

## **TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY – CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

This policy relates to Teignbridge only.

Teignbridge is a partner in the Devon Home Choice Scheme – a partnership between all district councils in Devon. The scheme has a common process for assessing and banding housing applications, the advertising of empty properties in the social housing sector and the allocation of empty homes.

The Devon Home Choice Policy should be read in conjunction with this allocation policy

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# Teignbridge District Council - Allocation Policy

## 1 BACKGROUND

### Introduction

- 1.1 Teignbridge District Council (TDC) no longer holds any housing stock having transferred its entire stock to Teign Housing in 2004. In addition to Teign Housing there are a number of other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) operating within the district
- 1.2 Devon Home Choice is the process adopted by the Council, and the majority of RSL's operating within the District, to allocate housing through a jointly operated Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- 1.3 Devon Home Choice covers all the District Council areas in Devon, enabling applicants to bid across all areas for empty properties that are available for letting (subject to eligibility)
- 1.4 TDC manage the Devon Home Choice Scheme within Teignbridge and maintain the joint housing register for all housing applicants in Teignbridge
- 1.5 The Council has nominations rights to most RSLs empty homes and we will provide the RSL with the nominated household following the bidding process
- 1.6 Participating RSL's will label, advertise and let their own properties through Devon Home Choice. They have their own allocation policies and will verify applicant's details to ensure they meet their criteria.
- 1.7 This policy document sets out:
  - a) The housing need assessment policy adopted by all partners within Devon Home Choice
  - b) The Council's allocation policy and choice based lettings scheme, and
  - c) The exceptions to the Devon Home Choice Scheme.

### Statement of Choice

- 1.8 Teignbridge District Council is committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing within the district, whilst ensuring that such choice is compatible with ensuring that housing goes to those in greatest housing need.
- 1.9 Within this it must be recognised that there is a very high demand for social housing in Teignbridge and that this demand cannot currently be fully met from available resources. Consequently, more often than not,

only those in the greatest housing need are likely to obtain suitable accommodation, which means that the degree of choice will always be limited.

- 1.10 Teignbridge is also committed to extending choice to homeless households as far as is compatible with the effective use of council resources and the need to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. (paragraphs 3.2-3.5 below sets out our policy relating to homeless households)

## **2. DEVON HOME CHOICE**

### **Housing Need Assessment Policy**

- 2.1 The partners in Devon Home Choice have agreed the Housing Needs Assessment Policy. This document sets out the fundamental principles upon which the Scheme is based.
- 2.2 The Housing Needs Assessment Policy sets out in detail how the scheme will operate, how applicants will be prioritised and how properties will be advertised and let.

## **3. TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL SPECIFIC POLICIES**

- 3.1 The Council has specific duties to meet local housing needs and to meet the need of the homeless. This section sets out the Council's policies in this respect and how they operate alongside the Housing Need Assessment Policy

### **Homeless Households**

- 3.2 When the Council accepts a statutory duty to re-house a homeless household they will be placed in the band in accordance with the Housing Needs Assessment Policy
- 3.3 Homeless households will be offered the same degree of choice as other applicants for a period of 12 weeks after being accepted as homeless. Within that timescale the homeless household must bid for suitable empty properties
- 3.4 If no bid has been made within the 12 week period then the Council will bid on behalf of the homeless household, for all suitable empty properties that arise, until the household is offered suitable accommodation.
- 3.5 If no suitable empty property has been advertised within the 12 week period, the period of choice will be extended by a further period of up to 12 weeks.

- 3.6 Refusals of accommodation by homeless households will be considered in accordance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance

### **Assisting Vulnerable Households**

- 3.7 To ensure vulnerable household, who do not have any support network, are able to access Devon Home Choice and bid for properties, the Council will operate an Assisted list under Devon Home choice.
- 3.8 Regular checks will be made on “non – bidding” households who may need support. Council staff will identify ‘vulnerable’ households and may bid on their behalf.
- 3.9 Statutory and voluntary agencies are encouraged to act on behalf of known vulnerable applicants and help the Councils ensure equal access to housing.

### **Local Housing Needs**

- 3.10 Whilst choice will be extended as widely as possible, certain housing schemes may only be let to applicants with a local housing need.
- 3.11 Schemes delivered in the Dartmoor National Park and exception sites within Teignbridge will be controlled by very specific criteria relating to needs in a particular parish. This criteria will be set out within the Section 106 Planning Agreement relating to specific sites
- 3.12 Other larger sites enabled through the planning process within Teignbridge will be delivered to meet the needs of Teignbridge as a whole.
- 3.13 For the purpose of clarity a household has a connection with Teignbridge in any of the following circumstances:-
- Currently living in Teignbridge and has been resident for at least 6 months
  - Having lived in the Teignbridge for at least 3 out of the last 5 years at the date of application
  - Having lived in Teignbridge for at least 10 years cumulatively at any time in their life
  - Currently working in Teignbridge and has done so for the past 6 months and working for more than 16 hours per week.

### **3.14 Specially adapted properties**

Properties which are specifically designed or adapted for elderly people and people suffering from mental illness or learning or physical disabilities will continue to be allocated or nominated to, will be based on the Council’s assessment of individual need, including local

connection, following advice from social services or health authorities or other specialist agencies

### **Labelling of Properties**

- 3.15 The Labelling of the empty property is an essential part of the lettings process which allows the Council to set parameters regarding which type of households can apply for vacancies and whether any households will be given preference over others (Section 167 (2E)(b) Housing Act 1996 – Part VI. Property labelling also provides the applicant with information about the property available for letting and which band of applicants is likely to be successful in securing the property
- 3.16 When labelling properties, the Council will aim to give as much information as possible to give clear indication of the type of household who is able to apply. We aim to strike a balance between the need to make the best use of housing stock, the requirement to house those in greatest need and the aim of giving applicants as much choice as possible to help create sustainable communities
- 3.17 When labelling properties the Service Lead Housing or his appointed deputy will decide whether a local connection S106 criteria applies.
- 3.18 The Council reserves the right to place a Teignbridge local connection on all its properties available for let should it be necessary for any unforeseen reason or exceptional circumstances.

## **4. EXCEPTIONS TO DEVON HOME CHOICE**

- 4.1 It is envisaged that all properties will be let through the Devon Home Choice Scheme if possible and this is the aim of all partner organisation. However,
- 4.2 On occasions, suitable vacancies will be excluded from the Choice Based Lettings System when effective housing management requires. For Example when:
- accommodation is required as interim accommodation to meet the Council's homelessness duty
  - Where community safety may be an issue, for example, re housing under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements or the witness Protection Scheme.
  - Accommodation leased under the private sector leasing scheme will not be subject to Devon Home Choice.
- 4.3 If an RSL's with properties in Teignbridge decides not to join the Devon Home Choice Scheme their properties will be let by the Council nominating direct to the RSLs without advertising the empty property.

- 4.4 Properties that have been adapted for the disabled will be labelled to ensure the property is let to an applicant with the need for this type of accommodation e.g. preference needs to be adapted or built to meet a specific housing need. However, there may be occasions when the needs of disabled households cannot be met within the general housing stock and a specific property in a specific location needs to be adapted or built to meet that specific need. In such circumstances close liaison will take place between the Council, Social Services and where necessary the RSL to ensure the property is adapted or built to meet the specific needs identified. In this case the property will not be advertised through the Devon Home Choice Scheme.

## **5. General**

- 5.1 Full details of Devon Home Choice scheme and the council's allocation Choice Based Lettings Policy will be published on the council's website and made available in summary leaflet format.

### **Diversity and Equal Opportunities**

- 5.2 Teignbridge District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone
- 5.2.1 This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request

### **Policy review**

- 5.3 The Devon home choice and common assessment criteria are regularly reviewed and any changes are implemented only after majority agreement amongst all Devon Home Choice partners. Delegated authority is given to the Service Lead Housing or his appointed deputy to make agreements on behalf of Teignbridge District Council in relation to the effective management of Devon Home Choice.
- 5.4 The council's allocation policy will be monitored regularly and reviewed and updated annually.