

Briefing note for people delivering Housing Needs Survey forms

Why have a housing needs survey?

The survey is designed to find out if there are people with a **local connection to the parish** who **need to find a new home** and **cannot afford to buy or rent in the open market**.

What do these terms mean?

Local connection to the parish	This is set by the District Council, it can cover the length of time someone has lived or worked in the parish, whether they have previously lived in the parish, or if they have strong family connections in the parish.
Need to find a new home	There are many reasons to need a new home. A couple may be looking to set up a new home, a family may be overcrowded, or an older resident may need smaller or more suitable accommodation. A need could also be that someone who has been forced to move away to find affordable housing wants to move back to the village they were brought up in.
Cannot afford to buy or rent in the open market	Generally lenders will not lend people more than 3.5 times their annual income – this means with the level of local house prices most people on modest incomes cannot afford to buy unless they either already own a house or they have a very large deposit available. It is also considered that people on low incomes should not have to pay more than 25% of their income towards housing costs.

Who should fill in which parts of the form?

Part 1

Everyone should fill in part one of the form – it only takes a minute or so.

Part 2

If the household contains people over the age of 55 they should complete part 2 of the form. The purpose of this part of the form is to get an idea about what older people are thinking in terms of their future housing needs. It involves no commitment on anyone's part and can be completed anonymously.

Part 3

The third part of the form is for people who want or may need to move in the next 5 years whatever type of housing they need. If respondents believe they can afford to buy in the open market they do not need to give any financial information. If they need affordable housing they will need to give information on income and saving otherwise it will not be possible to take their needs into account in the final assessment.

What will happen to the information that is provided?

The information will be sent in directly to the Community Council of Devon Rural Housing Enabler who will analyse the information and produce a report for the parish council. The results of the survey will be fed back to the community.

How safe is the information – will it be passed on to anyone else.

The Community Council of Devon is a well respected Charity supporting rural communities in Devon, funded by both the District and County Councils to do this work. The report will be made available to the parish council and other interested parties, but will not include any information that can identify an individual. At the end of the form people with housing need are invited to sign an authority to pass information on to affordable housing developers should the survey result in new homes being developed. If no authority is given no information will be passed on.

Can people who do not live in the parish fill in an extra form?

Yes – if people have a local connect to the parish they can complete a form.

If there is more than one person, couple or family needing separate housing how should this be dealt with?

A separate form to each new potential household should be completed.

Is there a minimum age limit for who could complete a separate form?

It is very difficult to assess the need of anyone who is still at school, so there would be need to be special reasons for filling in the form (for example a young parent, or person with very specific needs).

What is affordable housing?

This is a term which has different meaning to different people. In terms of this survey it generally is of two types:

Social rented housing – homes rented at a subsidised rent by a housing association or local authority – typically a rent would be £75-£85 per week for a 2 bedroom house

Shared ownership housing - where the occupier buys a share of the house and pays a rent on the rest.

Who will decide if any affordable housing is built?

The final decision on whether a scheme will get planning consent is by the District Council. The Parish Council will need to be consulted as with other planning applications.