



# **View Point**

## **Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings**

### **Scheme Guide and Banding Policy**

### **Consultation**

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# **View Point**

## **Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings**

### **Proposed new way of allocating homes in the Sherwood Forest area**

#### **Introduction**

Local authorities are being asked to work together so that you have a greater chance to move to areas other than the one in which you are living.

The new approach will give you a greater choice in selecting where you wish to live and is designed to give you a true understanding of your housing options. Expected to operate from late summer 2010, Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings will run right across the Sherwood Forest sub-region of the North Nottinghamshire (see front cover of this booklet to see the areas it covers covers). We will use a shared application form, common allocations policy and a shared computer system. The proposed name of the scheme is View Point.

We have produced a draft **Allocations Policy** to use with the Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme. Consultation is being undertaken with customers and other agencies from November 2009 on the draft Allocations Policy. The full policy is available on all of the websites of the Partner Organisations (see front cover).

#### **Objectives of the Scheme**

**These are very clear and are to:**

- Meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act (1996) Part VI as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002).
- Provide a single system of choice in housing across the whole sub-region
- Produce a system that customers can understand and which is both open and fair.
- Increase the sustainability of local communities
- Facilitate genuine opportunities for mobility across the sub-region
- Assist customers in the highest assessed need and in minimising homelessness
- Ensure that vulnerable customers are supported in being able to participate
- Provide a complete housing options service to increase the opportunity for all.
- Ensure that the scheme allows partner organisations to make best use of homes and in particular adapted properties.

## **How Choice Based Lettings works**

### **Step 1: Applying for housing**

To apply for housing, you must join the housing register by completing the application form online or over the telephone. Applicants do not have to do this yet; we will write and tell you again if you need to complete a new form.

The applications will be assessed for eligibility to join the housing register and you may be required to provide further supporting evidence and documentation.

### **Step 2: Assessment of Need**

You will be placed into one of five housing needs bands (band 1-5) based on the information provided.

Band 1 is the highest housing needs band and band 5 is the lowest. Within each of these bands there are a number of criteria, which your circumstances will be assessed against.

Where customers have the same housing band the person who has the longest effective date will have the higher priority for housing.

Where any of the three Councils makes an assessment of need and places you in one of the five housing needs bands, that is your housing needs band for the entire sub-region. Different Councils will not place customers in different bands, even if they have a local connection to more than one authority.

### **Step 3: Advertising available homes**

Properties will be advertised:

- on the website
- at local offices
- in a property newsletter sent to all Housing Associations, voluntary agencies and other agencies who request it
- Customers in Bands 1 and 2 or those who require sheltered accommodation can be sent the property newsletter if they are unable to access the Choice Based lettings system.

Advertisements will include a description of the home and any other relevant information, for example rent charge, property size and any disabled adaptations or other special facilities.

The home will be labelled to show whom it is suitable for and any other qualifying issues e.g. where a local connection is required or if there is an age restriction on the home.

#### **Step 4: Expressing interest in available homes**

To be considered for an available home you will need to express an interest (make a bid) on the property you wish to be considered for. This may be done by using the website, telephone, text or calling in person to a local office.

You will be able to make expressions of interest each advertising cycle on properties that meet your need.

You may not be eligible for a property because:

- your bedroom requirement is different to the number of bedrooms in the home
- you do not meet the criteria of a local lettings policy
- there are disabled adaptations that you do not need
- there is an age restriction on the property.

If you require assistance in making bids support will be offered. If you regularly bid on properties that are unsuitable for you, you will be contacted and offered support.

#### **Step 5: Making an offer of accommodation**

Once the advertising cycle for the property has closed, a shortlist of customers will be produced for each property.

Generally the successful customer will be the person who has been in the highest housing needs band for the longest period of time.

#### **Step 6: Viewing of a property**

Once a shortlist of customers is produced the person with the highest priority who meets the advertised criteria will be invited to view the property. If you view a property but decline it on the grounds that it is unsuitable for you, there will be no penalty against you.

#### **Step 7: Feedback**

Feedback will be provided on all homes let through the Choice Based Lettings scheme on a regular basis. This is to provide an open and transparent service and to help you make realistic choices.

Feedback details include the band of the highest bidding applicant and their effective date and the total number of people who expressed an interest in the home. No personal information will be disclosed. You will be able to receive individual feedback on your bidding for each property through the website or by contacting one of the partners (housing associations and councils in the scheme).

## **Direct Lets**

Some properties may not be advertised through the Choice Based Lettings scheme but let directly to a customer who meets specific criteria. The Principle Partners will advertise that the property has been directly let. The **Allocations Policy** explains when direct lets may be used.

## **Local connection criteria**

Properties may be restricted to those customers who have a local connection to that local authority. This will be made clear on the description of the property advertised.

If you do not have a local connection to the sub-region you may join the scheme but you will be banded one band lower than if you had a local connection to the sub-region.

## **Reviews and Complaints**

You have the right to ask for a review regarding certain decisions made about your application. Details regarding reviews are contained in the **Allocations policy**.

## **Working with Vulnerable People**

To ensure that everyone is able to take part in the scheme, a number of measures will be put in place to protect vulnerable people from being disadvantaged. We will:

- provide appropriate advice and assistance
- translate key documents where necessary
- provide information in other formats where necessary
- develop partnership working with support agencies
- publish a sub-regional vulnerable people strategy
- undertake monitoring and regular reviews of the allocations policies
- hold a list of customers who require additional help with the scheme
- implement a full monitoring system to ensure vulnerable people are using the scheme successfully.

## **How We See View Point Choice Based Lettings Working**

You would fill in ONE application form, which would register you for properties with ALL of the Councils and Registered Social Landlords in the View Point partnership. As well as social housing to rent, the scheme will also advertise properties to rent privately or affordable homes for sale.

Some of the benefits are:

- One application form across the sub-region
- One common allocations policy so all properties are allocated in the same way across the sub-region
- Transparent, simple and easy to understand.
- There will be support for vulnerable people.
- It will allow greater regional mobility.
- Choose properties YOU are interested in.

## **How does banding work?**

The Sherwood Forest Sub-Region Councils and Housing Associations use the information you've given in your initial form to award your band (1 to 5).

The following pages provide details of how the banding system operates and the criteria needed for each band.

### **Band 1**

- **Statutorily homeless applicants as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996**
- **Applicants in properties subject to Emergency Prohibition Orders under the Housing Act 2004 within the sub-region, or Demolition Orders, with written confirmation from Council or Housing Associations**
- **Applicants assessed as having a severe medical need**
- **Applicants assessed as having a severe welfare need, e.g. those suffering severe harassment or violence**
- **Nominations (Move on) from agreed agencies where applicants have been identified by the provider as, ready to move, and able to sustain a tenancy**
- **Negotiated Surrender (applicants likely to be sent to prison or detained in hospital for more than 13 weeks, have not breached their tenancy agreement, their rent is up to date, have not been served with a notice seeking possession and offer to end their tenancy)**
- **Qualifying Agricultural workers within the sub-region**
- **Successions**
- **Relationship Breakdown**
- **Applicants in Band 2 with two or more needs**

## **Band 2**

- **Applicants threatened with homelessness within 3 months who are likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, who are assessed by the particular scheme council as likely to be in priority need and have exhausted all other prevention options**
- **Applicants assessed as having a moderate medical need.**
- **Applicants assessed as having moderate welfare need.**
- **Social Housing tenants within the sub-region under occupying by 2 or more bedrooms or are willing to move to property designated for the elderly.**
- **Applicants whose household is overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms**
- **Applicants who have been rough sleeping for 4 weeks or more.**
- **Applicants currently in the Armed Forces accommodation, who will be discharged within 6 months, have a priority need and who has been based, lived or have family in a District within the sub-region.**
- **Applicants assessed as having a need to move to a particular locality within the sub region in order to take up an offer of employment or apprenticeship.**
- **Applicants assessed as meeting band 1 criteria but with no local connection to the sub-region**
- **Applicants in Band 3 with 4 or more needs**

### **Band 3**

- **Poor housing conditions - households living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions, for example they are sharing facilities with another household or the accommodation they occupy is lacking certain facilities.**
- **Applicants who have been assessed as homeless under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, but have been found to be not in priority need or are intentionally homeless.**
- **Applicants who have No Fixed Address.**
- **Applicant assessed as having low medical need.**
- **Applicant assessed as having low welfare need.**
- **'Golden Transfer' tenants who have been tenants for 2 years, had clear rent account for 12 months, no record of any other breaches of their tenancy, no anti-social behaviour record.**
- **Applicant whose households are overcrowded by 1 bedroom.**
- **Applicants served with valid Notice to Quit.**
- **Social Housing tenants within the sub-region under occupying by 1 bedroom.**
- **Applicants in Tied accommodation who have been provided with legal notice asking them to leave their accommodation.**
- **Applicants assessed as meeting band 2 criteria but with no local connection to the sub-region**

### **Band 4**

- **Applicants assessed as meeting band 3 criteria but with no local connection to the sub-region**
- **Reduced preference (applicants with significant financial resources and are financially able to secure alternative accommodation at market rent or where the behaviour of the applicant ((or member of his household)) affects their suitability to be a tenant)**

### **Band 5 (Applicants with no housing need)**

- **Applicants whose property require repairs that are able to be done**
- **Applicants who are in accommodation that meets their needs**
- **Owner occupiers**
- **Applicants in tied accommodation who are not required to leave**
- **Those who reside in caravans and boats**
- **Those who are currently in prison**

### **Choice of area**

Once you have registered for housing within the Sherwood Forest Sub-Region and received your banding you can:

- Find out about council and housing association housing throughout the Sherwood Forest Sub Region and
- Express an interest in which properties you are interested in.

### **Things to bear in mind**

Most of our properties for letting (including Housing Association properties) will be advertised through the Choice Based Lettings System.

There will be some situations where customers are not able to bid on all properties:

- View Point will be looking at the number of properties they've let to people coming from other parts of the Sub-Region. If there's a significant rise, then only people with a local connection to their particular borough or district will be able to bid for homes. This will be clearly stated in the advert.
- Some homes will require you to have a local connection to a particular village. This will be clearly stated in the advert.

**If you have:**

- **Seen a Housing Options/Solutions Officer and the Council has 'accepted a duty' to you under Homelessness law or**
- **Been awarded a band 1 for a move through nomination agreements (move on)**

You'll be restricted to bidding for properties in the local authority area where you've been accepted as homeless (or where you've received a move on priority).

**If you have:**

- **Received a medical or welfare award to enable you to move to a specific area (Close to family members)**

You may only be able to bid for properties in that area you've requested a move to.

## **The Consultation Process**

Consultation with all the people and organisations, who would be affected by or who have an interest in these proposals, in particular customers and advocates, will be taking place over a twelve week period from 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009 to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010

If you are either a person who currently uses the service, a prospective customer, a stakeholder or Registered Social Landlord you can take part in this consultation in different ways.

- By writing to one of the three Councils participating in the scheme. A questionnaire is available to express your views. All personal information given will be treated confidentially. The timescale for returning comments and feedback is 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010.
- You can email the Project Officer with your comments at [pholt@mansfield.gov.uk](mailto:pholt@mansfield.gov.uk)
- If you have any specific queries about the consultation, or wish to discuss any other information about the scheme please contact your local Council on the telephone number at the front of this document

## **What happens after the consultation?**

All feedback from the consultation will be collated and analysed, this will be presented to the View Point Project Board, prior to necessary changes and amendments being made to the Common Allocations Policy.