

Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17th October 2017

Review of Allocations Scheme Implementation

Introduction

The current Allocations Scheme became operational on 20 April 2017. Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an initial review of the implementation of the new scheme to be brought to the October meeting of the committee.

It is still relatively early in the “life” of the new scheme. As such it is inevitable that there will be initial issues that will need to be addressed. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that the response is proportionate and well-considered.

This initial review focuses on a number of key themes:

Re-registration – a review of the process for re-registering households with an application on the previous Housing Register;

Impact on the Housing Register – comparison of the housing register prior to the new scheme and 6 months after implementation;

Impact on Lettings – consideration of issues relating to letting void property through the scheme;

Policy issues – identification of policy issues that may need to be reviewed.

Re-registration

Due to the significant differences between the qualification and banding criteria between the old and new schemes it was necessary to undertake a complete re-registration exercise. All 17040 existing applicant households were asked to make a fresh application to join the new register in advance of the scheme go-live date. A failure to re-register would result in their omission from the new register.

Letters requesting applicants to re-register and containing details of the on-line process were sent in batches over the re-registration period. A reminder letter was also sent and a decision was taken during the re-registration process to supplement this with direct text messages to priority households who had not taken the opportunity to re-register.

The Housing Register comprised 17040 households at the point of re-registration. An analysis was undertaken in mid-September 2017 to understand the outcome of the re-registration process for this group.

- 19.4% of existing applicants had been accepted on to the new register
- 20% of existing applicants were assessed as being ineligible to join the register

- 39.4% of existing applicants chose not to re-register
- 7.2% of existing applicants started an application but did not proceed to complete and submit an application
- 14% of existing applicants had submitted an application that was undergoing assessment (this includes applications where the assessing team was waiting for further information from the applicant).

In terms of re-registration the primary equality concern was the ability of applicants to access the on-line application process. In particular there was concern that older applicants might be disadvantaged by the application of this technology. An initial analysis of the equality impact has been undertaken in terms of age, ethnicity and disability (new scheme figures relate to completed applications in July 2017).

Old Scheme

Age Group	Apps	% of Apps
Under 18	11	0.06%
18-24	1138	6.68%
25-34	4649	27.28%
35-44	4739	27.81%
45-54	3328	19.53%
55-64	1625	9.54%
65-74	907	5.32%
75-84	473	2.78%
Over 85	170	1.00%
Grand Total	17040	100.00%

New Scheme

Age Group	Apps	% of Apps
16-17	10	0.10%
18-24	773	8.04%
25-34	2847	29.63%
35-44	2785	28.98%
45-59	2238	23.29%
60-64	325	3.38%
65-74	400	4.16%
75+	231	2.40%
Grand Total	9609	100.00%

Ethnic Origin	Apps	% of Apps
White British	4980	29.23%
Pakistani	2293	13.46%
Black African	1671	9.81%
Black Caribbean	1408	8.26%
Bangladeshi	948	5.56%
Information Not Yet Obtained	923	5.42%
Any Other White Background	681	4.00%

Ethnic Origin	Apps	% of apps
White: Welsh / English / Scottish / Northern Irish	2534	26.37%
Black or Black British: African	1366	14.22%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	1208	12.57%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	684	7.12%
White: Other White: Any other white background	665	6.92%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	552	5.75%
Asian or Asian British: Any Other Asian Background	454	4.73%

Any Other Asian Background	457	2.68%
Black Somalian	434	2.55%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	413	2.42%
Any Other Black Background	389	2.28%
Arab	339	1.99%
Any Other Ethnic Background	329	1.93%
Indian	299	1.75%
Prefer Not To Say	227	1.33%
Irish	200	1.17%
Mixed White and Asian	117	0.69%
Afghani	111	0.65%
Any Other Mixed Background	103	0.60%
Iranian	101	0.59%
Kurdish	93	0.55%
Mixed White and Black African	83	0.49%
Asian Kashmiri	81	0.48%
Other Eastern European	59	0.35%
Refused	52	0.31%
Iraqi	49	0.29%
Yemeni	47	0.28%
Chinese	46	0.27%
Not Known	35	0.21%
Other Western European	15	0.09%
Mixed Asian and Black	13	0.08%
Gypsy / Roma	12	0.07%
Albanian / Kosovan	11	0.06%
(blank)	10	0.06%
Vietnamese	9	0.05%
Bosnian	2	0.01%
Grand Total	17040	100.00%

Black or Black British: Any Other Black/African/Caribbean background	372	3.87%
Other Ethnic: Arab	364	3.79%
Prefer not to say	312	3.25%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean/African	281	2.92%
Other Ethnic: Any other ethnic group	233	2.43%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	151	1.57%
White: Irish	110	1.14%
Mixed: White and Black African	78	0.81%
Mixed: Any Other Mixed Background	75	0.78%
Mixed: White and Asian	67	0.70%
Not known	39	0.41%
Asian or Asian British: Chinese	36	0.37%
Refused	19	0.20%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	5	0.05%
(Not set)	3	0.03%
Grand Total	9608	100.00%

Disability	Apps	% Apps
No	8257	48.46%

Disability	Apps	% Apps
No	6643	69.11%

Yes	2993	17.56%
Not Disclosed	5790	33.98%
Grand Total	17040	100.00%

Yes	2682	27.90%
Prefer not to say	287	2.99%
Grand Total	9612	100.00%

Impact on the Housing Register

The introduction of the new allocations scheme was specifically intended to reduce the size of the Housing Register; restricting qualification to those with the greatest housing need. The following tables provide a break-down of the composition of the register as at 9th October 2017.

Applicant Type	No. of Applicants
General need	2902
Homeless applicant	1089
Transfer	1885
Grand Total	5876

Band	No. of Applicants
Band 1*	618
Band 2	2438
Band 3	2306
Band 4	514
Grand Total	5876

*Note: Band 1 is the highest priority applicants

Bedroom Need	No. of Applicants
1	1338
2	1554
3	1698
4	1022
5	219
6	38
7	7
Grand Total	5876

The composition of the new register in terms of bedroom need is notable when compared with the previous scheme. In particular the number and relative proportion of those who need 1 bed accommodation has reduced whilst the proportion of applicants seeking 4 bed and larger properties has increased.

Impact on Lettings

1233 dwellings have been let through the new scheme (BCC lettings and nominations to registered providers). The following table details lettings completed by applicant type under the new scheme up to 9 October 2017.

General need applicants	Homeless applicant	Transfer applicant	Grand Total
476	552	205	1233
38.6%	44.8%	16.6%	100%

By comparison, analysis of 2016/17 BCC lettings shows the following proportions:

General need applicants	Homeless applicant	Transfer applicant	Grand Total
2748	1734	755	5237
52.5%	33.1%	14.4%	100%

It is notable that (so far) a higher proportion of lettings are being made to homeless households under the new scheme than under the old scheme.

There is some evidence that 1 bed properties are proving to be more difficult to let under the new scheme. Further work is required to understand this issue.

Policy Issues

The new scheme has been operational for 6 months. At present it is too early to draw firm conclusions in terms of areas of the policy that may need to be amended. In particular there are still a considerable number of applications that need to be assessed and entered onto the system. This will increase the size of the Housing Register and may address some of the issue identified with letting certain properties – particularly 1 bedroom flats.

Perhaps the key concern at present is the proportion of homeless households who have not taken the opportunity to register. This presents a serious difficulty in terms of discharging duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as at present the offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme is the only mechanism available to discharge a duty. The potential solution to this issue is to make an application on behalf of existing homeless households for whom the authority has accepted a duty under Part 7. The feasibility of this option is being considered.

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