

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

PERFORMANCE & REGULATORY
COMMITTEE

11 NOVEMBER 2008

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING
OPERATIONS

HOMELINK AND ALLOCATIONS QUARTERLY MONITORING & SCRUTINY REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give a position statement on the Allocations Service for the second quarter of 2008/2009. The report also informs the Committee of the outcomes of the monthly scrutiny of the service carried out by the Director and Assistant Directors of Housing Services.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

3 REPORT

3.1 HomeLink Register

A breakdown of the HomeLink register is given in **Appendix 1**.

On 27th October 2008, there were 16,107 applications within the six bands on the HomeLink register. This breaks down into 205 homeless applicants (1%), 3236 NCC/NCH transfer applicants (20%), 1445 Other Social Landlord Tenants (9%) and 11426 general applicants (70%).

There are 11580 (72%) applications from singles/couples without dependent children to be housed with them. 4527 (28%) applications registered are from families with dependent children.

29% of applicants on the Housing Register are of BME origin, 4.5% of applicants have a disability and 12% of applicants are over the age of 60

A separate waiting list is maintained for applications for the Victoria Centre flats. There are 256 applicants on this list. A local lettings policy is in place outside of the banding structure.

3.2 Progress on Review of the Housing Register

A robust review of the HomeLink register began at the end of May 2008. The objective of this review is to ensure that all the applications are current, the information recorded is accurate and up to date and that every application has been re-assessed and subsequently placed in the correct band on the register. In addition the review identifies support

needs and will feed into the new case work system (see Point 3.6).

As part of the review process, all transfer applicants and RSL applicants have now been contacted. Approximately one third of these applicants have not responded and those applications are presently being closed down. However, it must be emphasised that before closing applications, a check is made to determine if the applicant has any support needs or vulnerability. In cases where a support need or vulnerability has been identified, a referral is made to the HomeLink Support Officers or Medical Referral Officers. These Officers will then carry out a home visit to confirm that the applicant no longer has a housing need and/or that they definitely want to close the application.

Owing to a temporary redirection of resources to address other priorities within the voids and lettings service, a new target date has been set for the completion of the review. All review letters will be sent out by the end of November 2008, with all resulting actions completed by the end of January 2009.

3.3 **HomeLink Lettings Quarter 2 2008/2009**

In the second quarter there have been 711 lettings in total, including HomeLink partner RSL properties. 605 (85%) of the lettings were to properties managed by NCH. Approximately 59% of NCH properties are considered to be single type accommodation and 41% is suitable for families. However, owing to the limited supply of houses, larger maisonettes and flats are let to families. Only 219 houses became available in this period for letting, which was 36% of the total of NCH properties let.

A detailed breakdown of the lettings information is given in **Appendix 1**.

During the same period 8 flats were also let in the Victoria Centre.

3.4 **Manual Offers**

The target for lettings made as a result of manual offers is a maximum 5% of all lettings. 20 (3.3%) NCH properties were let as a result of a manual offer between 1st July and 30th September. **Appendix 1** gives a breakdown of the numbers and reasons.

All manual offers are reconciled with the offer approval as part of the monthly monitoring of Allocations. Details of the reconciliation monitoring between 1st July and 30th September are shown in **Appendix 2**.

3.5 **Bidding Patterns**

There have been 42,072 bids made during the quarter; 67% were made via the website, 26% via the telephone system and 7% via the Area Housing Offices.

40% of bids were made by BME applicants, which compares favourably with the 29% of BME applicants on the waiting list. 3.5% of bids were

made by applicants with a disability, which is fewer than those registered on the waiting list. 5% of bids were made by applicants over the age of 60. This is considerably lower than the percentage of applicants over the age of 60 on the Housing Register. These groups have been highlighted for individual support via our HomeLink Support casework. (see below).

3.6 HomeLink Support Casework

Analysis of the waiting list and bidding patterns has indicated that there are applicants who are either not bidding, making ineligible bids or who are making high numbers of bids but are not yet successful in being made a suitable offer. An increased and proactive casework system has been developed for HomeLink Officers, so that support reaches applicants who may need further advice or guidance. This includes targeted support to particularly vulnerable applicants including those under 25 and those over 60 years of age, those with disabilities and those applicants who have an urgent need for a move.

Performance is measured against the:-

- Decrease in urgent need applicants not bidding;
- Decrease in those bidding inappropriately.

Concentration during the first two quarters 2008/2009 has been on reducing the number of non bidders, particularly within the urgent needs band. The table in **Appendix 1** shows a gradual decrease in applicants not bidding, with applicants in the highest need band showing the greatest reduction. It is recognised that there are still 22.9% of applicants with a moderate or urgent need not bidding. Although this is a reduction of 2.5% since April, further improvement is required in this area and we will continue to contact applicants on an individual basis to provide support and advice in the bidding.

3.7 Monitoring and Scrutiny

The results of the monitoring of the Allocations Service are shown in **Appendix 2**.

Monthly meetings have been held with the Director and Assistant Directors of Housing Services. All cases referred to the Allocations and Tenancy Management Panel and the resulting decisions are scrutinised. Consideration is also given to:-

- exception reports in relation to any breaches of policy or practices;
- reconciliation of all new tenancies to the appropriate level of approval;
- Related Party allocations comply with Standing Orders;
- Reconciliation of manual offers with the approval to make an offer.

In addition an individual performance framework has been developed for

the monthly meetings in order to monitor adherence to policy and consistency of application. Within this framework both individual and team development needs are identified and addressed.

4 FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS (DOF010)

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 Effective maintenance, management and controls of the key risks of the allocations service is a Company requirement.

5 IMPLICATIONS FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 The regular monitoring and scrutiny carried out ensures a quality service is provided at all times and that improvement measures are identified, therefore meeting the Company's objective to deliver excellent services.

6 VALUE FOR MONEY AND EFFICIENCY ISSUES

- 6.1 Monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the allocations service ensures that value for money considerations are being made.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Monitoring, profiling and scrutiny of the service ensures that there is equality of service delivery to all service users.

8 BACKGROUND MATERIAL AND PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 8.1 Nottingham City Homes performance reports

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Date: 27th October 2008