

Choice Based Lettings

15 April 2008



Choice Based Lettings

- Definition of the term 'Choice Based Lettings' is simply that an authority has adopted allocation policies and procedures which incorporate an advertising scheme.
- The Secretary of State believes that allocation policies for social housing should provide for applicants to be given more of a say and greater choice over the accommodation which they are allocated, while continuing to ensure that the primary purpose of social housing is to meet housing need.



Choice Based Lettings

The government also highlight the main CBL benefits as follows:

- Aids sustainable communities
- Settled viable and inclusive communities
- Tenants who have been offered a choice of accommodation are more likely to sustain that tenancy
- Satisfied tenants are more likely to meet tenancy obligations and maintain the property in a good condition.



CBL Research Findings

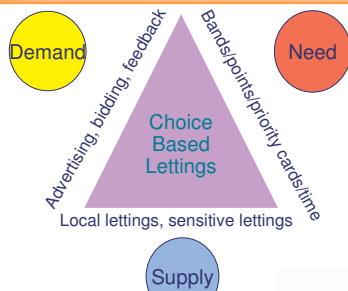
Most comprehensive research study* to date identifies benefits:

- Potential to generate savings that outweigh any additional cost
- Encourages home-seekers to think more flexibly about solutions
- Tends to reduce ethnic segregation
- Helps with any hard-to-let properties and lowers refusal rates
- Usually improves void relet times
- Evidence of improved tenancy sustainment
- Better outcomes for homeless people

*Monitoring the Longer Term Impact of Choice Based Lettings, Heriott Watt & British Market Research Bureau for CLG, October 2006



Choice in Context



CBL – Policy Framework

5 bands:

- Band A – Urgent
- Band B – High Level Housing Need
- Band C – Medium Level Housing Need
- Band D – Low level Housing Need
- Band E – No Housing Need

Selection by band & tie-breaker date of application



CBL – Policy

Band A – Urgent

- Urgent medical need
- Extreme social need
- Regeneration – Compulsory purchase orders
- Bed blocking
- Cumulative need



CBL – Policy

Band B – High Level Need

- High medical priority
- Severe overcrowding (by 2+ bedrooms)
- Statutory homeless / homeless prevention
- Care leavers
- Lack of Category 1 amenities
- Supply and demand transfer (underoccupation of desirable properties)
- Cumulative need



CBL – Policy

Band C – Medium Level Need

- Medium medical priority
- Overcrowding
- Social / welfare (to give/receive support)
- Forces (discharge within next 12 months)
- Lack of amenities but less serious than category 1
- Cumulative need



CBL – Policy

Band D – Low Level Need

- Low medical priority
- Want to live independently – no housing need
- Relationship breakdown – no housing need
- Intentional homeless
- Tenant incentive transfer
- Cumulative need



CBL – Policy

Band E – No Housing Need

- Adequately housed
- Outstanding debt
- Severe anti-social behaviour
- Deliberate worsening of circumstances



CBL – Policy

- Bands not points
- Quota system determines which band can bid
- New policy will incorporate and refine existing measures of need from current policy
- Aims to reduce disadvantage and inequality of opportunity
- In common with existing policy, is open to all applicants regardless of tenure or location



CBL

- Weekly advertising – website, local papers, local rate phone, offices, email alerts for vulnerable groups
- Officers assist vulnerable groups through bidding process
- Close links with VCS agencies to assist with support
- Bids – expressing an interest - phone, web, SMS text messaging, direct to housing office, and assisted bidding for most vulnerable
- Unlimited bids per cycle
- Feedback on let homes gives applicants the information required to make informed choices on realistic housing options



Sub – Regional Framework



Funding

PARTNERS ON THE PROJECT BOARD:

- Sedgefield Borough Council – Lead Organisation
- East Durham Homes
- District of Easington
- Derwentside District Council
- Derwentside Homes
- Teesdale Council
- Teesdale Housing Association
- City of Durham
- Wear Valley District Council
- Dale & Valley Homes
- Northern Housing Consortium



Funding

CLG Regional Challenge Fund offers up to 60% (or £95,000) of costs of promoting sub-regional CBL.

Essential criteria in obtaining funding:

- Genuine sub-regional partnerships - a minimum of 3 LA districts involved
- Wider Housing Options approach – including multiple housing associations, private rented tenancies, shared & low cost ownership schemes, home exchange
- RSLs must be involved



Funding

- Private landlords encouraged to advertise properties via scheme
- Facilitate greater sub-regional mobility between districts
- Easier accessibility to scheme - vulnerable groups
- Demonstrate value for money – joint procurement of services and shared costs for landlords involved

SBC obtained CLG funding of £95,000 plus partner contributions bring the total funding for the delivery of the sub regional scheme to £305,000



Sub Regional Project Plan

- Partnership Board created
- Project defined – Durham Key Options
- Funding obtained
- ICT solution procured
- Project manager appointed
- Development of common allocation policy framework
- Pathfinder East Durham Homes go live
- Marketing and consultation
- ICT testing and training
- Implementation across remaining partners



SBC Project Plan

- Develop a new allocation policy.
- Consultation events.
- Consider bidding rounds and adverts.
- Implement a new CBL software system to allow bidding.
- Change existing Orchard system.
- Consider other implications.



Summary

- CBL is a national policy requirement
- New Allocations Policy based on bands not points.
- Incorporates existing measures of need
- Properties are advertised and applicants 'bid'
- Recognised benefits to applicants and housing providers
- Accountability across sub-region as a whole
- Project plan sufficiently robust as to take account for either LGR or transfer

