

Homefinder Somerset Survey of Households who have been housed. September 2024 Update

Each month since August 2022 a survey has been sent to households who have recently been housed to give us their views on Homefinder Somerset.

699 responses had been received by 9th September 2024.

The main findings, and what will be done as a result, are set out below.

Registering with Homefinder Somerset

Most people who completed the survey said that registering with Homefinder Somerset was very easy (42%), easy (24%) or fine (21%). However, a minority found it difficult (13%) or very difficult (5%).

People were invited to provide comments on how they found registering with Homefinder Somerset. Most people reported that they found it easy to register with Homefinder Somerset. However, there were a small number of people who expressed frustration at the time taken to respond to changes they made to their application or having to complete the entire form again when updating any information.

Response:

- It is recognised that the backlog of applications to be assessed was unacceptable. This reached a peak of 3,400 in April 2024, when there was a wait of 16 weeks to assess applications. The backlog was caused by the volume of applications. Reducing the backlog has been identified as a priority and as at 19 September 2024 it had been reduced to 1,100 applications and a wait of 5 weeks.
- The application form was updated in October 2022 so that, when updating their details, people only need to amend what has changed rather than complete the whole form from scratch.

Bidding for homes

Most people reported that bidding for homes was very easy (66%), easy (17%) or fine (9%). However, a small number found it difficult (5%) or very difficult (4%).

Whilst people found bidding easy, concern was raised by some people about the lack of information about some homes that were advertised.

Response:

- We are working to improve the information given by landlords on homes being advertised.

Being kept informed by landlords

Just over half of respondents felt that they were kept well informed by landlords when being considered for homes. However, 48% of respondents either felt that they weren't kept well informed or only sometimes.

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Feedback from people who felt that they were not always kept well informed included: that some landlords were better than others at keeping them informed, feeling rushed to make a decision, and not being kept informed if there were delays with properties being ready.

Response:

- We have shared the feedback with landlords and emphasised the need to keep applicants informed.

Is Homefinder Somerset a fair way of letting homes?

Most people felt that Homefinder Somerset is a very fair (41%), fair (25%) or fine (23%) way of letting homes, but a small number felt that it was unfair (8%) or very unfair (6%). It is recognised that, as this is a survey of households who have been housed, it is very likely that the feedback will be more favourable than those who have not been housed.

Satisfaction with the service from Homefinder Somerset

Most people were very satisfied (52%) or satisfied (23%) with the service they had from Homefinder Somerset, whilst 14% felt the service was fine. However, a small minority of people felt unsatisfied (6%) or very unsatisfied (6%).

In the feedback provided the most common negative comment received was the length of time it took people to be rehoused.

Response:

- Unfortunately, there is a huge difference between the number of households looking for a council or housing association home and the number of homes that are available. There are currently nearly 12,000 households registered with Homefinder Somerset, but only 1,925 homes were let in the year to 30 August 2024.