

## ***Cornwall Homechoice – Frequently Asked Questions***

### **What is Cornwall Homechoice/choice based lettings?**

Homechoice is a Choice Based System for letting vacant social housing (council and housing association) to rent and affordable housing property to buy or part rent/part buy in Cornwall. It replaces all of the former district council registers and is used by the majority of local housing associations to find tenants for their vacant accommodation.

1) Once a customer applies, their 'need' for housing is assessed and they will be allocated a band from A to E to reflect this need. A being the most urgent need and E being the least urgent need.

2) applicants can view vacant social housing advertised weekly via Homechoice website, West Briton, OSS etc

3) applicants can then 'bid' on these vacancies. The successful bidder will be the applicant in the most need. If two applicants in the same need are top it will be the one that has been in their 'band' the longest.

Not all applicants can bid for some properties for example 3 bedrooms if they need two, disabled adapted properties, parish connection required etc. This will be indicated in the advert when applicable.

### **Why have you changed from the old system to Cornwall Homechoice?**

This is part of a government directive for all Local Authorities to have a choice-based lettings system in place by 2010.

It also coincided with Cornwall becoming one Authority and we could not continue to allocate social housing using 4 different policies.

Choice based lettings enables you to have a greater role in deciding where you wish to live and provides a much more transparent housing system. Feedback regarding which properties were allocated to which bands will be available via the Homechoice website the following week.

**How long will I have to wait for a house?** Homechoice is based on housing need. Applicants that are in the most urgent housing need will be allocated housing should they bid for it. These levels of housing need are called bands on Cornwall Homechoice.

Waiting time on the register will only apply if two or more applicants with the same housing need apply for a property. In this situation the applicant that has been in housing need the longest will be allocated the property.

If you feel you require housing urgently you should also consider alternative options such as privately rented accommodation.

**How do I apply to Homechoice?**

The best way is applying on-line. It is quick, easy, saves on paper and you don't have to drop it in. It is also quicker for us to assess. Go to [www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice) to apply. You can also use the PCs in your local One Stop Shop and Library

If you require a paper form please ask at your local One Stop Shop or ring 0300 1234 161.

**How do I know which Homechoice Team is dealing with my application?**

At present there is a Homechoice Team based in Penzance, Camborne, Truro, Wadebridge and Liskeard

Each Team is responsible for the applicants that currently reside in their former district. For example if you currently reside in Hayle they will be dealt with by the Penzance Homechoice Team.

If you currently live outside of Cornwall you will be dealt with by the Team for the area that is their first choice area of preference indicated on their application form. For example if you live in Exeter but want to reside in Truro, Camborne or St Ives you will be dealt with by the Truro Homechoice Team.

**I sent in an application form for Homechoice and I haven't heard anything back, why not?**

At present we are re-registering applicants from all of the former district registers aswell as dealing with new applications so there may be a delay which we apologise for.

Normally the Cornwall Homechoice teams are aim to process new applications within 28 days of having all relevant information.

**Where can I see what properties are available this week?**

Properties are advertised in your local One Stop Shop, Libraries, on the Homechoice website ([www.cornwallhomechoice.org.uk](http://www.cornwallhomechoice.org.uk)) and in the West Briton newspaper every Thursday.

**What is a local connection to Cornwall?**

Within the same band, applicants who have a local connection with Cornwall will be considered before those without a connection to Cornwall.

A local connection to Cornwall is defined as an applicant or a member of their household who: -

- Currently resident in Cornwall for 12 months
- Past residence for a continuous period of 5 years
- Permanent Employment 16+ hours per week that is not seasonal or casual
- Close family currently resident in Cornwall for 5 years
- Any other special reasons

**What is a Parish Connection?**

In addition to County connection some vacancies in rural and coastal locations will require applicants to demonstrate a connection to the Parish where the vacancy is located

A Parish connection is defined as

- Currently resident in the Parish for 12 months
- Past residence for a continuous period of 5 years
- Permanent Employment 16+ hours per week that is not seasonal or casual
- Close family currently resident in the Parish for 5 years
- Any other special reasons

**How do I bid for a property?**

You must first register with Cornwall Homechoice and you can start bidding for properties once we have written to you with your housing need assessment.

You can then see vacancies and bid for them on the Homechoice website – [www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice)

You can also bid by phone by ringing **0845 5051460** and follow the automated instructions

You can also text your bids. Text the login number, memorable date and the property ID numbers you wish to bid for to **447781486918**

*For example: 17779 010160 82 103*

You can only bid on two properties per text.

However you bid you will need to know your Login/Reference Number (on their assessment letter) and your memorable date.

**How many times can I bid on a property?** You can only place one bid per vacancy.

**How many properties can I bid on each week?** You can bid on up to 6 properties per week

**I don't have access to a phone or computer how can I make a bid each week?** Clients can use public access computers in the OSS and/or libraries.

**I placed a bid last week when will I hear if I am successful?** You will be contacted by the day after the bid cycle closes if you are successful. If not, you can view the website for general info about which band of applicant was successful.

**If I bid for a property will I have to accept it?** If you are the bidder in the greatest housing need for a property your application details will be checked to ensure they are correct and you will be made a formal offer in writing by the relevant landlord.

You have three days to either accept or refuse this offer.

You will be generally able to view the property before accepting.

Generally there is no penalty for refusing a property. However if you have refused several properties you will be contacted by the Homechoice Team to find out why and will offer you advice about placing more appropriate bids.

If you are a homeless applicant, are owed a main housing duty and you wish to refuse the accommodation you will need to discuss this with your Housing Options Officer as there may be implications towards our duty to you.

**Why did "X" get the property and not me?** Look at the feedback on the Homechoice website. It will probably be that the person that has got the property will have had a longer waiting time and/or have a greater housing need.

**I am registered with Cornwall Homechoice and my circumstances have changed** If you have changed address or another person (not babies) has joined their household you need to complete a new application form as your housing need may have changed.

For all other changes you can complete a Change of Circumstances at your Local One Stop Shop or ring 0300 1234 161.

**I am already in a council or housing association property but would like to change to another one** If you are a tenant in Cornwall and wish to move within Cornwall you can apply online to the Homechoice Scheme for a transfer.  
You can also place their own advert or view existing adverts from tenants looking for a mutual exchange on the Homechoice website.

You can also join the Homeswapper Scheme. This is a national scheme that allows social housing tenants to exchange with other tenants in other parts of the country.

**My Login doesn't work online.** Your Login is the numerical part of your Housing Register Reference number. This is found on any correspondence you receive from the Homechoice Teams for example HR12345-1 your Login will be 12345

Check that you are using this number.

If this is still doesn't work check you are using the correct 'memorable date'.

If this still doesn't work contact please ask for assistance at your local One Stop Shop or ring 0300 1234 161

**I cant remember my memorable date or my memorable date does not work** If you have entered their 'memorable date' the problem may be your Login reference. Your Login is the numerical part of their Housing Register Reference number. This is found on any correspondence you receive from Homechoice for example HR12345-1 their Login will be 12345

Check that you are using this number.

If this still doesn't work contact please ask for assistance at your local One Stop Shop or ring 0300 1234 161

**I need to be housed quickly as I will be homeless soon. Will I go to the top of the list?** Generally not and even if you were at the “top” of the list the Homechoice system would need to have a suitable vacancy in time with no other ‘bidders’ in more need interested.

Please contact our Housing Options Team on 0300 1234 161 regarding alternative solutions to your urgent situation.

**Can I rent a garage from the council?** Not via Homechoice.

Some Housing Associations, Carrick Housing Ltd or Landlord Services (in North Cornwall) maintain a separate waiting list for garages.

You need to approach whichever of these operate in your area.

**What is sheltered housing'?**

Sheltered housing is usually a complex of flats and bungalows which are designed for older and/or vulnerable people to assist them in living independently, with a range of support services including an emergency alarm. Some schemes may also provide communal facilities e.g. lounge, laundry room etc.

**How do I apply for a place in Sheltered Housing?**

The best way is applying on-line. It is quick, easy, saves on paper and you don't have to drop it in. It is also quicker for us to assess. Go to [www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice) to apply. You can also use the PCs in your local One Stop Shop and Library

If you require a paper form please ask at your local One Stop Shop or ring 0300 1234 161.

If you are already registered with Homechoice please contact your local Homechoice Team on 0300 1234 161

**What is Extra Care housing?**

Extra Care housing offers a way of supporting you to live independently for as long as you can, in the security and privacy of a home of your own, with a range of facilities on the premises and 24 hour care services available if you need them

**How do I apply for Extra Care housing?**

The best way is applying on-line. It is quick, easy, saves on paper and you don't have to drop it in. It is also quicker for us to assess. Go to [www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/Homechoice) to apply. You can also use the PCs in your local One Stop Shop and Library

If you require a paper form please ask at your local One Stop Shop or ring 0300 1234 161.

If you are already registered with Homechoice please contact your local Homechoice Team on 0300 1234 161

**What is "affordable housing"?**

In recognition that homes in Cornwall are expensive to buy Housing associations and private developers in partnership with Cornwall Council are currently developing a range of new housing that applicants who are on low earnings can buy part of or outright at less than current market values.

When these schemes are available the properties will be advertised through Cornwall Homechoice.

Registered Homechoice applicants will be able express and interest for these properties.

The type of affordable housing scheme will depend on the developer.

Most of these new schemes will be especially developed for applicants with a connection to the parish they are being built in.