



Sheffield City Council Lettings Policy Review

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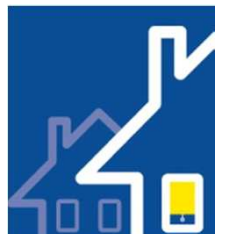
Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Committee 11th September 2012

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Allocations Policy Review Manager



Topics requiring a steer:

- Choice Based Lettings
- Bidding
- Adaptations



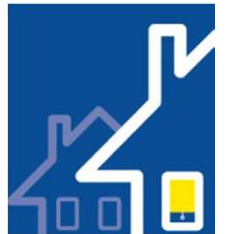


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Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

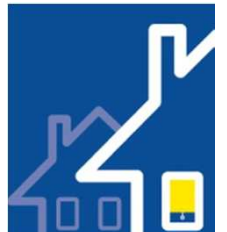
Current CBL System

- Majority of properties let via CBL
- Properties are openly advertised
- A weekly cycle
- Customers bid freely for available properties
- Properties advertised and let according to the rules in the policy
 - 1 in 4 to Waiting Time
 - Matched according to length of priority/Waiting Time
 - Management Lets
 - First Come First Served



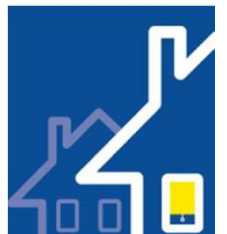
What works well with CBL?

- Available properties advertised openly
- Customers like seeing and choosing
- Fewer low demand properties
- Customer led
- Customers can bid for any area that interests them
- Reduces costs



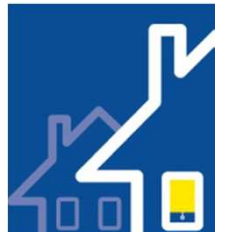
Issues with the current Policy?

- CBL is confused with the Policy
- The word 'choice' can be misleading
- Vulnerable applicants accessing the system
- Choice and urgent cases
- System and Policy from 2004
- IT has developed



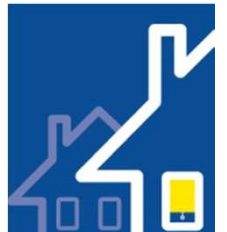
Consultation Headlines - CBL

- CBL is popular with customers and fits with the Council's commitment to choice
- 40% said they had ideas about how the system could be improved
- CBL is confused with the Lettings Policy



Relevant Research

- Most authorities use a CBL system
- Low demand properties have reduced as a result
- Voids times improved
- Ability to manage the register more closely
- A few authorities have moved away from CBL
- They have restricted their registers
- They mainly allocate to need
- They have far fewer properties than Sheffield
- They are in the minority



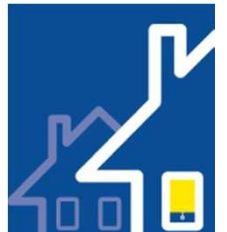
Key areas still requiring a steer: Choice Based Lettings

Options:

1. Keep CBL as the advertising and matching mechanism using the new ICT to manage more effectively.
2. Officer allocations of each property.

Officer Recommendation:

1. **Keep CBL as the advertising and matching mechanism using the new ICT to manage more effectively.**



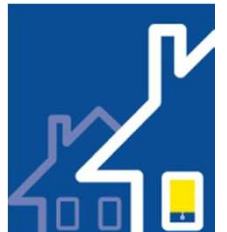


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Bidding

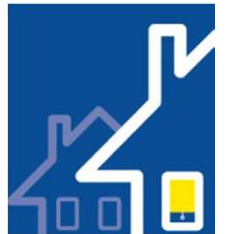
Current Policy

- Anyone registered to bid can place as many bids as they wish
- There is no restriction on how many bids can be added per cycle



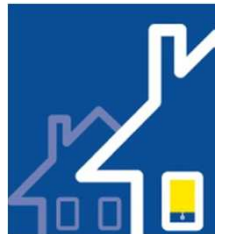
What works well in the current system?

- The system is accessible and easy to use
- A huge number of bids are received each cycle (average of 24 per applicant)
- Vulnerable applicants are supported to bid



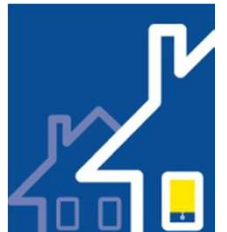
Issues with the current Policy

- Introduced at a time of low demand
- Allows unlimited bids
- Demand now outstrips supply
- Applicants bidding indiscriminately
- High levels of refusals
- Waste of staff time, resources, increased voids times



Consultation Headlines - Bidding

- RPs think bids should be restricted
- BME and older people think 3 bids per cycle are enough
- Some think bids should be restricted to priority too others do not agree



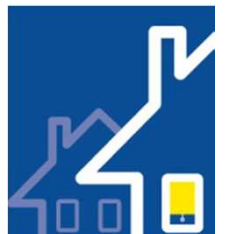
Additional information

Cabinet looked at the issues in Jan 2010 and agreed:

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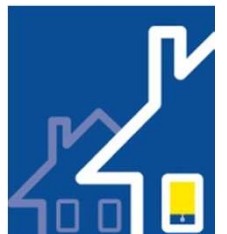
- Restriction to 3 bids for Waiting Time applicants
- To be implemented in the new ICT system
- Further analysis required on restricting to all applicants

It was acknowledged it would technically be impossible to implement on the current system.



Relevant research

- 13 out of 16 authorities restrict bids
- The 3 that don't give penalties for refusals
- All the authorities have levels of priority
- 9 of the 16 authorities advertise everything to priority first
- 9 of the 16 authorities do not place forced bids



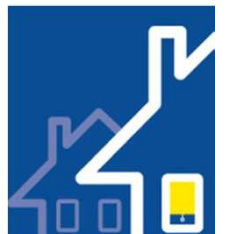
Key areas still requiring a steer: Bidding

Options:

1. Keep the system as it currently is and reverse the previous Cabinet decision, therefore keeping unlimited bids for all applicants
2. Implement the formerly agreed Policy change to restrict the bids of Waiting Time applicants only
3. Extend the restriction to apply to all applicants, therefore restricting all applicants to 3 bids per cycle. Retain the facility for staff to place additional bids, where necessary, for priority applicants in order to fulfil Council's duty to applicants with urgent housing needs.

Officer Recommendation:

3. Option number three





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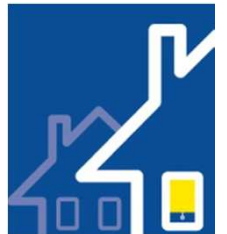
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Adaptations



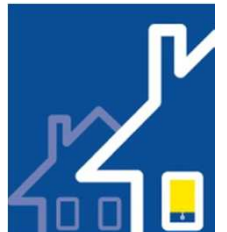
Current Policy

- People with mobility priority are considered first for property types
- Priority only given for a property that will resolve the need
- Released high demand for various scenarios



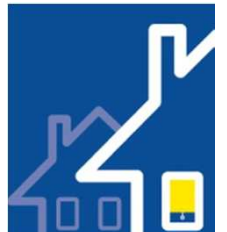
What works well in the current Policy?

- Disabled people can participate in CBL
- Mobility priority considered first for some properties
- Priority given for people in an adapted home that don't those adaptations to move
- Priority to people in a home not adapted who need adaptations to move



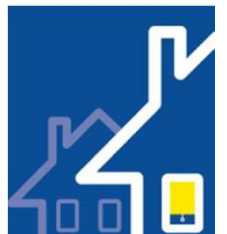
Issues

- Adapted properties let to people who are not disabled
- No levels of need
- Lack of property information
- Lack of customer information
- Unrealistic time limits



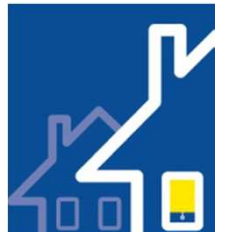
Consultation Headlines - Adaptations

- Disabled people find it more difficult to access the system
- There is not enough information given about the advertised properties
- There is not enough time given to consider the offer of accommodation



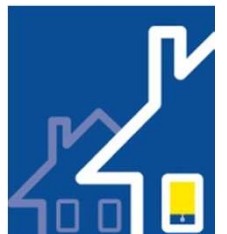
Adaptations Officer Sub-Group Recommendations

- Introduce levels of need
- Separate out highly adapted properties
- Have realistic time limits
- Clarity of information on adverts
- Formalise clear definitions



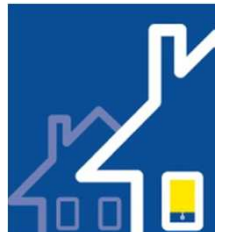
Suggested definitions.....

- **Highly adapted** – more than one adaptation and could meet the needs of most disabled people (wheelchair users)
- **Adapted** – properties with some adaptations - will not necessarily meet the needs of most wheelchair users
- **Adaptable** - could be adapted to meet the needs of most wheelchair users



Relevant research.....

- Best practice would be to keep choice for disabled applicants
- A new IT system will bring enhanced functionality
- Most authorities find this a challenging complex area within allocations
- Good information on properties and definitions are essential



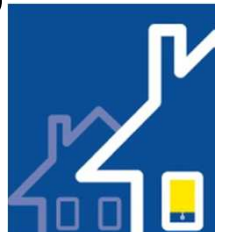
Key areas still requiring a steer: Adaptations

Options

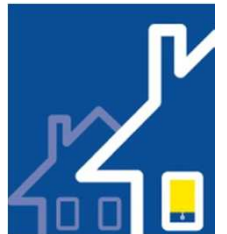
1. Keep the system as it currently is noting that the acquisition of a new CBL system is going to provide enhanced functionality
2. Retain and develop the adapted features already in the Policy, building in the additional flexibility to take highly adapted properties out of CBL and match manually.
3. Take all adapted properties out of CBL

Officer Recommendation:

2. **Retain and develop the adapted features already in the Policy, building in the additional flexibility to take highly adapted properties out of CBL and match manually.**



Thank you



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