

Information, Advice and Letting Policy Consultation



Response to the Consultation

Following the close of the Information, Advice and Letting Policy Consultation on 03 September 2017 (extended to 08 September for Stakeholders), all responses received have now been collated.

A total of 97 responses were received, the vast majority of respondents were individual customers who filled in the questionnaire sent out with the 'Proposals for letting our homes' booklet.

A small number of stakeholders also responded, including Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and British Red Cross (BRC). Although contact was made with a number of others who were keen to respond, no response was provided by the extended deadline and after some final encouragement.

Table 1 provides a breakdown by respondent type.

Table 2 – Breakdown of respondents to consultation				
RSL	Current Tenant	Applicant	Current Tenant Looking for new home	Stakeholder
Cube	60	21	10	6

Overall, every type of customer responded to the consultation. Please note that due to self-selection the majority of those who selected other 'Stakeholder' appear to have done so in error.

Consultation Findings

The consultation posed thirteen questions and four profile questions (age, sex, household composition and ethnicity). This section will provide an overview of the responses to both closed and open-text questions.

Closed Questions

Four of the questions asked through the consultation were closed questions (Q1i, Q1ii, Q1iii, Q1iiii), respondents could answer on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Overall agreement has been calculated from the total saying either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree'.

Please note not all respondents answered each question. Due to rounding the totals can vary between 99 – 101%.

It's clear from the feedback that the majority of respondents feel that the proposals help make the process more clear, are supportive of our emphasis on helping those most in need, understand our need to make best use of housing stock and agree the proposed changes help applicants better understand their chances of getting a home. Overall agreement for each aspect is as follows:

- 80.5% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help make it more clear how we allocate our homes
- 77% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help those in greatest need of housing
- 73% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help make best use of available housing stock
- 79.5% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help tenants and applicants better understand their chance of being offered a home and be supported to consider alternative housing options.

The full breakdown of these results follow below.

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that, if implemented, these proposals would:					
i) help make it more clear how we allocate our homes?					
Landlord	Strongly Agree'	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Cube	30.49% (25)	50.00% (41)	10.98% (9)	7.32% (6)	1.22% (1)
	80.5% Agreement		11%	8.5% Disagreement	

Q1 (ii) Help those in greatest need of housing					
Landlord	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Cube	37.35% (31)	39.76% (33)	14.46% (12)	7.23% (6)	1.20% (1)
	77.1% Agreement		14.5%	8.4% Disagreement	

Q1 (iii) Help make best use of available housing stock					
Landlord	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Cube	30.49% (25)	42.68% (35)	19.51% (16)	6.10% (5)	1.22% (1)
	73.2% Agreement		19.5%	7.3% Disagreement	

Q1 (iiii) help tenants and applicants better understand their chance of being offered a home and be supported to consider alternative housing options?					
Landlord	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Cube	40.96% (34)	38.55% (32)	13.25% (11)	7.23% (6)	0% (0)
	79.5% Agreement		13.3%	7.2% Disagreement	

Open Text Questions

Twelve questions asked through the consultation were closed questions requiring respondents to answer by writing their response in the space provided. This information provides a wealth of qualitative information and has been analysed.

The first open text question asked provided respondents with the opportunity to explain their reasons for responding to Q1 (reported above) in the way they did. Those supportive of the proposals – the vast majority - emphasised the transparency of the policy, and that it does appear to support a clearer understanding of how we let our homes including that people with housing need are housed first. These respondents appear to come to this view based on one or more of the following perspectives:

- Change will benefit people – acknowledge the bigger picture
- Appreciate the problem the landlord faces with supply & demand - doing the best you can in this context.

A selection of quotes are provided below to demonstrate the clear support for the proposals overall.

“The bands system seems to be fair and in the correct order of priority. People will understand where they stand in the bands.”
(Cube respondent)

“Those most vulnerable are given the highest priority and each category is explained clearly” (Cube respondent)

The smaller number of customers who were less supportive responded with one or more of the following general themes:

- Change doesn't benefit my circumstances, or I don't know how long it'll take for me to get a home
- A perception that “queue jumpers” (i.e. people with chaotic lifestyles or those recently moved into the country) get all the houses.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, what respondents said were most important in the proposals were the principle of fairness, and the ability to help prevent homelessness and support those with health and wellbeing

concerns. For some, they wanted to know how to improve their chances of finding a home, and hoped the policy and processes would support this.

Questions specifically probing the proposals for a move to priority Bands demonstrate general support for clear groups of customers and applicants being given additional priority, and acknowledgement that the bands had been clearly thought out. However, for some respondents - on a personal level - these changes mean that they will likely be in a Band with lower priority need and this concerns them for their prospect of housing in the short-medium term.

The majority of respondents feel that not advertising Band A and using automated bidding for Band E were good ideas, helping maximise chances at getting a home for the most in need. A small number of respondents did raise questions on whether this would reduce transparency and whether automation would be effective, either in terms of a systems ability to bid on the right properties or whether it could remove an aspect of choice for the applicant. When the consultation probed on the publication of percentage of lets being included in Locality Plans and determined by demand for the last year respondents were however very supportive.

Respondents generally acknowledge that homelessness is a problem in society and that landlords are in a strong position to help, including prevention activity. There was strong support for single young people and those experiencing financial difficulty getting more priority than they currently do, with many respondents reflecting on the current economic climate. There were a small number of equally strong views that this can't be without support to these groups to understand a tenancy and how to be a good neighbour, or to be at the expense of those who are older and experiencing health issues.

Respondents generally supported the change to our overcrowding criteria to ensure children 10 years or older are entitled to a room of their own. However, response to our proposal to allow people, where they can afford it, to under occupy by one room was more mixed. This raised questions around whether this would reduce the supply of larger properties to the detriment of those who need a larger home, not simply who can afford one.

Stakeholders Perspective

A summary of four key stakeholder submissions are provided below:

We received an overall response comprising all the **Community Homelessness Managers (Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership)** - They commented that overall the proposals clarify the basis on which people with different kinds/levels of housing need will be allocated priority to access Wheatley Group homes. They commended the introduction of a single group for statutory homeless households and young care leavers, and were supportive of the priority for young single people under the age of 35. They felt that the six main bands (A-F) proposed provide a clear division of different groups of people with housing needs, however, the eligibility criteria for Band F needed to be clarified as it is not clear if this group relates to all people with a need for amenity / sheltered / accessible etc. housing, or just Wheatley tenants who would move from an existing tenancy.

West Dunbartonshire Council are strongly supportive of all our proposals. They like the Bands proposed and felt that they were clearly explained. The most important element of the proposals is the recognition of young care leavers and separating partners. On the proposal to allow tenants to under occupy by one room they felt that it was fair to give those who can afford it more flexibility as long as no one else required that house type/size at that time. The principle of allocating on a needs basis is applauded.

British Red Cross (BRC) are supportive of the proposals but would like additionally priority for reunited families. BRC supports the proposal to give more priority to those with children over 10 years of age sharing a room.

Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) commented that the most important change in the proposals in the consultation are for Band D where people living in overcrowded conditions get more priority. Commented that band A should include applicants who have planned homelessness with family being granted asylum and coming to stay with family. In this case when the family become overcrowded they should retain their original housing application date.

Customer Event

At our “Help out the icing on the cake” customer event, held on 26 June 2017, the proposals were presented to tenants from across the Group. In the main the feedback at this event mirrors that received and reported above from the formal consultation responses.

However, at the event, our proposals to change the overcrowding criteria to recognise children 10 years or older are entitled to a room of their own, and - for those who can afford - allow people to under occupy by one room generated a lot of lively discussion. Customers voiced views that affordability and supply/demand factors respectively needed carefully considered for these proposals. For some, the provision of a room of their own for children 10 years or over, or for a spare room for families own use was only considered desirable, and not essential. This raised questions of what a social landlord should be prioritising, particularly when there is limited housing stock. A number of quotes from the event table discussions is provided below to bring to life their mixed perspectives.

“It’s a nice idea that reflects modern society.”

“In an ideal world children would have a room each but not a necessity. Need to take into account affordability.”

“Demand for houses exceeds availability. If you need a one bed apartment that’s what you should get.”

“People should look at mid-market rental if they can afford to pay for an extra room.”

Cube IAL Consultation – Additional Question – Dogs

The Cube consultation feedback asked a supplementary question regarding dogs in properties. The feedback is summarised below.

When asked to provide views “on whether tenants should be allowed a dog in our properties, particularly our multi-storeys”, respondents showed very mixed and strong views.

Many feel that dogs can provide valuable companionship. However, dogs in properties also raised concern related to the dog’s behaviour/owner responsibilities, and dogs in multi-storeys was generally felt to be particularly problematic given the size and close proximity of flats.

A selection of quotes demonstrating the interplay of these viewpoints are shown below:

“Dogs are excellent companions for the elderly and families. They encourage healthy exercise and teach young people to take responsibility for others. In high rise flats they can be an annoyance and it's not much of a life for a dog unless they are large apartments and they can see out and are very well trained.”

“A lot of people rely on a dog for companionship and security as long as they are a responsible owner and clean up after them and follow the dog tenancy agreement, then ok.”

“Yes, don't see why not as long as it's cared for and it doesn't soil inside and outside of properties and doesn't cause a nuisance to others.”

“Multi - storeys are not suitable for dogs. There is always the risk of lift or stair soiling. Also, barking at any time.”

“No dogs in multi - storeys!”

“Absolutely not. A high rise is no place for a dog and having so many dogs in such a small area such as a high rise is an awful idea. I am constantly bothered by loud howling and barking. Lazy dog owners not picking up mess outside doors. Very few high rise flats allow dogs for a good reason.”