

# Minutes



## Minutes of Allocations Customer Focus Goup meeting held on Date 26<sup>Th</sup> March 2009 @ 11am Venue Houndsgate

**Present:** Susan Lomax, Elaine Crofts, Pat Greenwell, Lynn Mitchell, Shelia Thwaites (STH) , Ennis Peck, Ella Richmond(minutes).

**1.0 Apologies:** Susan Taylor, Kate Graham, Valerie Schneider.

### **2.0** **Actions from previous minutes**

LM Stated that Tony Bernard will be working with the homes for us forum

PG Confirmed that cant set the policy in isolation and that it is a legal requirement for each Local authority to have a housing allocations policy which is framed by housing law and Housing Acts.

SL Confirmed that EC will take on the sensitive and local lets in BL absence.

LM **Amendment to minutes** – paragraph 6.0 LM meant that bathrooms in sheltered accommodation should be safety not comfort.

LM Mentioned that age concern are no longer providing support workers due to the current economical status and for people to complain on the age concern website.

SL This is useful for NCH to know so that support workers can fill the gaps and pick the other bits up.

### **3.0 Matters arising**

None raised.

### **4.0 Allocation policy review**

PG Need to ensure that all consultation has taken place. (Meeting taken place previous night all were present in the meeting today)

SL Suggested that we collate comments form last night's previous meeting.

PG Discussed part s of the allocations policy  
Bottom of page 9 highlight part in red regarding local connection – the code of guidance has tried to cover

### Action

most points and PG has referred mainly to the 2002 code of guidance as this backed more the housing acts. Local connection must not dominate the CBL scheme and in Nottingham Local Connection is quite strong with the view 'Nottingham homes for Nottingham people' although we are not destroying this we need to consider housing associations as they can offer properties to applicants outside the city boundary. With Homelink joining the sub regional scheme local connection will need further development.

SL Explained that the changes has allowed the policy to become more transparent as it has allowed for the virtual banding to cease. For example if an applicant was living in London and was in band 3 he would not be considered for NCH properties unless he had a local connection. The first option will be to Nottingham residents.

PG Page 11 Local Lettings and sensitive allocations- The district orders report about the local lettings plan and ensure we are doing it properly – NCH consultants Housemark was under the impression that NCH had far too many locals lets and this needed to be addressed and ensure that staff understand how to apply Local Lets.

PG Page 13 children in living in Highrise flats discussion around the need to move children before they start school.

STH Confirmed that we don't rehouse people in the flat with children and asked why is the time frame after two years?

PG This is to ensure that families are moved before the children start School.

SL Families in Highrise with children are also given a high priority as living in an highrise with children is seen as worse then a lowrise – new part of policy has mirrored previous policies and two years has been accepted as being long enough.

STH Not acceptable any children in living flats – not only for the children but also other residents and tenants and causes friction.

SL These tie in with applicants who are given up properties which are in high demand.

LM People do want to move out of three beds but don't want to be offered one bed accommodation- want to the space of a two bed, especially older people who want to move to sheltered accommodation.

PG Unfortunately there is a lack of two beds in the city

SL When we do consultation this needs to be developed to see what out aspirations of out

	customers are, which ties in with the regeneration of certain areas.	
PG	Pg22 Succession more work needs to be completed around the succession as H/As successions have different rules to L/As.	
	Pg 26-27 Pg needs to run Neighbourhood Regeneration pass Darrel Smith- full housing option assessments are completed for all regeneration schemes and support is available to offer tenants and residents to best possible outcome.	PG
STH	Asked what happens to leaseholders in these circumstances?	
PG	Explained that because clauses in the housing Act that a market value is taken of the property and home compensation payment which is set by local Government – LA can compulsory purchase although this is discouraged.	
PG	Pg 32 the different types of tenancy needs to be amended to reflect H/As starter tenancies.	PG
EP	Stated that they are not just a different name, clauses are different.	
EC	The type of tenancy should be stated on the offer letter.	
PG	Appendix 4 Succession- conflicting messages one succession per secure tenant, although H/As are different and joint tenant – if one should pass away then the other will be given the tenancy and this will be a succession.	
EP	Discussed how a recent court case on succession explained that two joint tenants could give Notice on the other tenant and that this should not happen.	
SL	Explained that this discouraged at NCH and we look at each individual case.	
LM	Asked what happens if the tenancy is with three or four people?	
SL	Same rule applies.	
PG	Everyone to email PG for comments (if any) on the allocations policy – before the 09 <sup>th</sup> April 2009 or as soon as possible.	STH, EP. LM
PG	Explained that the portfolio holder for the city wants councillor seminar with input from senior staff before the allocations is policy is passed. Therefore putting back the policy to July.	
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CBL Reimplementation</b>	
EC	Explained that she has stepped away form her role as Homelink manager for a short time to complete the CBL reimplementation project and is currently back in the Homelink managers role, Ella as the practitioner is currently completing the majority of the work.	

- EC Background is that we have worked with Northgate to try and develop the changes and close working has taken place with ICT in the company.
- EC Consulted users of Northgate on what they believe the changes to be.
- EC Lots of changes as taken place with the application form and this is not aligned with Northgate and can also slow processes.
- EC Looked at current processes with the allocations policy and worked closely with PG regards this. Included in this is that all the applicants in Highrise accommodation with children have either been placed into band 2 or have be written to and advise when they qualify.
- EC Security has been matched up to the specific job roles this has escalated and is a big project, all access to the Northgate system will match the users specific job roles – which will restrict access to branch staff and people who do not use allocations. Smaller teams making the changes means that the process will be more consistent- Close working has been undertaken with Northgate,
- SL Reason we a re moving to a more specialist team as lots of mistakes with amendments were happening – and this is to improve the whole customer experience.
- SHT Asked would the closing of Housing offices have effects on advice?
- SL Advised that doesn't know the present state of the closure of housing offices – but housing officers will still be able to give advice, and the less people involved in the process the more consistent the advice will be.
- LM Stated that the Homelink website was not clear and not very good.
- EC Advised that is another part of the process we are changing – although the changes are complex.
- EC Purchased new software Task manager which helps co-ordinate task form Northgate- yet to see the new software working but hopefully this will solve lots of Northgate problems.
- EC Networked and liaised with other organisations which was a benchmarking exercise.
- SL Stated that we rely on Northgate to much to update the system what we aim to do is strip back the system to ensure more emphasis is put on t he user to update.
- EC Emphasised that its about he user making the decision which can be easy to monitor and not as complicated – which in turn will be easy to update

- the Northgate system.
- EP Commented that he was concerned that the banks and mortgage lenders are taking our council homes through people not affording their RTB mortgages and borrowing too much and then being rehoused back into council housing.
- EC Mentioned that there is support from the government through a mortgage rescue scheme that Housing Aid would have more information about.
- 6.0 Lettings -sign up - resettlement process.**
- ER Talked about the process where support needs are identified and addressed – through the application form, allocation process, sign up and in the tenancy.
- ER Explained briefly the types of support from homelink support officers, FIOs and Floating support.
- ER Explained that anyone can identify support needs and request support at point of the customer being known to NCH.
- EP Asked about FIP tenancies and where support needs were identified.
- SL Advised that ER would not necessarily know about this as the process regarding FIP tenancies are being introduced and that the lettings officer would know about the FIP tenancy at the point of allocation as it would be determined if the allocation was suitable.
- LM Mentioned that sheltered scheme managers are still not aware of customer moving into sheltered properties. Some have more problems than others and possibility of requiring a sensitive let?
- SL Explained that if a scheme has lots of problems this should be balanced.
- SHT Advised the HPMs don't know who is moving into properties.
- SL Advised that Lettings officers should hand paper work over within two weeks and that lettings officers should liaise with HPM to them of circumstances straight away.
- SL Will complete some spot checks and scrutiny on High risk tenants and when the HPM found out about this- for next meeting.
- 7.0 Performance**
- SL (See attached ) Discussed performance for homelink – how time to register an application form has decreased- and we are currently going in the right direction. How next year the performance indicators are going to be revised to ensure better monitoring of updated changes in circumstances and support framework.
- SL Went on to discuss the number of applicants in
- SL

regards to BME and over 60s and how many are registered bidding and the number of properties let to this specific group.

LM Requested information of the number of BME tenants in sheltered housing.

SL Advised that this was a profiling document about getting to know our customers better.

SL Advised that the table regarding the support is to ensure that we are giving support – although applicants will wait for specific properties and this about ensuring that the applicant is moved quickly.

### **8.0 Annual Review**

SL Reduced the applicants on the waiting list from approx 16.000 to approx 12.000- homeless have in the mean time reviewed their own waiting list has they had a lot of application forms that were retained.

SL We are currently going back to the monthly review and VMS surveys are being sent out with the review in April to capture customer satisfaction on the waiting list.

### **9.0 Further meetings**

Further meetings to be held: (venue to be confirmed)

June 25<sup>th</sup> 2009 -11am

September 24<sup>th</sup> 2009 – 11am

December 17<sup>th</sup> 2009 - 11am

March 25<sup>th</sup> 2010 11am