

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

PERFORMANCE & REGULATORY
COMMITTEE

12 MAY 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

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 fourth quarter and the full year 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 Committee note the report.

3 REPORT

3.1 HomeLink Register

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

At 17th April 2009 there were 12,763 applications within the six bands on the HomeLink register. This breaks down into 143 homeless applicants (1%), 3365 NCC/NCH transfer applicants (26%) 1298 Other Social Landlord Tenants (10%) and 8100 general applicants (64%).

There are 8957 (70%) applications from singles/couples who do not have dependent children to be housed with them. 3806 (30%) applications registered are from families with dependent children.

BME applicants make up 32% of the Housing Register. 9% of applicants have a disability and 13% of applicants are over the age of 60, and 25% under the age of 25.

A separate waiting list is maintained for applications for the Victoria Centre flats. There are 255 applicants on this list. A local lettings policy is in place outside of the banding structure.

3.2 HomeLink Annual Review

During 2008/2009 a robust review of the Housing Register was carried out. This review ensured that all the applications are current, that we have accurate and up to date information, and that every application

was re-assessed and placed in the correct band on the register. In addition, the support needs of all applicants were reviewed to identify any support needs for either the bidding process or for the applicants' new tenancy. At the end of the review the Housing Register was reduced by approximately 25%.

From April 2009 a new annual review process will commence with every application being reviewed yearly on the anniversary of registration. In addition a new customer satisfaction process has been developed within the Vision Management System (VMS) programme. This will measure customer satisfaction of the allocations service and can be used with the existing system of measuring customer satisfaction of new tenants. Discussions have taken place with the HomeLink RSL partners with regard to outcomes that will need to be actioned as a result of customer satisfaction of the HomeLink service. The results of the surveys will be reported to this Committee.

3.3 HomeLink Lettings 2008/2009

In the fourth quarter there have been 662 lettings in total. This includes HomeLink partner RSL properties. 536 (81%) of the lettings were to properties managed by NCH. Approximately 58% of the NCH properties are single accommodation and 42% 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 218 houses became available, (40% of the total of NCH properties let).

There were 2812 HomeLink lettings in total for 2008/2009, 2345 (83.4%) of which were properties managed by NCH. Approximately 59% of the NCH properties are single accommodation and 41% family type. The family type accommodation included only 816 houses (37% of the total of NCH properties lets).

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

3 flats were also let in the Victoria Centre during the fourth quarter and 29 in the full year 2008/2009.

3.4 Manual Offers

The target for lettings made as a result of manual offers is a maximum 5% of all lettings. 34 (6.3%) NCH properties were let as a result of a manual offer between 1st January and 31st March 2009. Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of the numbers and reasons.

It should be noted that similarly to last quarter the increase in manual lets this quarter is predominantly due to regeneration work in the City.

All manual offers are reconciled with the offer approval as part of the monthly monitoring of allocations. Details of the reconciliation monitoring between 1st January to 31st March 2009 are shown in Appendix 2 and for

the full year in **Appendix 3**

3.5 **Bidding Patterns**

There have been 36891 bids made during the quarter. This is an increase of over 10,000 bids from the previous quarter. 71% were made via the website, 21% via the telephone system and 8% via the local offices.

43% of bids were made by BME applicants which compares favourably with the percentage of BME applicants on the waiting list. 6% of bids were made by applicants with a disability, which is slightly 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**

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.

Information regarding the outcome of the HomeLink support is provided in Appendix 4.

The decreasing trend, in applicants not bidding has continued this quarter. It is encouraging to note that over the year the number of applicants not bidding in band 2 has decreased by 51% and in band 3 by 46%. It is recognised that there are still 17% 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.

We are now working with 122 partners within our outreach programme, ensuring that agencies working with the most vulnerable people are trained and kept up to date on HomeLink processes, in order that they may support their clients to bid successfully.

Several examples of qualitative success in engaging with specific groups

in the community are given in Appendix 4.

A performance management framework has been developed in order to measure the quantitative outcomes of HomeLink Support. Performance will be monitored via the employee appraisal process and through monthly one to ones with staff.

3.7 Monitoring and Scrutiny

The results of the monitoring of the allocations service are shown in Appendix 2 for quarter 4 and Appendix 3 for the full year 2008/2009.

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.

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