

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 43 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 1 – Breakdown of respondents to consultation			
RSL	Current Tenant	Applicant	Current Tenant Looking for new home
Loretto	24	16	2

Overall, every type of customer responded to the consultation.

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:

- 89% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help make it more clear how we allocate our homes
- 86.5% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help those in greatest need of housing
- 86.5% agreement that if implemented the proposals would help make best use of available housing stock
- 84% 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 break down 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
Loretto	23.68% (9)	65.79% (25)	5.26% (2)	2.63% (1)	2.63% (1)
	89.5% Agreement		5.3%	5.3% Disagreement	

Q1 (ii) Help those in greatest need of housing					
Landlord	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Loretto	29.73% (11)	56.76% (21)	8.11% (3)	0(0)	5.41% (2)
	86.5% Agreement		8.1% (168)	5.4% Disagreement	

Q1 (iii) Help make best use of available housing stock					
Landlord	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Loretto	24.32% (9)	62.16% (23)	5.41% (2)	5.41% (2)	2.70% (1)
	86.5% Agreement		5.4%	8.1% 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
Loretto	29.73% (11)	54.05% (20)	10.81% (4)	0% (0)	5.41% (2)
	83.8% Agreement		10.8% (131)	5.4% 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 most vulnerable people – acknowledge the bigger picture
- They believe that this change will benefit them personally
- Frustration with the current system, with little information about chance of being offered a home and/or after a bid is placed.

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

“It puts people more in the know what to do and gives them a bit more direction” (Loretto respondent)

“The bandings are clearer” (Loretto 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
- Working tenants get no priority.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, what respondents said were most important in the proposals were helping people to know their chance of getting a home and how to improve this chance.

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 it would be effective. 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 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. Some were unconvinced at the impact of this and others appeared to feel that it should be based on individual circumstances.

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.”