicants who are not awarded any priority within Devon Home Choice, and/or those who will not be made an offer of social housing will be informed in writing of:

- The decision and the reasons behind it
- Their right to appeal and how to do this

Partner local authorities in Devon Home Choice will review applications on request following the receipt of further information. This may include an applicant being able to demonstrate that there has been no further instance of such behaviour, and/or that they can show that they are engaged with support that will enable them to maintain a tenancy.

2.5 Applicants financial resources

Local authority and social landlord homes provided through Devon Home Choice are for people who are considered to have insufficient resources to meet their housing need.

The resources available to each household will be assessed to determine whether they are sufficient to meet their housing need. The following factors will be taken into account:

- Income
- Capital and savings
- Equity
- Size and composition of household; number, ages and genders of adults and children that the applicant wishes to be housed with
- The local housing market and interest rates
- Ability of applicant to meet their housing need in the market place

Applicants with a household income that is five times greater than their relevant Local Housing Allowance level¹ will normally be considered to be able to meet their housing need through either renting privately or owner occupation. Further information on the financial assessment and the Local Housing Allowance rates that apply across Devon is available from local authority housing teams (contact details provided in appendix 2).

The following types of income are fully disregarded:

- Attendance Allowance

¹ Where there is more than one Local Housing Allowance rate within a local authority area, the most generous rate will be used.

- Disability Living Allowance

An exemption from the financial assessment will apply if the applicant or partner, where applicable, is in receipt of one of the following means-tested benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Pensions Credit

Partner social landlords within Devon Home Choice have different policies relating to levels income and other assets of those households that they will accommodate. Whether a bid for home is accepted will therefore be subject to the policies of the each partner social landlord. More information is available from each Devon Home Choice partner.

Applicants may be required to demonstrate that they can afford the rent on any prospective tenancy before being allowed to sign for it.

Section 3

How is housing need assessed?

3.1 How is housing need assessed?

Once an application has been received it will be placed in one of five bands detailed below depending upon the applicant's level of housing need, and whether or not they have a local connection to Devon ([see Section 3.4](#)).

3.2 How is priority awarded?

Whilst offering choice to applicants wherever possible, allocation schemes must still ensure that reasonable preference is given to applicants who fall into one or more of the following groups over those who do not:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). This includes people who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need
- People who are owed a (homeless) duty by ANY local authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are living in accommodation secured by ANY housing authority under section 192(3). The letter detailing the outcome of a homeless application will specify whether one of these sections applies
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including a disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality in Devon, where failure to move would cause hardship to themselves or others

The scheme should take into account those who qualify under more than one category when assessing housing need.

3.3 Banding

The following section provides details of the five bands. The band in which an applicant is placed will be determined by their housing need as set out below. Further details of the criteria are provided in the [Definitions](#) section below.

Emergency Housing Need Band (A)

Applicants will be placed in the Emergency housing need band (A) if their need for housing is assessed as so exceptional that they take priority over all other applicants.

Any application for an applicant to be placed in the Emergency housing need band (A) must normally be submitted by an agency and not the applicant themselves. For example, if an applicant wants to move due to threat of violence, the police or an appropriate agency must contact a Devon local authority with evidence to support the request for an urgent move.

Individual local authorities will assess Emergency applications. Substantial evidence must exist before such priority is awarded.

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

- Urgent medical need
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.12
- Urgent disrepair
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.13
- To escape violence or threat of violence, or a traumatic event
Where there is immediate and serious risk to a household living in Devon. The Police or another appropriate agency will usually provide supporting evidence that the risk exists. The person at risk may be the applicant, or another person who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.
- Serious harassment
Where there is immediate and serious risk to a household living in Devon. The Police or another appropriate agency will usually provide supporting evidence that the risk exists. The person at risk may be the applicant, or another person who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.
- Witness protection scheme
Where a Devon local authority has accepted a household being referred under the Witness Protection Scheme.

Applicants will be given this priority for 12 weeks. If an Emergency housing need band (A) applicant does not make bids for suitable homes available through Devon Home Choice (or refuses a suitable offer of a property) they will have their status reviewed and may be placed in one of the other bands dependent on their need. In very exceptional circumstances an applicant will be allowed to remain in the Emergency housing need band (A) for longer than 12 weeks.

The decision to extend or remove the Emergency housing need band (A) status will be made by the local authority and will be based upon: -

- Whether a vacancy occurred during the 12-week period that met the declared needs of the applicant.
- The reasons why the applicant failed to apply for the property and whether the reasons were valid.

All decisions will be reported to the next available Devon Home Choice Project Group meeting.

High Housing Need (B)

- Social need or to support delivery of another service
This applies to applicants whom, for exceptional reasons, fall outside of the rest of Devon Home Choice Assessment Policy, and need to be found secure alternative accommodation. This may include child risk or concern issues where children would otherwise be accommodated by social services.
- Statutorily Homeless Households
Where a duty has been accepted by a Devon local authority towards an applicant under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless)
- Prevention of homelessness for applicants within Devon
Where this will avoid the applicant becoming homeless, and where they would be accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need
- Lacking two or more bedrooms
Applicants who currently lack 2 or more bedrooms given the size of their household
- Under occupying by two or more bedrooms
If the applicant is a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner and moves to property at least 2 bedrooms smaller
- High medical need
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.12
- High disrepair
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.13
- Ready for move on from supported housing within Devon
Where the applicant is living in supported accommodation in Devon and the provider has confirmed that they are ready to move on
- Effective management of social housing within Devon
There will be times when a household will be placed in the High housing need band (B) in order to ensure that social housing is used to its full potential. Examples include where the household has no particular priority themselves,

but is occupying a property that is particularly suitable for someone with a severe disability, but has no need of that particular property. Where there is an immediate and pressing need for this type of property the household occupying it will be placed in the High housing need band (B)

Medium Housing Need (C)

- Medium medical need
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.12
- Medium disrepair
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.13
- Lacking one bedroom
Applicants who currently lack 1 bedroom given the size of their household.
- Under occupying by one bedroom
If the applicant is a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner and moves to a property that is 1 bedroom smaller
- Children over 3rd floor under 8
Where the applicant's household includes a child under the age of eight, offers of accommodation would not normally include properties above the third floor. This priority is awarded to reflect the difficulties that may be faced by applicants with young children who are living in accommodation above the third floor

Low Housing Need (D)

- Non Statutory Homeless Households
Where an applicant has been assessed by a Devon local authority as non priority homeless and/or intentionally homeless under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Low medical need
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.12
- Low disrepair
[Defined below](#) in Section 3.13
- Shared facilities (for example toilet, bath, shower or kitchen)
Where an applicant has accommodation but shares facilities with other persons. This will include applicants living with family that are not part of their household on their application, lodging or renting a room in a shared house with communal facilities.

- Staying access to children outside of the travel to work area of each Devon local authority
If the applicant has parental responsibility for a child or children staying regularly, and the child has permanent accommodation outside of the Devon local authority travel to work area in which the applicant lives.
- Notice to quit
Where a private tenant has been served a valid notice to quit by their landlord. Evidence of the notice will need to be provided to demonstrate that the landlord genuinely intends to seek possession and the applicant will need to have been seen by a housing advisor.
- Work/support
Applicants who have a particular need to move to, or within, Devon, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship. Where applicants are seeking to give or receive support, they must provide evidence of the level of support required and may only bid for properties within 30 minutes drive time of the person either seeking or giving the support. Applicants who wish to move within, or into Devon because they have secured permanent employment (of at least 16 hours per week) in Devon must provide evidence of this employment.
- Households with a housing need but no local connection to Devon
[See 3.4 below](#)
- Households who have been assessed as having deliberately worsened their circumstances
[See 3.9 below](#)

No Housing Need (E)

Applicants with no housing need at the time of assessment. This will normally include the following:

- Applicants who live in a property that is adequate to meet their housing need in terms of property type, size and facilities.
- Applicants who do not meet the housing need criteria within any of the other bands (Emergency, High, Medium or Low housing need)

3.4 No local connection to Devon

Applicants who have no local connection to Devon will be placed in either:

- The Low housing need band (D) if they are assessed as having a housing need (whether this be high, medium or low need), or
- The No housing need band (E) if they are assessed as having no housing need

However exceptions to this will include where:

- They have been accepted by one of the Devon local authorities as statutorily homeless
- They need to move to Devon to give or receive support where failure to do so would cause hardship **define**
- There are special circumstances such as medical or support needs that are only available within Devon
- An applicant has no local connection in any district within the United Kingdom, then they will be deemed to have a local connection to Devon

In such circumstances applicants will be banded in line with the above policy, regardless of the fact that they have no local connection to Devon.

To demonstrate a local connection (defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) with Devon applicants will:

- Normally be resident in Devon. Local Government Association guidelines define this as having resided in the area for six of the last twelve months, or three out of the last five years, where residence has been out of choice.
- Work in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as employment other than of a casual nature. For the purposes of this policy this will be defined as having had permanent work with a minimum of a 16 hour contract per week for the previous 12 months, and without a break in the period of employment for more than three months.
- Have family connections in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as immediate family members (parents, siblings and children) who have themselves lived in the area for five years.

Applicants will be required to provide proof of their local connection to Devon before their banding is assessed.

3.5 Households with more than one need

Where an applicant is assessed as having only one need they will be placed in the band that this relates to. However if an applicant has more than one need in either the High, Medium or Low housing need bands this will be recognised in the following way.

Two needs from same band - If an applicant has two needs from the same band they will receive a six month advance on their 'effective date', to recognise the additional need. This will mean that their effective date is 6 months earlier than their application date ([see Section 3.6 below](#)). As a consequence the application will be placed higher in the band by 'time'.

Two or more needs from different bands - Where an application has more than one need from different bands, the application will be placed in the highest band.

Three or more needs from same band - Where there is a combination of three or more needs in any one band, that application will be placed in the next higher band to reflect their circumstances.

Applicants assessed as having no housing need cannot be placed any higher. Applicants in the Emergency band cannot be placed higher, as this is the highest band.

3.6 Application and Effective Dates

All applicants will have an application date and an effective date.

Their application date records the date they applied to Devon Home Choice. Their application date will never change, unless their application is cancelled and they re-apply to Devon Home Choice.

Their effective date records the date they moved into a particular band, and/or whether they have received an advance on their application date due to having two needs within the same band.

For those applicants whose circumstances have not changed and who do not have more than one need from the same band, their application date and effective date will be the same.

If a client has more than one need in the same band or moves into a higher band, because of a change of circumstances, their 'effective date' will change as set out above and below.

Applicants who have bid for properties will be prioritised:

- Firstly by their band. For example those applicants in the High housing need band (B) will be listed above applicants in the Medium housing need band (C), and
- Secondly **within** each band in order of their effective date, with the applicant with the earliest effective date at the top.

If two applicants within the same band apply for the same property, it will be awarded to the one with the earliest effective date. In case two or more applicants within the same band have the same effective date, the applicant recorded as having the earliest time on that date on the Devon Home Choice register will be put forward.

Effective dates that will apply are as follows:

Homeless applicants accepted under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996:

- The date the applicant applied to the local authority as homeless.
Once a local authority has completed their enquiries and accepted that an applicant is unintentionally homeless and in priority need, the applicant will be placed in High housing need band (B). Their effective date will be backdated to the date they applied as homeless.

Whilst the local authority is carrying out enquiries the applicant will be banded according to their housing need. For example, if they are staying with family or friends and are sharing facilities they will be placed in the Low housing need band (D).

Note: If the homeless applicant was already placed in High housing need band (B) as a result of some other need (for example due to a high medical need), their effective date remains the same and does not change to the date they made their homeless application.

General applicants (including existing local authority and housing association tenants)

- The date the housing register application was received for assessment.

Move on applicants (from Supported Housing):

- Any applicant living in designated 'supported' accommodation within Devon who has been assessed as ready for 'move-on' into independent accommodation will be awarded an effective date equal to the day they moved into the scheme.

3.7 Changes in circumstances

Applicants must provide information about their current housing situation so that the following can be assessed:

- The band they are placed in
- What size, and where appropriate, what type of property they can bid for

Applicants must inform their local authority housing team of any changes in their circumstances straight away (for example a change of address or if the people living with them move).

If a person successfully bids for a property and it is later found that the housing situation was different from the details provided when the application was made the offer might be withdrawn.

3.8 Moving bands following a change in circumstances

Applicants whose housing need changes will be reassessed. This may change the band their application has been placed in.

Those moving to a lower band because their need for housing has reduced will keep the same effective date to determine how high up that band they will be.

Those moving to a higher band because their need for housing has increased will have their effective date changed to the date their change of circumstances request was received. This is so that people who have been in this high level of need for a long time will remain above applicants who have recently joined this band.

3.9 Deliberate worsening of circumstances

Deliberate worsening of circumstances will arise where local authorities decide that an applicant has given up accommodation that was suitable for their needs where there was no requirement or obligation to do so. To reduce the likelihood of applicants moving into poorer accommodation in order to qualify for higher priority and quicker re-housing, applicants who are deemed to have deliberately worsened their circumstances will normally be placed in the Low housing need band (D).

This decision can be reviewed after 12 months.

Examples of deliberate worsening of circumstances might include:

- Selling a property that is affordable and suitable for an applicants needs
- Moving from a secure Assured Tenancy to insecure, overcrowded accommodation with family or friends, where there is no good reason for this move
- Where there is evidence that it was reasonable that an applicant could have remained in their original accommodation

Where an applicant has little or no control over their move to alternative accommodation, this should not be considered as a deliberate worsening of circumstances.

3.10 Notification

Once an application form has been entered online or received by a Devon local authority housing team it will be assessed and the information entered onto the Devon Home Choice register. The applicant will receive a letter confirming their application details within 20 working days of the local authority housing team receiving the application form.

This notification will include:

- The 'band' in which the applicant has been placed
- The size property the applicant is eligible for
- Their 'effective date'
- A unique reference number

- Information on how Devon Home Choice works
- Information on sources of further advice and assistance
- A reminder of the need to notify any change in circumstances immediately
- Information on the appeal procedure

Applicants will also receive notification of their application details within 20 working days if they have provided details about their change of circumstances.

3.11 Size of property

Applications will be assessed to determine the size of property that their household requires and is therefore able to bid for as follows:

Size of Property	Who is eligible?
1 Bedroom	Single People or couples with no children Single People with regular access to children, but who do not normally live with them (see below)
2 Bedroom	Applicants with 1 child or who are pregnant Applicants with 2 children of the same sex (or different sexes but who are both under 8 years old)
3 Bedroom	Applicants with 2 children of different sexes, with at least one child over 8 years of age Applicants with 3 children Applicants with 4 or more children
4 Bedroom	Applicants with 4 or more children

Please note: Individual landlords letting policies or local planning policies may affect the size of households that may apply for particular properties. Any such restrictions will be included in the property advert.

These property sizes will not apply to existing tenants of a social landlord who are seeking to move to a home that is at least one bedroom smaller. For example a single person underoccupying a four bedroom local authority or housing association home will be able to move into a two bedroom property. This is to make the most effective use of social housing and free up family accommodation.

Where households have particular needs (for example due to medical issues) these will be taken into account in determining the size of property that they are

eligible to apply for. For example, where the applicant requires an overnight carer they will be eligible for an additional bedroom.

Because of the very high demand for properties within Devon, additional bedrooms cannot be given to applicants who do not have children who normally live with them or who might reasonably be expected to live with them. This will normally be a permanent or regular arrangement and not a temporary agreement.

Such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by the local authority's decision as to which parent or guardian the child is dependent on in terms of their primary day-to-day care, and with whom the child would therefore be expected to ordinarily reside. One indication may be drawn, for example, by checking circumstances such as which parent receives the Child Benefit.

3.12 How is medical priority awarded?

If an applicant needs re-housing because their health is being affected by their current housing they must complete a medical assessment form.

Medical priority is only awarded if a Devon local authority (or appropriate agencies working on their behalf) has determined that:

- An applicants health is made worse by their current home, or lack of a home
- An applicant's medical condition means that their current home is unsuitable e.g. they cannot manage stairs up to the bedroom or bathroom

Medical priority will only be given if the applicant agrees to move to a more suitable home. For example, if they cannot manage stairs they can only be considered for a ground floor flat or a bungalow.

Each local authority will use the following guidelines for assessing medical applications. This process can recommend access to a property size or type outside of the normal rules if there are special medical or welfare needs.

Applicants are informed in writing of the outcome of their medical assessment. If they disagree with the assessment there is a right to appeal but they must state the reasons for appeal in writing and provide additional medical evidence so the case can be reconsidered.

Urgent Medical Need (Emergency housing need band [A])

This is where there is an urgent need for alternative housing. An example of this might be where remaining in their home could have catastrophic consequences which can only be averted by a move to suitable alternative accommodation without delay. There are no alternative options to overcome this unless by alternative housing design or location.

This will include situations where the applicant:

- is in hospital and is unable to return to their accommodation because it does not meet their medical needs
- has an urgent need to move to a new home that if not met would result in them being placed inappropriately into residential care

To award this level of need local authorities will seek to assess the following:

- Physical health
It is a crisis situation requiring re-housing in the very near future, to avoid serious repercussions on health
- Mental health
A persons inability to cope is solely and directly related to housing. There is a very high risk of actual breakdown, and a serious threat that someone may take their own life.

High Medical Need (High housing need band [B])

The applicant has a high need for alternative housing. The current accommodation is so severely affecting their health that it has led to the person affected becoming disabled within their home, or housebound. There might also be serious medical problems where unless alternative housing is found within a reasonable timescale the consequences on the applicant may be very severe.

This will include people who are inappropriately accommodated in residential care and need to move onto more independent living.

To award this level of need local authorities will seek to assess the following:

- Physical health
There is a high risk to physical safety and functional ability. This is unable to be improved unless by alternative house design or location
- Mental health
A persons inability to cope is solely and directly related to housing.

Medium Medical Need (Medium housing need band [C])

Serious medical problems where a failure to re-house would lead to a significant and serious deterioration of the person's condition in the medium term or have an unacceptable impact on the applicant's quality of life.

To award this level of need local authorities will seek to assess the following:

- Physical health
There is a medium risk to physical safety and functional ability. Re-housing is required to prevent a deterioration in functional ability over three year projection.

- Mental health
Current housing is a significant contribution to social isolation (including recent history of admission to hospital over past two years).

Low Medical Need (Low housing need band [D])

Whilst the current accommodation has a negative effect on the applicant's health, this is not sufficiently severe to warrant a high priority for alternative accommodation. However there are none the less lower level needs that should be recognised.

To award this level of need local authorities will seek to assess the following:

- Physical health
There is some concern about potential risk to physical safety.
- Mental health
Current accommodation contributes to social isolation, restricts independence and re-housing is required to prevent deterioration. Alcoholic/drug users are likely to fall in this category.

No Medical Need (No housing need band [E])

Whilst it is recognised that there may be a medical condition, this is not adversely affected by the current accommodation. The medical condition would not be improved by a move to alternative accommodation, therefore no housing need actually exists.

To award this level of need local authorities will seek to assess the following:

- Physical health
Risk to physical safety and functional ability would not improve by re-housing. Pregnancy itself is not regarded as an illness.
- Mental health
No significant improvement in quality of life likely to be gained by re-housing.

3.13 How is priority awarded due to disrepair?

Where applicants are living in a property in disrepair priority will be awarded as follows:

High Disrepair (High housing need band [B])

This will normally only be agreed where there has been an inspection of the property by an Environmental Health Officer. This assessment will have found that there are serious health and safety issues within the property. The Officer will be responsible for taking appropriate steps to rectify the problem as well as advising the Devon Home Choice Team. Usually no additional priority will be awarded unless the matters cannot reasonably be expected to be rectified quickly.

Where the applicant does not wish any action to be taken to put the problem right (for example they do not want a notice to be served on their landlord), then they would not normally be awarded any priority. Once the problem has been addressed and the disrepair has been put right, then on receipt of a report to this effect from Environmental Health, any banding priority due to disrepair will be removed.

Medium Disrepair (Medium Housing Need band [C])

This will be assessed by a local authority officer, who will usually have carried out a home visit to assess the problem. However in some cases it might be determined by having regard to information supplied by the applicant and others as appropriate. Medium disrepair will normally be taken to cover items which might be considered to be significant by the officer and applicant, but where the risk is not one that presents a serious health or safety issue.

Low Disrepair (Low Housing need band [D])

This will normally be assessed by a local authority officer, who will take account of information supplied by the applicant and others as appropriate. Low disrepair will normally be taken to cover items that do not badly affect health and safety, and do not have a significant impact on the peace and comfort of the applicant.

Local authority and Registered Social Landlord tenants

Tenants of local authorities and Registered Social Landlords will not normally be given any additional priority due to disrepair. There are other policies and procedures that will be used by the individual landlord to assist where there is disrepair in these properties.

3.14 Review of the Devon Home Choice register

All local authorities in Devon will regularly review the applicants on the housing register in order to:

- Confirm that the details on the register are still correct
- Check whether there have been any changes in an applicant's circumstances
- Confirm that the applicant wants to stay on the housing register.

The review will usually take place on a rolling annual basis falling on each anniversary of the application.

There will be an automatic review of all applicants who haven't bid for any properties for one year.

If an applicant does not reply to a review it will be assumed that housing is no longer required and the application will be cancelled. The applicant will

have to apply again if they later want re-housing. In such cases an applicant will lose their previous effective date and their effective date will be determined by their fresh application.

3.15 Cancelling applications

An application will be cancelled from Devon Home Choice in the following circumstances:

- At the request of an applicant
- Where an applicant does not respond to an application review, within the specified time limit
- Where a local authority or a Registered Social Landlord has housed the applicant
- When a tenant on the housing register completes a mutual exchange
- Where the applicant moves and does not provide a contact address
- Where the applicant has died
- Where the applicant has not supplied the relevant information requested within 28 days

When an application has been cancelled, the applicant or their representative will be notified in writing. Where an applicant has been highlighted as potentially vulnerable, the local authority will contact the applicant, or agency that they are working with if appropriate, to check their circumstances before cancelling the application.

Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision.

3.16 Rejoining Devon Home Choice

Where an applicant wishes to re-join Devon Home Choice at a later date their new effective date will be determined by the date they re-apply. Their housing need will be reassessed and they be placed in the appropriate band as set out above.

Section 4

Applying for properties

4.1 Finding a home

Once applicants have received notification that they have registered with Devon Home Choice they can start applying for homes for which they are eligible.

4.2 Advertising of properties

Homes will be advertised each week in the following ways:

- Online at the Devon Home Choice website
- On freesheets that will be widely distributed across Devon
- On a multi-language automated telephone service

The Devon Home Choice Participation Strategy sets out that all documentation, adverts and the website are fully accessible to all community groups within Devon.

4.3 Property Descriptions

Properties advertised will include a photograph of the home (where possible) and a full description. The description will include:

- Type of property
- Number of bedrooms
- Location of property
- Any adaptations (for example disabled facilities)
- Access to the property (for example the number of steps or whether there is a ramp)
- Whether there is accessible parking
- Information about the surrounding area (for example whether local shops and public transport are easily accessible)
- Services provided (for example warden, caretaker, cleaning)
- Heating type
- Rent charged/service charges
- Type of tenancy

4.4 Labelling Properties

In some cases homes may only be advertised to certain applicants or groups of applicants. For example:

- Where a home has been adapted for disabled people only applicants who require this type of home will be allowed to bid for it
- Where, due to planning restrictions, applicants are required to have a local connection to a particular area within Devon
- Existing tenants who wish to transfer, including those who wish to move to a smaller property
- Households who have been accepted as homeless by a specific Devon local authority

There may also be occasions where 'local letting policies' need to be applied by Devon Home Choice partners.

Local letting policies may include a system to ensure a mix of household types, for example the number of children in order to ensure that there are not too many within a particular area. Where agreements have been reached adverts will clearly state how such schemes will be allocated and the applicants eligible to bid.

Local letting policies may be introduced where a new estate has been built in order to help create a new community. Alternatively, a local letting policy may be required where there are issues that have occurred within an established community, and action is required to assist that community to become sustainable.

The decision to undertake a local letting policy will be made by the partners involved including the local authority's housing department.

Whilst being designed to reflect local needs, local letting policies will still be compatible with the aim of meeting housing need in Devon as well as the requirements of relevant 'Codes of Guidance.'

The use of local letting policies should not lead to vulnerable households being disadvantaged but lead to increased tenancy sustainability.

Further information can be obtained from the relevant local authority.

Sensitive letting – individual properties

Occasionally there may be a requirement to assist in dealing with issues that impact on a small, specific location that may be only one dwelling within an estate. This may be to:

- Reduce the concentration of certain needs groups which is impacting on housing management
- Promote a more balanced community by seeking to select/not select households with particular characteristics

This will be agreed by a process between the local authority housing department and the RSL landlord (where the local authority is not landlord itself).

The decision to apply particular requirements will be undertaken by the relevant Devon Home Choice Partners.

The success of this will be the sensitive matching of a household to the vacant home where some flexibility has been identified.

4.5 Applying for a home

Where an applicant meets the criteria for a home set out in the advert they may apply for that home within the deadline given.

Applicants may apply for properties:

- Online at the Devon Home Choice website
- Using the multi-language telephone service
- By text message
- In person at the offices of any of the Devon local authorities

Applicants can apply for as many homes each week as they choose.

However in the event that they have the highest band and earliest effective band for more than two properties in any one week, applicants will be required to choose which two properties they wish to view. In order to ensure effective housing management applicants will not be able to view more than two properties in any one week.

4.6 Deadlines for Applications

Homes will be advertised each week. The advert will indicate the deadline by which time applications for homes must be received. Any applications received after the deadline has been reached will not be considered.

4.7 Automatic Bidding for Statutorily Homeless Households

Households who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority are expected to apply for all suitable homes advertised through Devon Home Choice each week. This will be monitored on a weekly basis by each of the Devon local authorities.

Those households who have been accepted as statutorily homeless and have not been applying for suitable homes will be contacted after six weeks. This will be to remind them of their responsibilities and to ensure that necessary support is in place to enable them to apply for homes. They will also be advised that if they are not applying for all suitable homes after another six weeks (12 weeks in total) that automatic applications will be submitted on their behalf.

If after 12 weeks homeless households are still not applying for all suitable homes, or are refusing offers of accommodation for which they've applied, automatic applications will be placed on their behalf. If one of these automatic applications is successful the household will be expected to accept the offer of accommodation unless there is good reason why they should refuse a property. Any 'unreasonable' refusal of such an offer will lead to a local authority discharging their duties under the homelessness legislation.

This requirement and the associated procedure will be clearly set out in the decision letter sent to households when they have been assessed as being statutorily homeless.

4.8 Selection procedure

Applicants who have bid for properties will be prioritised:

- Firstly by their band. For example those applicants in the High housing need band (B) will be listed above applicants in the Medium housing need band (C), and
- Secondly **within** each band in order of their effective date, with the applicant with the earliest effective date at the top.

For each home advertised the successful applicant will be the one who is in the highest band and has the earliest effective date.

Each successful applicant's details will be checked to ensure they are eligible for the home. Only those applicants who meet the criteria will be offered the home.

4.9 Reasons why an offer of social housing may not be made

All offers of accommodation with landlords will be subject to the policies of the individual organisation. The landlord may require additional criteria to be met.

Existing tenants seeking to transfer may not be allowed to move if their home is in poor condition, or the conditions are such that it is felt that the tenant is unlikely to be able to sustain the new tenancy, or rent arrears exist on the tenant's account. The applicant's circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for example if an emergency move is needed or serious harm would result then a move may be allowed and the tenant would be charged and expected to pay back the cost of any work needed to put right wilful damage or neglect.

Transfer applicants should check with their landlords on the criteria they should meet before being offered a transfer to alternative accommodation.

Partners in Devon Home Choice reserve the right to prevent an offer going ahead where the home is not considered to be suitable for the applicant.

This may include issues of public safety, risk, or sustainability of the tenancy. An offer may not be made or may even be withdrawn if the support needs of the applicant are such that the landlord, in consultation with the local authority deems that the applicant will be unable to maintain an independent tenancy. This decision may also be informed by the input from other partner agencies involved in a case.

In these circumstances there must be a sufficient care or floating support package available to ensure that the tenancy is likely to be successfully maintained.

The Sex Offenders Protocol

Most social landlords within the scheme have entered into an agreement with the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary to exchange information on any applicant convicted under the Sex Offenders Act 1997. Any applicant who has previous convictions of sex offences/is on the Sex Offender register, will be subject to the provisions set out in the information exchange protocol.

Before any known offender is offered housing, full consultation will be undertaken with the relevant support agencies to assess the risk involved.

4.10 Refusals

If an applicant decides to refuse an offer of a home, either at the accompanied viewing, or when an initial verbal offer is made, it will be offered to the applicant who is eligible and has the next highest band and/or earliest effective date.

There will be no penalties for refusing an offer.

Applicants who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority are also able to refuse an offer of a home that they have applied for a period of 12 weeks without penalty. Any refusal that they make during this time will not affect the duty owed to them by the local authority.

After this 12 week period applicants who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority are still able to exercise choice through Devon Home Choice, to apply for those homes they feel meet their needs. However after 12 weeks, if they refuse an offer of accommodation, the refusal will be referred to the local authorities Homelessness Team. They will investigate whether or not the refusal is 'reasonable' and inform the Devon Home Choice team within 24 hours. If the refusal is 'reasonable' then the second placed applicant will be made an offer of the home. However, if the refusal is deemed 'unreasonable' then the applicant will be advised by the homeless section that their duty will be discharged and the applicant re-offered the home.

Homeless applicants will also be advised that if they refuse an offer, the home will be offered to another household with the next highest band and/or earliest

effective date who applied. Rather than refusing an offer of accommodation, homeless households will therefore be advised to accept the offer and request a review of suitability once they have been accommodated. Further advice and information is available from each of the Devon local authorities.

4.11 Feedback

An important part of Devon Home Choice will be to provide feedback to applicants.

Personalised feedback will be available to each applicant on the 'My Account' section of the Devon Home Choice website to let them know the outcome of their applications for properties. This will help to inform any future choices they make about applying for homes. Feedback will also be available from local authority housing teams.

The website will also contain key information on all homes let through Devon Home Choice including:

- Property size and type
- Property location
- Any eligibility criteria placed on the property
- Number of applicants who applied for each property
- Band of successful applicant
- Effective date of successful applicant
- The date the property was advertised

This information will help applicants understand where properties are more likely to become available and their chances of success.

4.12 Difficult to let properties

If a vacancy cannot be filled through Devon Home Choice then the property can be let in anyway deemed appropriate by the landlord. This may include re-advertising the property and removing any restrictions previously attached, or making a direct offer.

Details (for example the number, type and location) of properties that are difficult to let will be monitored each quarter. Information will be fed into the Devon Home Choice Project Group.

4.13 False information

Applicants who are found to have deliberately given false information during the application process will have their application reviewed immediately. This may result in the 'band' awarded being changed as a result or their application being cancelled.

All landlords in this agreement are committed to taking legal action against any applicant found to have gained a tenancy based on false information in their application form.

4.14 Data Protection

Data Protection statement to be inserted

All applicants have the right under the Data Protection Act to inspect their housing register file and to correct any information held which is inaccurate. Applicants may also request a copy of their computer records. There may be a charge made by the local authority to view any records.

4.15 Information sharing

Information sharing statement to be inserted

4.16 Policy review

The Devon Home Choice scheme is reviewed annually and any changes to the Assessment Policy are implemented only after majority agreement amongst Devon Home Choice partners.

4.17 Appeals and Complaints

Any applicant has the right of appeal of the following decisions:

- They have been denied the right to register
- They have not been awarded any priority, or their priority has been suspended
- They are being denied offers of social housing following unacceptable behaviour (including debts to a social housing provider)
- Their application has been cancelled
- About the facts of their case, for example banding, eligibility for a property or that they have been assessed as having deliberately worsened their own circumstances

Once an applicant has been notified in writing of the band in which they have been placed, or their ineligibility, they will have a right to appeal against the assessment. Appeals must be submitted in writing, to the local authority housing office within 21 days of the date on the notification letter and include the reason why the applicant believes their banding or ineligibility is wrong together with any additional information that the applicant believes is relevant.

The local authority will acknowledge the appeal request within 7 days. A Senior Officer who played no part in the original assessment will carry out a review of the case and respond in writing, to the applicant within 56 days of the receipt of the appeal letter. Following the review, the applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome.

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal then they can take it further through the relevant local authority's complaints procedure.

Any complaints regarding the scheme should be directed initially to the local Devon Home Choice partner. Details of applicants, allocations and complaints will be monitored in relation to diversity to ensure equality of access.

Appendix 1

Definitions

Efficient management of social housing stock within Devon (High housing need band [B])

This priority will be awarded in a number of situations set out below to aid the efficient management of social housing stock.

- To release high need properties

As social rented housing is a scarce resource there will be times when it is not being used to its full potential. Re-housing will enable a 'high need' property to be released or to aid the wider management of the social rented housing stock.

This will include:

- 'High need' property
Where the re-housing of a tenant or household would assist with the better use of social rented housing. This might include where applicants have no particular priority, but are occupying a property that is of a type in very limited supply and is needed to be returned to the stock of social housing for letting to meet an immediate and pressing need. An example of this could be where someone occupies a property that is particularly suitable for someone with a severe disability, but has no need of that particular property.
- Persons left in occupation
If a person is left in occupation after the death of a tenant, they will usually be expected to leave the property and find their own home. Where a tenancy is ended by the tenant it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that the property is handed back to the social landlord.

There are some exceptions to this: -

- Upon the death of a social tenant, if person(s) left in the home are legally entitled to be a 'successor', then the situation will be dealt with in accordance with the law. Sometimes this may mean that they are able to stay and in others it may mean that they are offered an alternative home
- When a social tenant leaves the home and ends the tenancy, there are some cases in which a potential 'successor' may qualify as above
- A 'Carer left in Occupation'. A person will only be seen as a 'Carer' when there is clear medical evidence of that care being essential and that the applicant has been providing care

- Where the person left in the home has been living there for most, if not all, of their lifetime and has been dependant upon the tenant for support. If as a result they have become vulnerable and less able to find their own home, then they may be made an offer of accommodation. The age, length of residence, life skills and experience of the person left in the home will be the deciding factors.
- **As a management tool to resolve issues affecting a block or estate**
This priority may also apply where it was agreed as an appropriate solution to resolve an issue affecting a block or estate, but where all other tools available to the Social Landlord had proven ineffective.

A decision on these grounds would normally only be made where leaving the particular household in their existing property would seriously and negatively impact upon the quiet enjoyment of the tenant or neighbouring residents. Where agreed it should normally be seen as part of a package of support measures for that particular household, but only rarely would it be the only support measure being employed to achieve a solution. Typically it will arise out of a multi-agency strategy.

It should not be used as an alternative to enforcement action for anti social behaviour, nuisance, or any other breaches of tenancy.

A completed Devon Home Choice application form will accompany all such requests. The applicant will be able to identify their own preferred housing solutions in the normal way, however it will need to be recognised that where restrictions are made as to the type or location of properties which may be acceptable, that this may well reduce the prospects of such accommodation becoming available.
- **Demolition**
This need is recognised where there is a programme of regeneration which will require the re-housing of households whose homes will be demolished. This will be awarded once the demolition plans have been confirmed by the applicant's social landlord.
- **Major works**
Applicants in social housing who require permanent alternative accommodation as a result of major works needing to be carried out on their home. However, where there is a serious and imminent risk to the health and safety of the tenants then the application will be placed in the Emergency housing need band (A) for urgent re-housing.

Escape violence or threat of violence, traumatic event (Emergency housing need band [A])

This need will be awarded to applicants where there is immediate risk to the household, and usually with evidence from the police or another appropriate agency. The person at risk may be the applicant, or another person who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.

The purpose of this need is the removal of applicants from the risk that they are facing.

The definition of this risk will be where the person concerned is suffering from violence or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out. This would need to be an **imminent** threat of significant physical or mental harm to the applicant or a member of their household.

Where the request relates to anti social behaviour, it will only qualify where there is a serious risk of physical or psychological harm to the applicants due to violence or anti social behaviour. It will also need to be clear that the landlord or appropriate agency have tried all approaches to prevent such behaviour within their anti social behaviour policy.

Serious Harassment (Emergency housing need band [A])

In exceptional circumstances it will be appropriate to support the removal of households from the risk that they are facing by remaining in their current home. This will assist in ensuring that the household does not become homeless for this reason. The decision will be subject to regular reviews and could lead to the status being withdrawn if there is a change in circumstances.

Harassment is defined as personalised, deliberate, unwanted acts of violence (verbal or physical) or other behaviour that is designed to cause harm or damage to people or property which is suffered by individuals or groups. This may include harassment on the grounds of age, disability (including HIV status) faith or belief, gender, race, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, or specific individual or family circumstances.

To achieve this level of priority there must be a significant assessed level of harassment and a consequent risk to the household, and that this cannot be reduced or resolved to an acceptable level within a reasonable timescale.

This is likely to arise where either there is an immediate risk to the household or where there has been prolonged harassment that is causing a serious impact on the well-being of the household.

The request usually will require evidence supported by other appropriate agencies that this situation exists. The person at risk may be the applicant, or another person who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.

Move-on from supported accommodation (High housing needs band [B])

Move-on agreements are in place with agencies that provide supported accommodation. The purpose of these arrangements is to enable the agency to notify the Housing Service when any particular client is ready to 'move-on' into settled accommodation.

The inclusion of supported accommodation schemes will be determined by the Devon local housing authority where the scheme is located. They will include Supporting People funded services and Social Care funded Supported Living.

The Move-on agreement seeks to prioritise applicants' re-housing to prevent the 'silting up' of supported accommodation projects. This can only ever be a contribution to this process and does not imply there is any automatic entitlement to offers of housing residents leaving projects.

Overcrowding (High housing need band [B] or Medium housing need band [C])

Overcrowding refers to the situation where there are not enough bedrooms to satisfactorily accommodate the number of people that make up a household.

Where a household is assessed as lacking 2 bedrooms given their household size, they will be placed in the High housing need band (B).

Where a household is assessed as lacking 1 bedroom given their household size, they will be placed in Medium housing need band (C).

The best use should be made for the bedroom resources available so that, for example, a bedroom used for storage should be counted as a bedroom.

The number of bedrooms required for households of different sizes is set out in the [Size of property](#) section above.

No additional priority will be awarded for overcrowding if there is evidence that the overcrowding is deliberate.

Prevention of Homelessness (High housing need band [B])

This need is awarded in order to avoid the applicants becoming homeless, where this will lead to a full homelessness duty being made and potential use of emergency or temporary accommodation.

The household must meet the following criteria:

- They are eligible for assistance and social housing
- They have a live application held with Devon Home Choice
- They are threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- They have been interviewed by a Devon local authority's Housing Department and that their circumstances been verified
- The homelessness prevention approach has been followed and it has not been possible to either stop the loss of accommodation or to assist in the

securing of alternative accommodation. **Note:** If there are other options that can be successfully used to meet their housing need then this need will not be awarded

- It can be shown that the applicants concerned would be owed a full homelessness duty were they to make such an application and by allowing this priority to be used it is clear that a Devon local authority will avoid the need to provide temporary accommodation, or incur other avoidable use of public funds

This may include people who have fled domestic violence and are resident in a refuge or safe house.

There will be a time limit of one month placed on this need after which the application will be reviewed.

Shared facilities (Low housing need band [D])

This need will be awarded to applicants who have accommodation but share facilities with other persons. This will include applicants living with family that are not part of their household on their application, lodging or renting a room in a shared house with communal facilities.

Social need or supporting delivery of another priority service (High housing need band [B])

This need applies to applicants whom, for exceptional reasons, fall outside of the rest of Devon Home Choice assessment framework, and need to be found secure alternative accommodation.

This may include child risk or concern issues where children would otherwise be accommodated by social services.

Exceptional cases may also be considered where there is a combination of factors or special circumstances which make the overall effect disproportionately worse than any of those factors might normally be assessed as being.

This should not be used to prioritise applicants who could be assessed under the Medical and Welfare Assessment process set out above, or whose problems relate to such issues as overcrowding that are assessed and banded separately.

Requests for acceptance into the above need should be referred to a Devon local authority's Housing Department.

Statutory Homelessness (High housing need band [B])

This need applies to those applicant(s) who have been accepted as homeless.

These are applicants to whom:

- a duty has been accepted under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless)

and

- a duty has been accepted to secure accommodation

Staying access to children residing outside of the local authority area (Low housing need band [D])

If the applicants have parental responsibility for a child or children staying regularly, and the child has permanent accommodation outside of the Devon local authority travel to work area in which the applicant lives, the applicant will be placed in the Low Housing need band (D). No additional bedroom eligibility will normally arise in such cases.

Appendix 2

Devon Home Choice Partners

Local authorities

<p>East Devon District Council Council Offices Knowle Sidmouth Devon EX10 8HL</p> <p>T: (01395) 517469 E: Required W: www.eastdevon.gov.uk</p>	<p>Exeter City Council Civic Centre Paris Street Exeter Devon EX1 1JN</p> <p>T: (01392) 265726 E: housing@exeter.gov.uk W: www.exeter.gov.uk</p>
<p>Mid Devon District Council Phoenix House Phoenix Lane Tiverton Devon EX16 6PP</p> <p>T: 01884 234388 E: Required W: www.middevon.gov.uk</p>	<p>North Devon District Council 25 Boutport Street Barnstaple Devon EX31 1RP</p> <p>T: 01271 325757 E: housingadvice@northdevon.gov.uk W: www.northdevon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Plymouth City Council Community Services Plymouth City Council Plymouth Devon PL1 2AA</p> <p>T: 01752 305950 E: Required W: www.plymouth.gov.uk</p>	<p>South Hams District Council Follaton House Plymouth Road Totnes Devon TQ9 5NE</p> <p>T: 01803 861234 E: customer.services@southhams.gov.uk W: www.southhams.gov.uk</p>

Local authorities

<p>Teignbridge District Council Forde House Brunel Road Newton Abbot Devon TQ12 4XX</p> <p>T: 01626 361101 E: housing@teignbridge.gov.uk W: www.teignbridge.gov.uk</p>	<p>Torbay Council Pearl Assurance House 101 - 107 Union Street Torquay Devon TQ1 3DW</p> <p>T: 01803 208723 E: housing@torbay.gov.uk W: www.torbay.gov.uk</p>
<p>Torridge District Council Riverbank House Bideford Devon EX39 2QG</p> <p>T: 01237 428700 E: Required W: www.torridge.gov.uk</p>	<p>West Devon Borough Council Kilworthy Park Tavistock Devon PL19 0BZ</p> <p>T: 01822 813600 E: housing@westdevon.gov.uk W: www.westdevon.gov.uk</p>

Registered Social Landlords operating in Devon (Participation in Devon Home Choice to be formally confirmed)

<p>Colebrook Housing Association 3 Woodland Terrace Greenbank Plymouth Devon PL4 8NL</p> <p>T: 01752 205210 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Cornerstone Housing Co-operative 16 Sholebroke Avenue Chapelton Leeds Yorkshire LS7 3HB</p> <p>T: 01392 273462 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Dartington Housing Association Ltd Forder Lane House Forder Lane Dartington Totnes Devon TQ9 6HT</p> <p>T: 01803 863550 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Devon and Cornwall Housing Association The Mount Paris Street Exeter Devon EX1 2JZ</p> <p>T: 01392 252566 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Devon Community Housing Society Hillfields House Matford Court Sigford Road Exeter Devon EX2 8NL</p> <p>T: 01392 686686 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Falcon Rural Housing Ltd Falcon House 3A South Street Wellington Somerset TA21 2NR</p> <p>T: 01823 667343 E: Required W:</p>

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<p>Guinness Trust Hillfields House (Ground Floor) Matford Court Sigford Road Exeter Devon EX2 8NL</p> <p>T: 01392 822900 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Hanover Housing Society Hanover House 1 Bridge Close Staines Middlesex TW18 4TB</p> <p>T: 01480 475069 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Hastoe Housing Association Ltd Fleur de Lis Middlemarsh Street Poundbury Dorchester Dorset DT1 3GX</p> <p>T: 0845 601 8865 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Housing 21 The Triangle Baring Road Beaconsfield Bucks HP9 2NA</p> <p>T: 0370 192 4000 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Jephson 450 Woodlands Court Ash Ridge Road Bradley Stoke Bristol BS32 4LB</p> <p>T: 01454 618822 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Magna Housing Group Hollands House Poundsbury Road Dorchester Dorset DT1 1SW</p> <p>T: 01305 216000 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Methodist Homes Epworth House Stuart Street Derby DE1 2EQ</p> <p>T: 01271 379787 E: Required W:</p>	<p>North Devon Homes Westacott Road Barnstaple Devon EX32 8TA</p> <p>T: 01271 312500 E: Required W:</p>

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<p>Orbit Group Garden Court Harry Weston Road Binley Business Court Binley Coventry CV3 2SU</p> <p>T: 02476 438000 E: Required W: Required</p>	<p>Raglan Housing Unit 4 Vincent Court 89 Soundwell Road Staple Hill Bristol BS16 4QR</p> <p>T: 0117 9709281 E: Required W: Required</p>
<p>Redland Housing Association Holly House Corbet Close Lawrence Weston Bristol BS11 0TA</p> <p>T: 0117 938 2700 E: Required W: Required</p>	<p>Riviera Housing Trust Woodview House Torbay Business Park Woodview Road Paignton Devon TQ4 7HP</p> <p>T: 01803 696123 E: Required W: Required</p>
<p>Sanctuary Leat House Tavistock Street Roborough Plymouth Devon PL6 7BD</p> <p>T: 0800 083 9283 E: Required W: Required</p>	<p>Sarsen 4-5 Russell Court Palace Street Plymouth Devon PL1 2AS</p> <p>T: 01752 827730 E: Required W: Required</p>
<p>Signpost Housing Sunrise Business Park Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 8SA</p> <p>T: 01392 361122 E: Required W: Required</p>	<p>South Western Housing Society 504 Worle Parkway Weston-Super-Mare Somerset BS22 6WA</p> <p>T: 0845 290 3366 E: Required W: Required</p>

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<p>Sovereign Unit 2 Orchard Court Heron Road Sowton Industrial Estate Exeter Devon EX2 7LL</p> <p>T: 01392 Required E: Required W:</p>	<p>Stonham Required</p> <p>T: 01823 327388 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Tamar Housing Society Belgrave House 73 Mutley Plain Plymouth PL4 6JJ</p> <p>Tel: 01752 250902 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Tarka Housing Limited Gammaton Road East the Water Bideford Devon EX39 4FG</p> <p>T: 01237 428080 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Teachers' Housing Association Ltd Rugby Chambers 2 Rugby Street London WC1N 3QU</p> <p>T: 020 7440 9440 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Teign Housing Templar House Templar's Wharf Collett Way Newton Abbot Devon TQ12 4PH</p> <p>T: 01626 322777 E: Required W:</p>
<p>Tor Homes Tor House St Peters Quay Totnes Devon TQ9 5SH</p> <p>T: 01803 869600 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Westcountry Housing Association Ltd Hatfield House Hatfield Road Torquay Devon TQ1 3HF</p> <p>T: 01803 200300 E: Required W:</p>

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<p>West Devon Homes Limited The Quay Plymouth Road Tavistock Devon PL19 8AB</p> <p>T: 01822 813770 E: Required W:</p>	<p>Western Challenge Housing Association Limited Spinnaker Housing Group Ltd Spinnaker House Grange Road Christchurch Dorset BH23 4GE</p> <p>T: 01425 283600 E: Required W:</p>
<p>William Sutton Housing Association 12 Elstree Way Borehamwood Herts WD6 1JE</p> <p>T: 02082357000 E: Required W:</p>	