

**HomeLink Support**

At the outset of CBL, HomeLink adopted an inclusion strategy to ensure that vulnerable applicants were not disadvantaged by a new pro-active system.

**There are various ways in which HomeLink Support is provided:-**

- Individual One to One Case Work – An increased and proactive casework system has been developed for HomeLink Officers, to ensure support reaches applicants who may need further advice or guidance. This includes targeted support to particularly vulnerable applicants including those over 60 years of age, those with disabilities and those applicants who have an urgent need for a move.
- 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.
- Single Point of Contact for applicants with Move-On support.

**Performance Targets**

Move on support package approvals have a target of 5 days.

Outreach sessions - 2 per week for each Homelink Support Officer

Placing of proxy bids are carried out weekly by Tuesday lunch time

The mail shot of the Homelink advert to 114 applicants is completed by close of day Friday.

Casework – Currently the HomeLink Support Officers have approx 12 cases which are contacted on a weekly and work with on a 1 to 1 basis.

Casework for the Medical Referral Officers is currently 106 cases

The HomeLink advert is emailed every week to approx 200 support agencies and workers

Service promotion - The Homelink Support Officers regularly attend events to promote the Homelink Scheme and to build links with new and existing community and support groups. These events have recently included visits to Top Valley and Henry Mellish Schools.

### **Outcomes of HomeLink support – 2008/2009**

#### **Inclusion Strategy – Ensuring Applicants are not disadvantaged by a Choice Based Lettings Allocations System**

##### BME Applicants -

32% register, 43% bidding 34% lets

##### Applicants with Disability

9% register, 6% bidding, lets 8%

##### Applicants over the Age of 60

13% register 5% bidding 14% lets

The lettings to applicants over the age of 60 are reflective of the housing register. The need to use transferable bids could account for the difference in the percentage of applicants bidding. In addition the Outcome of one to one support has also identified that many applicants over the age of 60 wish to put their name on the housing register but do not necessarily want to be rehoused immediately.

#### **Supporting Vulnerable Groups –**

##### Care-leavers

10 care-leavers have been accepted for priority rehousing between April 2008 and March 2009 under the care-leavers protocol. One to one support is provided for all. 9 Applicants have now been successful in bidding and have been allocated a property. The average wait to first offer was 20 days. The tenth applicant is actively bidding with support from the Medical Rehousing Officers.

##### Vulnerable Young Parents – with urgent need for rehousing

A robust process has been developed in partnership with Housing Aid to ensure inclusion for vulnerable young parents. There have been 6 lets to vulnerable young parents with an urgent need for rehousing during the above

period. There are currently 4 vulnerable young parents with an urgent need for rehousing on the register. All are being given one to one support to bid on a weekly basis.

### Bidding Support

- 65 people currently on the proxy bidding list.
- 114 people are sent the weekly advert, as a result of a support visit / contact.
- A further 12 people are receiving extensive support under the case work system as a result of a direct referral or referral from another agency.
- Analysis of those not bidding has resulted in the development of a 1 to 1 case load system for those vulnerable people not bidding in those in urgent need for re-housing. This has resulted in a gradual reduction in applicants not bidding. The table below shows the decrease since April 2008.

The table below shows the reduction in numbers of applicants not bidding between April 2008 and March 2009

	No. Not Bidding April 08	No. Not Bidding Oct 08	No. Not Bidding January 09	Not Bidding April 09
Band 2	148	107	97	72
Band 3	574	552	347	310
Band 4	4175	3924	3119	2994

There has been a significant decrease, in applicants not bidding since April 08. It is recognised that there are still 17% of applicants with a moderate or urgent need not bidding. The provision of one to one support for all applicants in band 2 has identified that none bidding is not through lack of support but due to applicants awaiting specific properties of choice.

### Outreach Program

An Outreach Programme has been developed for support agencies and community groups. The Homelink Support Officers have an annual programme for training and advising support agencies and community groups with regard to Nottingham HomeLink. There are currently 122 agencies and groups on the outreach list, although this is a developing document. The following are examples of some of the outcomes developed within the outreach programme:-

## Project Rahnama

Rahnama was an already established group which was set up in 1993 initially to provide employment training and advice, educational courses and general advice to the people in the inner city of Nottingham, but especially to BME communities (copy of website information enclosed). HomeLink outreach has been developed into a partnership project with the Rahnama group, with the objective of increasing access and support to the Asian communities. The Asian community are particularly under represented on our Housing Register. Funding has been provided for this project and free advice and drop in sessions are available for customers to receive help in registering an application and bidding for properties. HomeLink Support Officers are attending and supporting the project facilitators in weekly surgeries, which are well attended.

Rahnama reported that in March a total 80 enquiries were received. Enquiries were received from people living in Radford, Hyson Green, Top valley, Sherwood, Mapperley, Arboretum, New Basford, and Meadows, Forest Fields, City Centre, Calverton, Sherwood Rise, Wollaton, Bobbers mill and Bilborough.

The Ethnicity of people using the service in March, 2009 included Pakistani's, Polish, Black British, Iraqi's, Chinese, English, Kurdish and Afghani's.

60 Bids were placed on behalf of Clients and other enquiries received were: - Help with mutual exchange, help to complete application forms, banding issues and general information.

## HMP Nottingham

HomeLink Support Officers have been attending quarterly meetings at HMP Nottingham for the past year. An outcome of these meetings was that HomeLink Support Officers would visit the prison and present a workshop to a group of prisoners with a local connection to Nottingham and who would be released from custody in the near future. The aim of the workshop was to inform prisoners about the Gateway and HomeLink process and what is required of tenants in terms of tenancy conditions. A joint workshop was presented by HomeLink Support Officers, Gateway Staff and Tenancy and Estate Management. As a result positive links have been made with both prisoners and the Resettlement Team at the prison. It has been requested by the Resettlement Manager at Nottingham Prison that these workshops are presented on a regular basis.

## Sure Start

Drop in sessions have been arranged at the Sure Start Centre in Sneinton. Sessions are taking place on the last Friday in every month. The HomeLink Support Officers attend a drop in play session and are available to answer HomeLink queries. The sessions have been added to the centres diary and information flyers produced. An information board has been set up in the

reception area for sessions to be advertised but also to provide information on issues such as how to apply, step by step guides on how to bid, the current void edition is displayed and a range of Nottingham City Homes and HomeLink information booklets are available. It is intended that this link with the Sure Start Centre in Sneinton can be used as a model for other Sure Start Centres across the City. Attendance is monitored and feedback requested in order to further develop the service.

### Gypsy and Traveler group

A HomeLink Support Officer regularly attends the monthly drop in session as part of the outreach program. This has resulted in a relationship of trust being built up between the HomeLink Support Officer and the group (where trust has previously been an area of concern). Subsequently this has also resulted in the HomeLink Support Officer being invited to attend the multi agency meetings held with the Police, Health and Education. In addition links have been forged with a specialised floating support agency for this client group.

### Applicants over the age of 60

It has been recognised that a large number of applicants aged over 60 are not bidding. Subsequently this has resulted in events regularly being held in day care centres to increase access to the sheltered schemes and to provide registration and bidding advice. In addition this group of applicants are included in the one to one casework system.

### Hostel Move On Support

As a result of the outreach program a more robust system has been developed for the referral and approval of applicants who are living in hostels and are ready for independent living. The HomeLink Support Officers now offer a single point of contact for the Hostels and Support Agencies.