

Mid Sussex District Council

Customer Impact and Needs Assessment

Title of Policy/Service: introduction of Choice-Based Letting for the allocation of social housing.

Division: Housing Services

Lead Officer: Julian Till

Date Assessment completed: 15 October 2009

1. SCOPING

1.1 What are the aims of the policy/service?

Choice- Based Letting (CBL) will commence from April 2010 for the allocation of social housing in Mid Sussex. CBL is designed to give people more choice about where they live, to encourage commitment to the area chosen, to reduce the time taken to let less popular properties and to change passive applicants into active customers.

1.2 Who does the service/policy affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

Those seeking social housing in Mid Sussex.

1.3 If your service uses contractors, how do you ensure that they comply with the Council's equality policies and schemes and relevant legislation?

Downland Housing Association (now known as Affinity Sutton), currently run the Council's Common Housing Register. Housing Associations are governed by the Homes and Communities Agency, which ensures compliance with relevant legislation and equalities policies. The Council is joining the Sussex Homemove CBL scheme, an established partnership of 11 local authorities in West and East Sussex. There are key principles of the Homemove scheme that the Council has had to sign up to, which are supportive of equalities. The partnership has an action plan to implement its overall Equality Impact Assessment.

2. Assessment of Impact and Needs - Supported with evidence from Data and Consultation

(See Guidance Notes for information on completing this section)

	Barriers to service/differential impact	Evidence base	Current actions taken to address these	Further actions required
Race	BME groups may be disadvantaged in terms of accessing information regarding the advertising of properties. Access problems for Gypsies and Travellers. BME applicants may have problems bidding for properties due to language difficulties.	From ethnic monitoring of homelessness applicants and housing advice enquiries.	Use of Signpost and translation service. Scheme user guide has been made available in nine community languages in print and on the website. Agencies that work with vulnerable groups contacted to be made aware of CBL, so that they can facilitate re-registration and bidding on their behalf.	Wide range of methods used to allow bidding for properties. Partnership provides access to translation and interpretation services.
Religion or Belief	People may need to know the location of places of worship when considering bids under CBL.	Census information on breakdown of religious groups.	None at present.	Online property advertisements for CBL will include "up my street" links which provide details of local facilities including places of worship.
Gender	None.	N/A	N/A	None.
Disability	Inability to match disabled applicants with suitable adapted or adaptable accommodation. There may be problems for those with learning needs accessing the scheme.	Analysis of the available social housing stock.	Agencies that work with vulnerable groups contacted to be made aware of CBL, so that they can facilitate re-registration and bidding on their behalf. This includes support workers.	Homemove CBL property advertisements will include mobility codings, based on levels of disability. More time to be allowed for viewings for disabled applicants, including those with learning disabilities.
Sexual Orientation	Need to ensure that same sex relationships are given equal rights under CBL.	Evidence from existing schemes.	Same sex couples are given equal rights under the allocations scheme. Domestic violence policies recognise same sex relationships.	None.

	Barriers to service/differential impact	Evidence base	Current actions taken to address these	Further actions required
Age	<p>Potentially lower levels of access to or use of the internet among the elderly</p> <p>Some elderly people may find it difficult to cope with bidding for properties.</p> <p>Access to information about how the process works for younger people.</p>	<p>Feedback from older people and their representatives at equalities consultation events.</p> <p>Consultation carried out for the development of the Homelessness Strategy.</p>	<p>Agencies that work with vulnerable groups contacted to be made aware of CBL, so that they can facilitate re-registration and bidding on their behalf.</p> <p>All young people in temporary accommodation are visited by Signpost, who can provide them with advice and support so that they can bid for properties.</p> <p>Age Concern assist with completion of re-registration forms.</p> <p>Some supported housing will continue to be allocated by panels.</p>	<p>Applicants will be able to bid in a range of ways, including paper based, telephone and online.</p> <p>Use of monitoring reports on Locata to ensure that all age groups are bidding.</p> <p>Policy on the availability of personalised free sheets to vulnerable people to be decided upon.</p>
Income or Skill Level	<p>There may be difficulties for people on low incomes or with skills/literacy issues being able to access information about how the process works, including the ability to register and bid on-line.</p>	<p>Evidence from existing schemes.</p>	<p>Agencies that work with vulnerable groups contacted to be made aware of CBL, so that they can facilitate re-registration and bidding on their behalf.</p>	<p>Applicants will be able to bid in a range of ways, including coupons, telephone and online.</p> <p>Free use of library internet pc's for Affinity Sutton tenants negotiated with WSCC.</p> <p>Consideration of using the worklessness module being developed by Locata to link skills/training advice.</p>
Residential Location (Rural/ Urban)	<p>Access to information about how the new system will work.</p> <p>Ensuring opportunities for registering and bidding across Mid Sussex.</p>	<p>Monitoring of registration/bidding information</p>	<p>Communications Plan in place for ensuring all parts of the community/geographical areas are informed about the introduction of CBL in Mid Sussex.</p>	<p>Re-registration access to be provided at a variety of venues across the District, including Council offices and libraries.</p> <p>Assistance provided through Help Points.</p> <p>CBL scheme publicised through Town and Parish Council offices, open dais in each of the 3 towns.</p>

3. ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLANNING

Any gaps in information or provision and/or barriers to services identified above need to be translated into SMART targets and recorded here. These actions then need to be incorporated into service plans so that they can be monitored at service level and also as part of a corporate equalities action plan.

Issue	Action	Lead Officer	Deadline	How will impact be measured?
For all equality groups/vulnerable people				
<p>The need to ensure that vulnerable people are assisted with re-registration and bidding.</p>	<p>Inform agencies working with vulnerable people with learning difficulties that CBL is coming and the requirement to assist people with registration and bidding. Letter to be sent to relevant agencies, offering to attend team meetings/provide training. Help Point staff trained on CBL. At re-registration vulnerable applicants are flagged as such. Paper re-registration form to be made available. Assistance to be provided with proxy bidding. Band A and vulnerable applicants sent personalised free sheets. Range of methods provided for people to bid for properties. Article in Mid Sussex Matters, which is distributed to every household in the District. Three open days to be held, one in each of the main towns to assist people with bidding and registration. Contacting vulnerable people who are not bidding.</p>	<p>Julian Till/Louise Tennant</p>	<p>Initial drop in day June 09</p> <p>Letter sent- Oct 09 Team meeting/training Oct – March.</p> <p>Proxy bidding from April 2010.</p> <p>From April 2010</p> <p>March 2010</p> <p>April 16th, 19th and 20th.</p> <p>June 2010</p>	<p>Report to be run of existing vulnerable people on the register that have re-registered for CBL. Picking up on cases where people are bidding for properties that they are not eligible for. Monitoring bidding activity amongst vulnerable applicants.</p>
Race				
<p>Accessing the Gypsy and Traveller community to assist those wishing to access bricks and mortar accommodation through CBL.</p>	<p>Work through the Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group to access representatives of their community. Gypsy and Traveller category included under ethnicity section of registration form.</p>	<p>Julian Till</p>	<p>From November 2009</p>	<p>Monitoring of the number of people from the Gypsy and Traveller community who are registering and bidding.</p>

Disability				
Proper matching of those with disabilities to the available adapted properties.	Disabled needs clearly identified in the registration form. Housing Associations lettings staff trained to properly categorise properties using mobility codes. More time to be allowed for viewings for disabled applicants, including those with learning disabilities.	Julian Till/Louise Tennant	From November 2009 15 February 2010 From April 2010	Monitoring of bidding information for properties with mobility codes. Feedback from disabled applicants and their representatives.