

## **Devon Home Choice common myths and FAQ's help guide**

Below are the answers to some common myths and frequently asked questions. The aim of this information is to remove some of the confusion and misconceptions about Devon Home Choice.

### **Common myths:**

**Myth 1: I should bid at midnight on a Wednesday to improve my chances.**

**False. It is not 'first come first served' when it comes to housing.** When you bid for a home does not affect your bid position. Bids are ranked by the Band of applicants and then by how long they have been waiting.

**Myth 2: I must use all 3 bids each week.**

**False. You don't have to use all 3 bids each week. The 3 bid limit is a maximum, not a minimum.** Instead, only place bids on homes that you would be interested in living in. If you have been accepted as homeless by a Devon local authority they will expect you to bid for all appropriate homes.

**Myth 3: I don't need to bid on properties as I will be given one.**

**False.** You need to bid on homes otherwise you will not be considered.

**Myth 4: Most of the homes go to people from outside of Devon.**

**False.** One of the common myths about Devon Home Choice is that a lot of homes are let to households from outside Devon. This is not true. From 01.04.2022 to 31.03.2023, less than 1% of homes were let to people who lived outside Devon with no local connection. Many will have moved very short distances into Devon. For example from Saltash to Plymouth or from Dorset to East Devon.

### **Frequently asked questions:**

**FAQ 1: Why am I in Band D even though I'm homeless?**

People who are homeless will have their application placed in Band D if it is possible and appropriate for them to find a private rented home. Where it is not possible or appropriate for the applicant to find a private rented home, their application will be placed in Band B. It is the relevant council's housing officer that decides whether finding private rented accommodation is possible and appropriate.

**FAQ 2: I have been on the register for ages and I still don't have a home. Why is this?**

The simple answer is that there are not enough social housing homes to meet demand. There are over 30,400 people on the waiting list and only 3,188 properties were let in 2022/23. It is likely that there will be a long wait until you find a home. If you need a home quickly we recommend that you look for private rented accommodation. You can improve your chances on Devon Home Choice by bidding for flats as well as houses.

**FAQ 3: Why am I 13th on one property but 20th on another?**

Your bid position will be different on different properties. Bids are ranked by the Band of applicants and then by how long they have been waiting. Your bid position will depend on your band and how long you have been waiting, compared to everyone else who has bid for a property. Some properties are more popular because of their location or type (for example houses are more popular than flats). This means that you may be higher on one property than another because there are less bids from people with a higher banding or have been on the waiting list longer than you.

**FAQ 4: I was 3rd when I placed the bid but now I'm 17th, why is this?**

When you bid for a home does not affect your bid position. Your bid position can change as more bids are placed. Bids are ranked by the Band of applicants and then by how long they have been waiting. If someone in Band B bids for a home just before the closing date, their bid will be placed above people in Bands C, D and E (and anyone in Band B who been waiting for less time).

**FAQ 5: I've been denied a property because my application did not match my current circumstances, why is this?** You must ensure that the information on your application is correct and up to date. This is because any change of circumstances may affect your Band and the size of home you need. If you do not keep your details up to date landlords may skip you.

**FAQ 6: Why have I been given this banding and not a higher one?**

The band that your application is placed in depends on our assessment of your housing need, and whether or not you have a local connection to Devon. The 5 housing need bands (Bands A – E) are summarised in the Devon Home Choice User Guide and in full in the Devon Home Choice policy, both of which are available on the Useful Information page of the Devon Home Choice website. For example, if you share facilities then your application will be placed in Band D. However, if you need to move because you live more than 25 miles away from your job and you are unable to work from home then your application will be placed in Band C.

**FAQ 7: Why don't you think I have a local connection to Devon?**

You will be assessed to have a local connection to Devon if you:

- Have lived in Devon for 6 of the last 12 months, or 3 out of the last 5 years, or
- Work in Devon for a minimum of a 16 hours per week for 6 months, or
- Have immediate family members that have lived in Devon for 5 years. Immediate family members include: parents, siblings and non-dependent children.

Please note that there are exceptions to the local connection rules for members of the UK armed forces, or veterans who have left the UK armed forces in the last 5 years. **Just because you continually go to an area does not mean you have a local connection.** You will not be assessed to have a local connection to an area just because your children go to school there, your auntie/cousin lives there or your doctor/dentist is based in the area, as you do not meet any of the other local connection criteria above.

### **FAQ 8: Why are my children expected to share a bedroom?**

The Devon Home Choice policy mirrors the rules of Housing Benefit when assessing what size home you need. Under Devon Home Choice each of the following are assessed as requiring a separate bedroom:

- People living together as a couple
- Person aged 16 years old or over
- 2 children or adolescents under 16 years old of the same sex
- 2 children who are both under 10 years old regardless of sex

Exceptions to these rules can be made for children who are entitled to the middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance, and supporting evidence is provided by a medical professional or social services to confirm that the child requires their own bedroom for medical reasons