

# INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	3 SEPTEMBER 2019	10
<b>UPDATE MY HOME CHOICE FYLDE COAST</b>			

## PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

MyHomeChoice is the Choice Based lettings (CBL) system across the Fylde Coast authorities of Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. It provides a portal where all vacancies for social housing are advertised in one place and households can place bids for this accommodation. Properties are then allocated using a Consistent Assessment Policy for prioritising the housing need of applicants.

A review was undertaken of MyHomeChoice in 2015/16 which focussed on addressing issues of concern with the current Consistent Assessment Policy (CAP) raised by Registered Providers. These included addressing issues with delays in processing applications due to all applicants having to go through a full registration process, applicants losing a local connection if they move between boroughs and the system adopting a more flexible commercial approach to attract more households who would not necessarily have thought they would be eligible for social housing.

Six changes implemented:

1. Revised local connection requirement giving applicants access to the register if they can demonstrate a three year residency within Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. However priority will still be given to Blackpool residents for Blackpool homes, Fylde residents for Fylde homes, and Wyre residents for Wyre homes.
2. At least 50% of homes, including those in the shortest supply, are available to people with a Banding priority for re-housing, Bands A-C. The rest of the homes will be available to everyone on the list and offered on a first come first served basis.
3. Simplification of the priority bands for people with a legally defined housing need. There are now three bands A, B and C. There will be no bands given to households who do not have a housing need defined in law, but they will be able to bid for accommodation on first come first served basis.
4. Restrictions on the use of the system by existing social housing tenants looking to transfer. Transfer applicants will only be able to access the housing register, if they have a banding priority for re-housing.
5. Priority given to people in paid or voluntary work by slightly increases the chances for access to social housing for working applicants. 20% of homes made available on a first come first served basis will be offered, with priority to people in paid or voluntary work.
6. Flexibility in the sizes of properties that applicants can bid for by allowing households where the rent is affordable to be able to get a home with an extra bedroom.

The proposed changes were approved by Environment, Health and Housing committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and it was recommended a further update on the working of the Consistent Assessment Policy of MHC within Fylde be provided to this Committee.

**SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

[Environmental Health and Housing – 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017](#)

[Environmental Health and Housing – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018](#)

[MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast website](#)

**WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?**

Update on the operation of the MyHomeChoice CBL system in Fylde following the implementation of changes to improve how the system operates in January 2019.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Contact Kirstine Riding, Housing Services Manager – [Kirstine.riding@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:Kirstine.riding@fylde.gov.uk) – 01253 658569

## August 2019 - My Home Choice Fylde Coast Update

1. In January 2019 My Home Choice brought about changes to the way that Housing Association properties were allocated. Reducing the banding categories from A-F to A-C and including a “No Band/ No Need” category for the households who were not homeless or at threat of homelessness. See Fact sheet that explains who will be given a banding, by accessing the following link [MyHomeChoice Quick Guide](#), also available in Appendix 1 of this report.
2. All available properties are now being split down the middle into two categories, My Home Need for households allocated a priority banding for rehousing and My Home Choice for the “No Band” Households. Households allocated a banding on My Home Need still have access to the full housing register from both the band and no band category (Please see the flowchart in Appendix B to demonstrate how the new allocations scheme works). The following report will highlight how these changes have had an effect on the housing register since January 2019.

### Analysis of households registered with MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast 2016 to 2019

3. Table 1 details the number of households with a local connection to Fylde who are active on the Housing register and able to bid. This shows a steady increase in applicants since 2016 with the number of applicants registered in 2019 remaining the same. The number of transfer applicants has fallen and this will be as a result of households already housed in social housing being unable to transfer, unless they have a housing need to do so and awarded a priority banding. Registered Providers report that since the implementation of the changes in January 2019 there have been no significant delays in the processing and accessing of applications to join the Housing Register.

**Table 1: Analysis of MHC for residents with a local connection to Fylde**

Application Status	31/03/2016	31/03/2017	31/03/2018	31/03/2019
Active applicants as at 31/03	975	1241	1462	1460
Of which are transfer applicants as at 31/03	202	270	249	114

4. Table 2 details the owner of applicants’ current accommodation. Data available from March 2019 (shaded) is only for **active** applicants who have placed a bid for accommodation through either the My Home Need stream or My Home Choice stream. Data for previous years included all applicants registered who would have been either active, being assessed, closed, cancelled or suspended.
5. Changes implemented were intended to make the process for applying for social housing simpler and more flexible for households actively looking for accommodation. The data illustrates in previous years we may have had high number of applicants who were adequately housed, registered for rehousing but never bid for accommodation. This may still be the case, but data from people actually bidding for accommodation helps to understand the tenures within Fylde where applicants are choosing to move from. Tenures where higher numbers of households are placing bids include living with relatives, no fixed abode, private rented accommodation and Housing Association tenants which will be transfer applicants with a priority for rehousing.

**Table 2: Tenure of applicants placing bids**

Owner of Accommodation	31/03/2016	31/03/2017	31/03/2018	31/03/2019
I am the Owner	153	164	199	3
Living with Friends/Others	36	43	59	3
Living with Relatives	132	190	271	106
No Fixed Abode	28	59	77	6
Occupier/Leaseholder	25	24	29	1
Other (please state)	72	99	120	13
Shared Ownership	16	15	21	1
Social Services	10	5	7	-
Tenant of a Private Landlord	590	789	987	289

Tenant of Housing Association	303	403	481	195
Tied Accommodation	8	10	19	4
Blank	34	39	58	571
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>1925</b>	<b>2437</b>	<b>1192</b>

6. Table 3 below details the number of members in each household on the register. This data is for **all** applicants registered who will either be active, being assessed, closed, cancelled or suspended and totals 1822. The register has 1460 households who are active (Table 1).
7. The total number of **all** households has decreased 615. The register has seen a steady decline in each category of household members, except single person households which has increased by 7.11% compared with March 2018. This evidences a continuous increase in demand of 1 bed accommodation needed in the borough since 2016. There is a reduction in households looking for 2 and 3 bedroom accommodation which will be as a result of increased affordable housing provision in the borough over the past couple of years. Table 4 details affordable housing provision since 2016/17 and tenures enabled.

**Table 3: Number of household members all applicants**

No. of Household Members	31/03/2016	31/03/2017	31/03/2018	% of Register Total	31/03/2019	% of Register Total	2018-2019 Change
1	615	805	1017	41.73%	890	48.84%	+7.11%
2	445	577	709	29.09%	503	27.60%	-1.49%
3	199	266	344	14.11%	224	12.29%	-1.82%
4	115	148	202	8.28%	126	6.91%	-1.37%
5	64	89	116	4.75%	51	2.79%	-1.96%
6	14	24	28	1.14%	19	1.04%	- 0.1%
7	9	8	9	0.36%	5	0.27%	- 0.09%
8	3	6	10	0.41%	2	0.11%	- 0.3%
9	0	1	1	0.04%	1	0.04%	0
10+	0	0	0	0	1	0.04%	0
Blank	1	1	1	0.04%	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>1925</b>	<b>2437</b>		<b>1822</b>		<b>- 615</b>

**Table 4 – Affordable housing delivery in Fylde**

Tenure	2016/17	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Affordable Rent</b>	47	77	186
<b>Shared Ownership</b>	18	13	32
<b>Discounted Market Sale</b>	0	17	14
<b>Total units delivered</b>	65	107	232

8. Table 5 gives the breakdown for households with an active application who have been awarded a banding priority. 2016-2018 is shown by banding as per the previous allocation scheme at any one time registered. 2019, shows the allocated bandings as per the new allocation scheme.
9. The changes intended to reduce the number of households in priority banding categories, speeding up the registration process and allow households on both the MyHomeChoice and MyHomeNeed streams to have higher chance of securing accommodation. The data in Table 5 shows that households with a priority banding now take up 8.24% of the total active applicants, a reduction of 4.51% since 2018. Showing that the changes are having the intended effect.
10. This will be explained by the reduction in priority bandings from A to C and households choosing not to complete a full application and being able to access accommodation through My Home Choice as a result of the flexibility brought in by the changes implemented.

**Table 5 – Breakdown of Banding awarded to active households**

Band	31/03/2016	31/03/2017	31/03/2018	31/03/2019	% of active households
A	8	12	18	4	0.27%
B	110	136	155	59	4%
C	4	16	14	58	3.97%
D	137	179	201	N/A	
E	187	262	336	N/A	
F	528	634	735	N/A	0.06%
No Band	1	2	3	1339	91.64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>1462</b>	<b>1460</b>	

11. Table 6 analyses the number of active applicants that are employed or undertaking voluntary work on the register as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and 2019. Under the new allocations scheme applicants who are not in housing need and are working, employed or voluntary, now become part of the “No Band/No Need” group and bid for accommodation through My Home Choice.
12. While the priority Bands A, B and C have seen a decline in the number of employed applicants, the overall percent of employed applicants in Fylde that are active on the housing register has risen by 6.83% since 2018.

**Table 6: Active applicants that are employed**

31/03/2018	A	B	C	D	E	F	No Band	Total
Employed	5	36	3	65	303	128	0	540
% of Active Applicants employed in band	0.34%	2.46%	0.2%	4.44%	20.72%	8.75%	0%	36.93% of all active applicants (1462)
31/03/2019	A	B	C	D	E	F	No Band	Total
Employed	2	13	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	609	639
% of Active Applicants employed in band	0.13%	0.89%	1.02%	0%	0%	0%	41.71%	43.76% of all active applicants (1460)

13. Table 7 details the age group of the main applicant within each household for all applications on the Register. Over half (75.96%) of the housing register is made up of applicants of working age from 19-59 further demonstrating the register is attracting working age households.

**Table 7: Age group of main applicant**

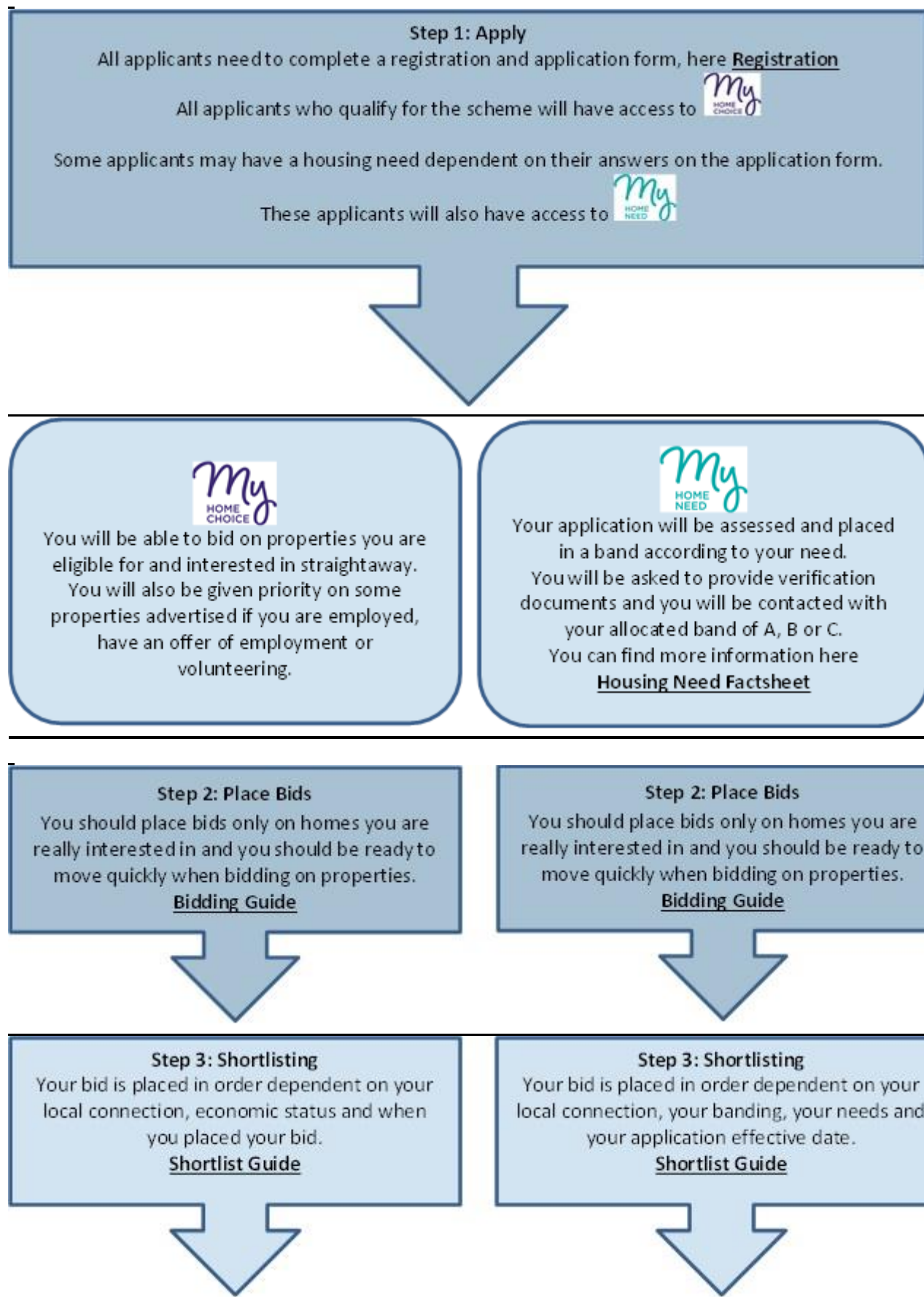
Age Group	31/03/2016	31/03/2017	31/03/2018	31/03/2019
16-18	5	2	2	6
19-25	125	197	205	184
26-40	436	582	655	679
41-59	467	584	624	521
60-65	119	149	154	144
66-74	158	209	213	168
75+	155	202	214	111
Blank	0	0	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>1925</b>	<b>2437</b>	<b>1822</b>

## Conclusion

14. The changes implemented were to address issues raised by registered providers around delays in processing applications due to all applicants having to go through a full registration process, applicants losing a local connection if they move between boroughs and the system adopting a more flexible commercial approach to attract more households in employment or voluntary work, who would not necessarily have thought they would be eligible for social housing.
15. An analysis undertaken to date does show that the implemented changes are addressing those initial concerns.
  - a. Feedback from processing partners, within Fylde this is Progress Housing, is that there have been no significant delays in the processing and assessment of applicants eligible for priority banding for rehousing. Fylde Council and Progress Housing work in partnership to fast track the assessment of applications presenting to Fylde Council Housing Services and facing homelessness.
  - b. On new build schemes enabled under Section 106 agreements for affordable housing provision on site, Registered Providers are not reporting significant issues with allocating accommodation from day of handover.
  - c. From December to January 18/19 the register was inactive to new applicants while changes the system were applied. As a result housing register since December 2018 has remained fairly static with 1460 active applicants registered.
  - d. The number of transfer applicants has fallen with existing housing association tenants only being able to register if they have been awarded a priority banding.
  - e. The main tenures where applicants are choosing to move from and placing bids for rehousing (living with relatives, no fixed abode, private rented accommodation) better reflect the register meeting the needs of Households in housing need within the borough.
  - f. The register has seen a steady decline in each category of household members, except single person households which has increased by 7.11% compared with March 2018. There is a reduction in households looking for 2 and 3 bedroom accommodation which will be as a result of increased affordable housing provision in the borough over the past couple of years. There is still a high need to continue to provide 1 bedroom homes.
  - g. The changes intended to reduce the number of households in priority banding categories, speeding up the registration process and allow households on both the MyHomeChoice and MyHomeNeed streams to have higher chance of securing accommodation. The data in Table 5 shows that households with a priority banding now take up 8.24% of the total active applicants, a reduction of 4.51% since 2018. Showing that the changes are having the intended effect.

## Appendix 1

### MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast Quick Guide





**Step 4: Offer**

The property landlord will contact you to make you your provisional offer. You can only be on offer for one property at a time.

[Our Partners](#)

**Step 5: Provide Documents**

The landlord will conduct pre-tenancy checks. You will need to provide the landlord with your documents and ID within 3 days to continue with your offer. [Documents Required](#)

**Step 6: View and Accept**

The landlord will contact you to arrange an internal viewing of the property. All Social Housing Properties are unfurnished. For further information see our [Guide to Viewings](#)

**Step 7: Sign Up**

If you like the property and pass the checks you will be advised when the property is ready for your sign up appointment. You may have to pay some rent up front. [Sign Up Guide](#)

**Step 8: Moving In**

You are responsible for your rent from the day you receive your keys and you will need to set up how you will pay your rent. You will need to have arranged your removals and cooker reconnection at your new property. You will need to set up your utility accounts. For more information see our [Moving In Guide](#)

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