

Choice Based Lettings Review

2010/2011

Who is involved?

- Lead – Cllr Dawn Barnett
- Verity Walker
Homemove, Housing Strategy BHCC
- Ododo Dafe
Head of Housing Management (East Brighton) BHCC
- Claire King (Minutes)
PA, Housing Strategy
- Ted Harman
Area Panel Member
- Roy Crowhurst
Area Panel Member
- Su Hansen
Area Panel Member
- Christina Hadleigh
Area Panel Member
- Heather Hayes
Area Panel Member
- Brian Balchin
Sheltered Housing Action Group
- Peter Foley
Tenancy Disability Network
- Tina Urquhart
Area Panel Member
- Cllr Maria Caulfield
Moulescoomb and Bevendean
- Sylvia Peckham
Head of Temporary Accommodation and Allocations
- Stewart Gover
Area Panel Member
- Jo Holt
CBL Partnership BHCC
- Dave Murtagh
Area Panel Member
- Terry Pester
High Rise Action Group
- Beverly Weaver
Area Panel Member

Objectives

- To carry out a review of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and to ensure that best use of stock and resources are being carried out

Areas looked at

- Choice Based Lettings platform
- Allocations Scheme (policy)
- Local Lettings Plans (LLPs)
- Communication
- Other areas (LDV, Accessible Housing, Housing Options, Homelessness & information from another LA who are not using Choice Based Lettings)

Local Connection

The proposed scheme allows demotion of applicants to a lower band where the applicant has no local connection.

Applicants are able to apply for social housing within Brighton & Hove from anywhere within the United Kingdom. However, in order to ensure that the Council meets the needs of the local community, reduced priority will be given to those people without a local connection.

Applicants without a local connection will have their priority reduced to Band C (below those with a local connection in this band) until they acquire a local connection with the Council.

An application is awarded a local connection if an applicant is currently residing in the City in either temporary or permanent accommodation and has been resident in the city for a minimum of **24 months** or is a serving member of the armed forces and is posted in the Brighton & Hove City Council Area.

Leaving Supported

In some cases where a household has been accepted homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII the case will not automatically be able to access general needs housing but rather an assessment of the housing need will take place and if deemed suitable will be placed into a supported pathway housing Scheme. Clients are worked with throughout this process and their skills and abilities are interrogated to ensure that they are ready to make each step to greater independence.

When these households are ready to move on from Council Supported Housing Pathway schemes Reasonable Preference will be awarded to the case once an applicant is ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the support worker. If ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan will be put in place.

3 refusals

Applicants who have refused 3 reasonable offers of accommodation within 12 months of the date of the first offer will **normally** have their priority for re-housing reduced to Band D for a 12 month period. **There may be exceptional circumstances where this may not be appropriate.** After this 12 months period the applicant will have their case returned to their original band with their original date as long as a change of circumstances has not occurred.

Working & Positive contribution priority

There is an increased recognition of the importance of Allocations Schemes at a Regional level to ensure that Authorities make best use of housing stock. Improving access to affordable housing and the ease of mobility for contributing to community households in particular, has emerged as a central theme for government.

To ensure that Brighton & Hove City Council promotes a positive contribution to the community at least 50% of all permanent social council housing stock will be advertised with a priority being given to those who can show that the ingoing primary tenant(s) is/are working or is making a positive contribution to Brighton & Hove City.

Working priority

For the purposes of this Allocations Scheme employment is described as having a permanent contract, working as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for 9 out of the last 12 months, is currently in employment and is working for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

Verification will be sought at point of application as well as point of offer under the same terms.

Positive contribution priority

Volunteer work - If the prime applicant(s) volunteers in an area of the City, the priority may be applied for in the area in which they volunteer. Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not-for profit organisation or a charity and must be for a minimum of 16 hours per month.

Full Time Carers - If the prime applicant(s) provide care in an area of the City, the priority may be applied for in the area in which they provide care. Carers must have been providing for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer and be able to provide formal evidence of this.

Work & positive contribution and disability

It was felt that it is important to recognise that many disabled people are and wish to remain active in their communities regardless of level of employment status or volunteer work and it has been found that they will likely benefit from being able to bid on all accommodation irrespective of level of work, paid or otherwise that they do. We therefore believe that anyone with a mobility 1 assessment on the Housing Register who can prove that they work or volunteer (irrespective of hours carried out) should be able to be awarded this priority.

changes to the current scheme

- **Minor wording changes regarding Private sector housing repairs banding to bring the allocations scheme into line with the H&S hazard rating system**
- **Directors Discretion (for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme) to replace Severe need – exceptional circumstances and/or multiple needs, which warrant emergency priority – to be agreed by Head of TA and Allocations.**
- **Homeless priority changes – All to Band C**
- **Closing of Homemove applications after a move#**
- **Change in wording for adapted property releases in Band A**
- **Medical priority wording changes**

Consultation

These changes will now go out on a 12 week consultation to interested parties in the City.

If you would like to be part of this consultation and would like a copy of the full report please contact Verity Walker at verity.walker@brighton-hove.gov.uk who will be happy to meet or speak with you and to hear your views

