

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

ALLOCATION POLICY – CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

This policy relates to East Devon only. The Devon Home Choice Scheme should be read in conjunction with this Allocation Policy

East Devon 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 properties through choice based lettings.

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ALLOCATION POLICY

1 BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 1.1 East Devon District Council (EDDC) has a housing stock. In addition to the EDDC housing stock there are a number of Registered Social Landlords or Housing Associations (RSL's or HA'S) operating within the District.
- 1.2 Devon Home Choice is the process adopted by the Council, and the majority of RSL's/HA'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.
- 1.4 EDDC manage the Devon Home Choice scheme within East Devon and maintain the housing register for all housing applicants in East Devon.
- 1.5 The Council has nomination rights to most RSL/HA empty homes and we provide the RSL/HA with the nominated household following the bidding process.
- 1.6 Participating RSL's/HA'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 East Devon 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 with a local connection to East Devon.
- 1.9 Within this it must be recognised that there is very high demand for social housing in East Devon 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 East Devon 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 set 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 Need Assessment Policy. This document sets out the fundamental principles upon which the Scheme is based.
- 2.2 The Housing Need Assessment Policy sets out in detail how the scheme will operate, how applicants will be prioritised and how properties will be advertised and let.
- 2.3 A copy of the Housing Need Assessment Policy can be found at www.devonhomechoice.com

3 EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL SPECIFIC POLICIES

- 3.1 The Council has specific duties to meet local housing needs and to meet the needs 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 suitable accommodation by homeless households will be considered in accordance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

Assisting Vulnerable Households

- 3.7 To ensure vulnerable households, 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.

- 3.8 Regular checks will be made on “non-bidding” households to identify households who may need our 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 Council ensure equal access to housing.

Local Housing Needs

3.10 Local Connection to Devon/East Devon

Local connection to Devon/East Devon is in accordance with the Devon Home Choice Policy – www.devonhomechoice.com.

3.11 Local Connection to Designate Isolated Areas in East Devon

Whilst choice will be extended as widely as possible the Council reserves the right to allocate scarce social housing to applicants with a local connection to East Devon. This includes allocating housing in designated isolated areas and certain housing schemes to those with a specific housing need or local connection and to satisfy the specific requirements set out in Section 106 agreements (planning consents, and are nominated by the Council). A list of the designated isolated areas is at Appendix ‘A’.

3.12 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, and 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

- 3.13 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 household 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 applicant is likely to be successful in securing the property.
- 3.14 When labelling properties, the Council will aim to give as much information as possible to give a 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 the 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.
- 3.15 When labelling properties the Housing Needs Manager will decide whether a local connection criteria is to be applied having regard to the demand for homes from people on the Housing Register and the availability of properties in the area

concerned.

Excluding properties from the Devon Home Choice scheme

3.17 On occasions, suitable vacancies will be excluded from the Choice Based Lettings system when effective housing management requires. For example when:

- When accommodation is required as interim accommodation to meet the Council's housing duty.
- A vacancy is required because a tenant of East Devon District Council or a Housing Association partner has serious estate management reasons to provide other accommodation.
- Accommodation is required for retiring wardens of East Devon District Council.
- Where community safety may be an issue, for example, re-housing under the Multi Agency Protection Panel Arrangements or the Witness Protection Scheme.
- Accommodation leased under the private sector leasing scheme.

Housing Associations/Registered Social Landlords

3.18 The Council makes no distinction between the allocation of a Council house or nomination to a Housing Association. Housing applicants will not be allowed to refuse nomination to a housing association property where that refusal is based solely on the type of landlord.

4 EXCEPTIONS TO DEVON HOME CHOICE

4.1 Some RSL's/HA's operating in East Devon have decided not to introduce Choice Based Lettings and not join the Devon Home Choice Scheme. Therefore, the letting of their properties will be made by the Council nominating direct to the RSL/HA without advertising the empty property.

4.2 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 will be given to an applicant with the need for a level access shower*

4.3 However, there are occasions when the needs of a disabled household cannot be met within the general housing stock and a specific property in a specific location needs to be adapted or built to meet a specific housing need.

4.4 In such circumstances close liaison will take place between the Council, Social Services and where necessary the RSL/HA 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 the Devon Home Choice scheme and the Council's Allocation and Choice Based Lettings Policy are published on the Council's website.

Diversity and Equal Opportunities

- 5.2 East Devon District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone.
- 5.3 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

- 5.4 The Devon Home Choice are regularly reviewed and any changes are implemented only after majority agreement amongst all Devon Home Choice partners
- 5.6 The Council's local letting policy will be monitored regularly and reviewed and updated annually.

5.7 Complaints

Applicants may want to complain about the application of this Policy. When this happens we will aim to resolve the issue quickly. The Council operates a formal complaints procedure to help an applicant if the issue is not resolved.

- 5.8 Where the Council's complaints procedure has not addressed the concerns satisfactorily, then the complainant may wish to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.