

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

PERFORMANCE & REGULATORY COMMITTEE

10 FEBRUARY 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING OPERATIONS

HOMELINK, 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 third quarter 2008/2009. The report also informs the Committee on the outcomes as a result of scrutiny of the service carried out by the Director and Assistant Directors of Housing Operations.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Performance & Regulatory Committee note the report.

3 REPORT

3.1 HomeLink Register

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

At 19th January 2009 there were 15,607 applications within the six bands on the HomeLink register. This breaks down into 180 homeless applicants (1%), 3289 NCC/NCH transfer applicants (21%) 1222 Other Social Landlord Tenants (8%) and 10936 general applicants (70%).

There are 11194 (72%) applications from singles/couples who do not have dependent children to be housed with them. 4433 (28%) applications registered are from families with dependent children.

BME applicants make up 30% of the Housing Register. 6.25% 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 264 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 waiting list began at the end of May 2008. The

objective of this review is to ensure that all the applications are current, that we have accurate and up to date information, and that every application has been re- assessed and is 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 below).

All applicants have been contacted. Reminder letters have also been sent to all applicants who have not responded. At week commencing 19th January there were approximately 5000 applicants who had not responded. HomeLink staff are now closing down those applications. Please note 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. Officers will then carry out a home visit before the application is closed, to confirm that the applicant no longer has a housing need and/or that they definitely want to close the application.

The review will be completed by 31st January 2009.

3.3 HomeLink Lettings Quarter 2 2008/2009

In the second quarter there have been 696 lettings in total. This includes HomeLink partner RSL properties. 581 (83%) of the lettings were to properties managed by NCH. Approximately 61% of the NCH properties are single accommodation and 39% family type. However owing to the limited supply of houses, larger maisonettes and flats are let to families. Of the lettings made in this period, only 200 houses became available, (34% of the total of NCH properties let).

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

During the same period 12 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. 50 (8.5%) NCH properties were let as a result of a manual offer between 1st October and 31st December 2008. Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of the numbers and reasons.

It should be noted that the increase in manual lets this quarter is predominantly due to regeneration work in the Highbury Vale area. Due to delays in funding to complete the modernisation work in the Highbury Vale improvement area, NCC approved direct offers of properties which had already been modernised, to be made to tenants whose homes were still awaiting modernisation.

All manual offers are reconciled with the offer approval as part of the monthly monitoring of Allocations. Details of the reconciliation monitoring between 1st October and 31st December are shown in Appendix 2.

3.5 **Bidding Patterns**

There have been 26,286 bids made during the quarter. 70% were made via the website, 22% via the telephone system and 8% via the local offices.

45% of bids were made by BME applicants which compares favourably with the percentage of BME applicants on the waiting list. 5.1% of bids were made by applicants with a disability, which is slightly fewer than those registered on the waiting list. 4.3% 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.

The table in Appendix 1 shows a significant decrease this quarter, in applicants not bidding. It is recognised that there are still 16% of applicants with a moderate or urgent need not bidding. All applicants within band 2 are given one to one support either by the Medical Referral Officers, HomeLink Support Officers, Housing Patch Managers, or in the cases of Applicants who have an urgent need due to home loss for regeneration purposes by the Decommissioning Team. It should be noted therefore that the reason for applicants not making a bid is not necessarily due to lack of support.

Other methods of support include:-

- Weekly proxy biddings for those applicants who cannot bid themselves or who do not have support networks to help them bid.
- Direct mail shots of the advert to individual vulnerable applicants.
- Advert e mailed weekly to Support Agencies and Community Groups who will subsequently support their clients/ group members to bid.
- Referrals for individual HomeLink support as a result of support needs assessment.
- Monthly HomeLink support surgeries at the Area Housing Offices.
- Outreach programme for Support Agencies and Community

Groups – to train and update on the HomeLink service. (includes 122 partners).

- Annual Inclusion events for Support Agencies and Community representatives in order to ensure access to the HomeLink service for vulnerable groups.

A performance management framework is currently being developed in order to measure the outcomes of this support. This will be implemented in February 2009. Outcomes will be reported to the Performance and Regulatory Committee.

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 decisions which are made 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 Monitoring and scrutiny of this service ensures a quality service is provided at all times and that the need for improvements is highlighted. Carrying out the monitoring and scrutiny therefore meets 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

Contact officers: Sue Lomax
Housing Registration & Allocations Manager
14 Hounds Gate
Nottingham
NG1 7BA
Tel: 9157138
E-mail: sue.lomax@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

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