



Agenda

Environment, Health and Housing Committee

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Date: | Tuesday, 7 November 2017 at 6:30 pm |
| Venue: | Town Hall, St Annes, FY8 1LW |
| Committee members: | <p>Councillor Ben Aitken (Chairman) Councillor Viv Willder (Vice-Chairman)</p> <p>Councillors Peter Anthony, Maxine Chew, Gail Goodman JP, Shirley Green, Peter Hardy, Angela Jacques, John Kirkham, Roger Lloyd, Graeme Neale, Louis Rigby.</p> |

Public Platform

To hear representations from members of the public in accordance with council procedure rule 11.

To register to speak under Public Platform: see [Public Speaking at Council Meetings](#).

| | PROCEDURAL ITEMS: | PAGE |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Declarations of Interest: Declarations of interest, and the responsibility for declaring the same, are matters for elected members. Members are able to obtain advice, in writing, in advance of meetings. This should only be sought via the Council's Monitoring Officer. However, it should be noted that no advice on interests sought less than one working day prior to any meeting will be provided. | 1 |
| 2 | Confirmation of Minutes: To confirm the minutes, as previously circulated, of the meeting held on 5 September 2017 as a correct record. | 1 |
| 3 | Substitute Members: Details of any substitute members notified in accordance with council procedure rule 24(c). | 1 |
| | DECISION ITEMS: | |
| 4 | My Home Choice Fylde Coast - Consultation on Changes to the Allocations Policy | 3 - 77 |
| 5 | Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 | 78 - 88 |
| | INFORMATION ITEMS: | |
| 6 | Overview of Environmental Health Department 2016/17 | 89 - 96 |
| 7 | Progress Housing Group – Annual Review For Fylde Borough Council 2016-17 | 97 |

Contact: Katharine McDonnell - Telephone: (01253) 658423 – Email: democracy@fylde.gov.uk

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<http://fylde.cmis.uk.com/fylde/DocumentsandInformation/PublicDocumentsandInformation.aspx>

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DECISION ITEM

| REPORT OF | MEETING | DATE | ITEM NO |
|---|--|-----------------|---------|
| DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE | ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE | 7 NOVEMBER 2017 | 4 |
| MY HOME CHOICE FYLDE COAST - CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY | | | |

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast is the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) across the Fylde Coast authorities of Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. It provides a framework for allocating social rented properties owned by housing associations and councils to potential tenants in housing need.

This report details a review that has been undertaken of the current Consistent Assessment Policy (Allocations Policy) for the CBL scheme, the reasons for this and a consultation exercise underway to gather views on the proposed changes. The last such review and consultation exercise was undertaken in 2013 following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011.

The report details Fylde Council's strategic housing role to assess, plan and meet housing needs across all tenures in the borough and how the MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast CBL Scheme assists with this role.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Note the contents of the report on the Consultation related to proposed changes to the Consistent Assessment Policy (Allocations Policy) for MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast.
2. The Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee establish a working group with the Housing Services Manager to submit a formal consultation response and any other members of the Committee.
3. Individual Councillors are requested to provide responses to the Consultation by the end of November 2017, should they wish to prior to the working group.
4. The Fylde Coast Housing Providers group to consider all responses received from across the Fylde Coast and provide a revised Consistent Assessment Policy for MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast for further consideration and approval by this Committee.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Cabinet - 18th November 2009

1. To commit to the detailed development of the CBL scheme based on the principles outlined in this report.
2. To approve the apportionment of costs, with FBC's costs to be funded by virement from within existing budgetary provision
3. To support consultation on the adoption of a new allocation scheme for Fylde borough that will comprise

a borough-specific lettings plan and a Fylde Coast Consistent Assessment Policy as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

4. To ensure that the final CBL system and associated allocation scheme is presented to a future meeting of Cabinet for approval prior to its introduction.

Cabinet - 16th February 2011

1. To recommend approval of a new Allocation Scheme for the Council which will set out who will get priority in the letting of affordable housing in the Borough. The Allocation Scheme to comprise a borough-specific Area Lettings Plan and a Fylde Coast Consistent Assessment Policy.
2. To recommend approval of the process to establish a Partnership Agreement that sets out the responsibilities of the nine partners in establishing and operating a proposed new Fylde Coast CBL system.
3. To recommend that project costs should be approved and that the council should enter into a contract with an IT provider for the new CBL system that will be operated by the principal social housing providers across Fylde, Blackpool and Wyre.

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee in 2013 considered changes as a result of the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and consultation responses as follows:

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee - 10th January 2013

1. To note the review of the allocation policy and to welcome the report of the consultation responses to a future meeting
2. To recommend that the Council approves the draft Fylde Coast Tenancy Strategy
3. To note the new power in the Localism Act 2011 that enables Local Authorities to discharge their homelessness duty using the private rented sector

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee - 23rd May 2013

1. The consultation results be noted
2. To recommend that Cabinet adopt the draft Housing Allocation Policy
3. To recommend that Cabinet approve the Fylde Coast Tenancy Strategy

Cabinet - 26th June 2013

Resolved to approve the recommendations made by the Policy Scrutiny Committee 23rd May 2013.

1. The consultation results be noted
2. To recommend that Cabinet adopt the draft Housing Allocation Policy
3. To recommend that Cabinet approve the Fylde Coast Tenancy Strategy

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

| | |
|--|---|
| Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money) | ✓ |
| Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green) | ✓ |
| Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy) | ✓ |
| To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live) | |
| Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit) | |

REPORT

Background

1. The Housing Act 1996 required every local housing authority to have an allocation scheme for allocating housing. This requirement has been retained in subsequent legislation (Housing Act 2002 and Localism Act 2011). The allocations scheme sets out who will receive priority in the allocation of affordable housing in the borough. Across the Fylde Coast Choice Based Letting system, this is the Consistent Assessment Policy. Fylde BC, in partnership with our neighbouring authorities and social landlords, determines to whom social housing is let within the borough, and there is a consistency and transparency across the Fylde Coast in how applicants for social housing have their needs assessed.
2. In 2008 the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) provided £100,000 funding to assist with the implementation of a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme across the Fylde Coast. At that time Fylde BC did not hold a housing waiting list, other than for households accepted as homeless, and did not allocate directly to the social housing stock in the borough.
3. In November 2009 Cabinet resolved to commit to the detailed development of the CBL scheme and support consultation on the adoption of a new allocation scheme that comprised of a borough specific lettings plan and a Fylde Coast Consistent Assessment Policy for an allocations scheme.
4. In February 2011 Cabinet approved the adoption of the new Allocation Scheme across the borough and a Partnership Agreement be entered into. MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast was launched in May 2012.
5. In 2013 the allocation policy was reviewed following the introduction of the Localism Act (November 2011) and newly revised allocations guidelines which were revised as a consequence of the Localism Act, 'Allocation of Accommodation; Guidance for housing authorities in England (June 2012)'. A consultation exercise was undertaken and the key changes were around:
 - 1 Local connection- Applicants will need to have lived in the area for at least 3 years and applicants with no local connection to Fylde, Blackpool or Wyre will be excluded from the housing register;
 - 2 Members of the Armed Forces – Current or former members of the armed forces and their families with a local connection will be placed in Band B. Current and former aArmed forces and their families with no local connection will be placed in Band F. It is a legal requirement that current or former members of the armed forces can still go on the housing register even if they have no local connection.
 - 3 Under occupation of social housing – Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) definition of under occupation will be used which says that in regards to the allocation of housing children under 10 should be required to share a bedroom irrespective of their sex and that children of the same sex between the ages of 10-16 should share a bedroom.
 - 4 Suspension and exclusion arrangements – Suspensions for anti-social behaviour from the Housing Register will be for at least one year. Where an applicant or member of their household has been evicted from any tenancy for anti-social behaviour they will be excluded from the Housing Register for a period of 5 years.
 - 5 Existing tenants wishing to transfer – Households will not be accepted on the Housing Register until after the first 12 months of a tenancy.
 - 6 Income and savings - Households with a gross income of £60,000 or more were to be excluded from the list and/or households with savings of over £30,000.
6. The three local authorities of Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre are each required by the Localism Act 2011 to produce a Tenancy Strategy that provides guidance to Registered Providers operating within their area on how they should use their new powers, namely the use of fixed term tenancies, preferred length of tenancies and guidance on the issue of affordable rents.
7. The revised Housing Allocation Policy for MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast (Consistent Assessment Policy) and Fylde Coast Tenancy Strategy were approved by Cabinet on the 26th June 2013.

Council's strategic housing role

8. Fylde BC does not own or manage social housing stock, however the local authority still has a role to assess and plan for housing needs across all tenures, make best use of existing stock to meet need, and to plan and facilitate new housing supply to meet identified need. The local authority also has a role to improve access to social housing, for all households, and this is achieved through a single application process.
9. In order to undertake this role effectively, robust up to date information on housing need is required. The Choice Based Lettings system, MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast assists Fylde BC in understanding and monitoring whether allocations are being made in accordance with the priorities set in the Consistent Assessment Policy and informs the development of affordable housing within the borough.
10. **Appendix 1 provides an analysis of applicants registered for rehousing on MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast for the purposes of this report.**
11. There are clear management arrangements in place for the CBL scheme across the Fylde Coast. The Fylde Coast Housing Providers Group meets quarterly and has overall responsibility for the control of the Project, overseeing the administration of the Project including approval of relevant expenditure, achieving best value for money, ensuring the Consistent Assessment Policy meets legislative requirements and all Parties use it and agreeing any changes to the scope of the Project. Meetings require a quorum of 2 Local Authorities and 3 Registered Housing Providers before a meeting can take place.
12. The Fylde Coast Housing Providers Group is attended by Senior Strategic Staff within each partner organisation. The current partnership includes each of the three local authorities in the Fylde Coast, Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre and seven Registered Providers that own and manage stock across the Fylde Coast – Blackpool Coastal Housing Ltd, Progress Housing Group Ltd, Regenda Group, Great Places Housing Group, Muir Group, Places for People and ForHousing (ForViva Housing Association).
13. My Home Choice Steering Group meets quarterly following the Fylde Coast Housing Providers Group and is accountable to that group in delivery of the practical activities needed to ensure effective operation of the scheme. The Steering Group consists of operational staff that allocate vacant properties via MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast.
14. Operating a successful CBL scheme requires partnership working and Partnership Agreement in place that sets out the responsibilities of each of the nine partner organisations in implementing and running the CBL scheme. The current partnership agreement ended in 2015 and at that time there was an opportunity to undertake a review of how the current system was operating. It is necessary to have a partnership agreement in place before a contract can be signed with the company who will provide the IT system that will operate the CBL scheme.

Reasons for a review of the current Consistent Assessment Policy

15. The My Home Choice system and lettings arrangements need to enable providers to find tenants for properties promptly and avoid unacceptably high re-letting times. It was felt there needs to be a more flexible commercial approach to the allocation of properties to attract more households who would not necessarily have thought they would be eligible for social housing.
16. Concerns were raised by the My Home Choice Steering about the number of properties that are currently proving difficult to let, which has been exacerbated by the introduction of the Spare Room Subsidy for Housing Benefit purposes from April 2013.
17. There was concern that the Consistent Assessment Policy and some Area Lettings Policies may have exacerbated the situation, especially through the exclusion of people from the Housing Register with no local connection to one borough, for a continuous period of residency for 3 years. For example a household may have lived in Fylde for two years and Blackpool for one year, under the current Policy they do not have a local connection to either Authority.
18. There are sometimes delays in processing of applications as all applicants have to go through a full registration process despite the reality that there are more applicants than homes each year and many households who register would be placed in Band F.
19. Many applicants who have gone through the full registration process do not bid regularly for available properties or find a home in the private rented sector. There is a need for the system to adopt a more

commercial approach. Appendix 1, Table 8 details the number of applicants bidding on a monthly basis which in Qtr 1 2017/18 was, 125 which equates to 10% of all registered applicants.

Gathering the evidence

20. A Pilot was ran between 1st July to 31st December 2015 where 10-25% of lettings were completed outside of MyHomeChoice for historically hard to let properties and the local connection policies were still applied. Methods used included Rightmove, McDonalds, Moving Soon and registered providers' own websites. Registered providers reported they were attracting households who would not have traditionally registered for social landlord stock who were in housing need and the Fylde Coast Housing Providers group concluded the ability to advertise properties outside of the CBL scheme allowed for greater flexibility when allocating properties to applicants.
21. A review was undertaken of CBL systems registered providers were also partners of and a system in Oldham, First Choice. First Choice operates a single point of application stage where applicants are slotted into those in housing need, and those not in housing need. Essentially the system is a housing need centered approach, running alongside a first come, first served approach.

Proposed changes

Appendix 2 contains the draft revised Consistent Assessment Policy for consultation.

22. Two ways of letting homes

(Page 7 – Appendix 2 Draft Revised Consistent Assessment Policy).

- 1 Eligible applicants who have a statutory housing need complete a full application and are placed on a Housing Needs Register in the MyHomeChoice system with a priority band.
 - 2 Eligible applicants who do not have a statutory housing need complete basic details on the MyHomeChoice system and are registered without a priority band.
23. The new system will offer at least 50% of homes, including those in the shortest supply, such as 4+ bedrooms, extra care stock and adapted stock will always be reserved only for people in Bands A-C; each of these homes will be offered to the 'bidder' with the highest priority. Properties will be advertised for a 5 days cycle.
24. The rest of the homes will be available to everyone on the list and offered on a first come first served basis. This will include households in housing need. This is designed to ensure that people in the greatest housing need still have access to the most homes, while offering opportunities to everyone who needs to move quickly to find a suitable home as soon as it is available. Properties will be advertised for a minimum of 1 to 2 days and Applicants expressing an interest in these properties will be short listed in order of when their bid was placed, with the preference given to the earliest bids.
25. Appendix 1, Table 9 details the number of properties let per band from Qtr 1 2015/16. Of the total properties let, 997, 55% were allocated to households with a priority banding, 17% to households in employment and 28% to households in Band F which defines no priority need for rehousing.
26. **Some homes will be offered with priority to people in paid of voluntary work** (Page 8). The CBL scheme wants to encourage people in work to access social housing, and proposes that 20% of homes available on the first come first served basis will be offered with priority to people in paid or voluntary work.
27. Appendix 1, Table 3 details banding breakdown for active households able to bid on the housing register. 21% of these households are in paid employment or voluntary work. Table 9 details that 17% of households in paid employment or voluntary work since 2015/16 have been allocated accommodation with a priority Band E.
28. **Applicants wishing to Transfer with no housing need will be ineligible from joining the housing register.** (Page 8). The current policy allows applicants to transfer their tenancy between Registered Providers if they have been a tenant for 12 months. The CBL scheme wants to prioritise new applicants who are not already housing in social housing. Existing tenants **who do** have a good reason to move because their situation has changed will still be given a priority band and be able to use the system to find a new home.
29. Appendix 1, Table 1 provides an analysis of active applicants able to bid on the Housing Register. Of these 22% are transfer applicants who currently have a social housing tenancy.

30. **One local connection to the Fylde Coast** (Page 9). In order to join the register local residents who have moved between the three Fylde Coast boroughs will now be able to get onto the housing register when previously they may not have met the local connection requirement. Priority will still be given to Blackpool residents for Blackpool homes, Fylde residents for Fylde homes, and Wyre residents for Wyre homes.

For priority when bidding, there are 3 levels:

- 1 Connection to the individual borough
- 2 Connection to the Fylde Coast
- 3 No connection to either of the above (Armed Forces only)

31. Partner organisations may also define particular requirements for local connection when setting the eligibility criteria – for example, the requirement to be resident in a particular parish, settlement or borough, and may be subject to a condition of a Section 106 agreement.

32. **Pre-tenancy Checks** (Page 13) may be undertaken by individual landlords once an offer of accommodation is made via the first come first served route. This will include verification of identify, current circumstances and housing conditions. Evidence of anti-social behaviour, outstanding housing debts and police checks where applicants have indicated an ‘unspent’ conviction. Landlord references (current/previous) will be sought where the applicant has held a private or social housing tenancy.

33. **Three Priority Bands** (Page 14). The CBL scheme are proposing to simplify the priority bands for people with a legally defined housing need so that there are only three bands, with the current bands C and D now becoming a single band C. There will be no bands given to anyone else, making the application simpler, while still allowing everyone to bid on a first come first served basis. The current system has Band E and F. Band E is for households who are working or contributing to the community and Band F is for households who have a local connection but are adequately housed and in no housing need.

34. Appendix 1, Table 4 details the breakdown on banding for active households currently on the Housing Register. In Qtr 1 2017/17 there were 1316 households. Of these 1% are in priority band A, 11% in priority band B and 16% in Priority Bands C and D. 21% of households are in priority band E due to employment or voluntary work and 51% are in Band F which denotes adequately housed.

35. **Partners still have the discretion to apply local lettings policies** (Page 21) where there are specific issues as they can assist in the management of existing stock and where there are planning restrictions such as S106 agreements.

36. **More flexibility to get a home with an extra bedroom** (Page 21). The numbers of bedrooms for which applicants are normally eligible for is determined by the size of the household and in line with DWP regulations and the current policy allows applicants to only express an interest in a home that meets their household’s minimum needs. The new policy allows households, as long as the rent is affordable, to be able to bid for homes through the first come first served route, that gives more space.

The consultation process

37. A consultation on the proposed changes will be underway between November and December 2017. Consultation will be carried out with anyone who lives or works in the Blackpool, Fylde or Wyre areas with an interest in the CBL system and any organisations or professionals with an interest in this issue.

38. Appendix 4 contains the draft leaflet for consultation with questions and Appendix 5 the draft consultation plan.

39. The intention is to approach as many households and agencies as possible who would have an interest in how social housing tenancies are allocated across the Fylde Coast. This will include all applicants currently registered on the Housing Register.

40. Methods of consultation include:

- 1 Letter and/or email with a doc link to electronic version on Fylde BC and MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast website of the document and questionnaire detailing the proposed changes.
- 2 Proposed changes to be taken to the Members of the three local authorities.
- 3 Hard copies of the leaflet and questionnaire to be available from customer service counters on request at each local authority and housing association offices.

41. The Fylde Coast Housing Providers group will consider all responses received from across the Fylde Coast and provide a revised Consistent Assessment Policy for MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast for further consideration and approval.
42. The revised Consistent Assessment Policy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure the policy meets the council's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

| IMPLICATIONS | |
|---|---|
| Finance | There are no financial implications arising directly from this report |
| Legal | None |
| Community Safety | None |
| Human Rights and Equalities | None |
| Sustainability and Environmental Impact | None |
| Health & Safety and Risk Management | None |

| LEAD AUTHOR | CONTACT DETAILS | DATE |
|-----------------|---|------------|
| Kirstine Riding | Kirstine.riding@fylde.gov.uk & Tel 01253 658569 | 24/10/2017 |

| BACKGROUND PAPERS | | |
|--|------------|---|
| Name of document | Date | Where available for inspection |
| Fylde Coast Local Authorities Tenancy Strategy | April 2013 | https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/The-Council/Documents/Fylde%20Coast%20Tenancy%20Strategy%20Final%20April13.pdf ouncil office or web address |
| My Guide to Applying for a Home | 2011 | https://www.myhomechoicefyldecoast.co.uk/NovaWeb/Infrastructure/ViewLibraryDocument.aspx?ObjectID=306 |
| Consistent Assessment Policy MHC | 2011 | https://www.myhomechoicefyldecoast.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/176.aspx |

Attached documents

Appendix 1 – Analysis of MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast to inform proposed consultation on changes to the Consistent Assessment Policy (Allocations Policy)

Appendix 2 – Draft Revised Consistent Assessment Policy for the MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast Scheme – October 2017

Appendix 3 – Fylde BC Area Lettings Plan 2017

Appendix 4 - Draft leaflet for consultation with questions

Appendix 5 - Draft consultation plan.



October 2017

Analysis of MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast to inform proposed consultation on changes to the Consistent Assessment Policy (Allocations Policy).

Table 1 details the number of households with a local connection to Fylde who are active on the MyHomeChoice (HHC) register and able to bid. This shows a steady increase in applicants since 2015. Transfer applicants are households already housed in social housing who have been in their tenancy for at least 12 months.

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

| Application Status | 31/03/2015 | 31/03/2016 | 31/03/2017 | 30/06/2017 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Active applicants as at 31/03 or 31/06/2017 | 831 | 975 | 1241 | 1316 |
| Of which transfer applicants as at 31/03 or 30/06/2017 | 186 | 202 | 270 | 289 |

Table 2 details the owner of applicants' current accommodation. Information in Table 1 is solely for households who are active and able to bid on the register, Table 2 is for all applicants registered who will either be active, being assessed, closed, cancelled or suspended.

Since 2015 the numbers of households renting from a private landlord has remained high. The scheme has also seen a rise of 50% of households living with relatives who wish to set up an independent home. Tenants of Council or a Housing Association would be transfer applicants. In the past year we have also seen a rise in households who are in accommodation tied to their employment.

Table 2: Who owns your current accommodation?

| Owner of Accommodation | 31/03/2015 | 31/03/2016 | 31/03/2017 | 30/06/2017 |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| I am the Owner | 137 | 153 | 164 | 170 |
| Living with Friends/Others | 27 | 36 | 43 | 43 |
| Living with Relatives | 107 | 132 | 190 | 213 |
| No Fixed Abode | 19 | 28 | 59 | 57 |
| Occupier/Leaseholder | 17 | 25 | 24 | 22 |
| Other (please state) | 63 | 72 | 99 | 100 |
| Shared Ownership | 12 | 16 | 15 | 16 |
| Social Services | 3 | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Tenant of a Private Landlord | 456 | 590 | 789 | 838 |
| Tenant of Council | 40 | 58 | 85 | 93 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Tenant of Housing Association | 257 | 303 | 403 | 423 |
| Tied Accommodation | 7 | 8 | 10 | 41 |
| Blank | 30 | 34 | 39 | 46 |
| TOTAL | 1175 | 1465 | 1925 | 2067 |

Table 3 details the number of household members in applications. This data is for all applicants registered who will either be active, being assessed, closed, cancelled or suspended. This shows a continuing high demand for one and two bedroom accommodation across the borough as has been the case since 31/03/2015. There is also an increased demand for three and four bedroomed accommodation.

Table 3: Number of household members

| No. of Household Members | 31/03/2015 | 31/03/2016 | 31/03/2017 | 30/06/2017 |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | 492 | 615 | 805 | 867 |
| 2 | 345 | 445 | 577 | 597 |
| 3 | 172 | 199 | 266 | 291 |
| 4 | 89 | 115 | 148 | 166 |
| 5 | 51 | 64 | 89 | 100 |
| 6 | 17 | 14 | 24 | 27 |
| 7 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 12 |
| 8 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| 9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 10+ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blank | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 1175 | 1465 | 1925 | 2067 |

Households registering for MHC are given priority banding based on their housing need. The main priority bands are A to D. The doc link below gives access to 'My Guide to Applying for a Home' that gives more detail on household circumstances that are reflected in the priority banding.

<https://www.myhomechoicefyldecoast.co.uk/NovaWeb/Infrastructure/ViewLibraryDocument.aspx?ObjectID=306>

Table 4 gives the breakdown for households with an active application by priority banding at any one time registered on MHC back to 31/03/2015.

Table 4 – Breakdown of Banding awarded to active households

| Band | 31/03/2015 | 31/03/2016 | 31/03/2017 | 30/06/2017 | % of active households |
|------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------------|
| A | 2 | 8 | 12 | 13 | 1% |
| B | 94 | 110 | 136 | 140 | 11% |
| C | 1 | 4 | 16 | 16 | 16% |
| D | 112 | 137 | 179 | 196 | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| E | 157 | 187 | 262 | 278 | 21% |
| F | 465 | 528 | 634 | 671 | 51% |
| No Band | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | .15% |
| Total | 831 | 975 | 1241 | 1316 | |

Table 5 analyses the number of active applicants that are employed or undertaking voluntary work. Band E is specifically for applicants working, employed or voluntary. Since 2015 the register approximately 35% of households wishing to move into social housing are in employment of undertaking voluntary work. Fylde BC has the highest number of employed applicants registered across the Fylde Coast.

Table 5: Active applicants that are employed

| 31/03/2015 Fylde | A | B | C | D | E | F | No Band | Total |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------------|---|
| Employed | 0 | 25 | 0 | 33 | 145 | 92 | 0 | 295 |
| % of Active Applicants employed in band | 0 | 26.6% | 0% | 29.46% | 92.36% | 19.78% | 0 | <i>35.5% of all active applicants (831)</i> |
| 31/03/2016 Fylde | A | B | C | D | E | F | No Band | Total |
| Employed | 0 | 29 | 0 | 44 | 169 | 99 | 0 | 341 |
| % of Active Applicants employed in band | 0% | 26.36% | 0% | 32.12% | 90.37% | 18.75% | 0% | <i>34.97% of all active applicants (975)</i> |
| 31/12/2016 Qtr 3 16/17 Fylde (no report for 31/03/2017) | A | B | C | D | E | F | No Band | Total |
| Employed | 1 | 31 | 2 | 57 | 212 | 111 | 0 | 414 |
| % of Active Applicants employed in band | 10% | 25.62% | 12.5% | 34.13% | 89.08% | 18.47% | 0% | <i>35.84% of all active applicants (1155)</i> |
| 31/06/2017 Fylde | A | B | C | D | E | F | No Band | Total |
| Employed | 4 | 32 | 2 | 63 | 252 | 116 | 0 | 469 |
| % of Active Applicants employed in band | 30.77% | 22.86% | 12.5% | 32.14% | 90.65% | 17.29% | 0% | <i>35.6% of all active applicants (1316)</i> |

Table 7 details the age group of the main applicant within each household for all applications registered on the Register. The majority of applicants are within working age 26 to 59. Since 2015 the Register has seen an increase in all age bands, bar 16-18 year olds where numbers have reduced since 2016.

Table 7: Age group of main applicant

| Age Group | 31/03/2015 | 31/03/2016 | 31/03/2017 | 30/06/2017 |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 16-18 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| 19-25 | 120 | 125 | 197 | 205 |
| 26-40 | 331 | 436 | 582 | 655 |
| 41-59 | 369 | 467 | 584 | 624 |
| 60-65 | 102 | 119 | 149 | 154 |
| 66-74 | 123 | 158 | 209 | 213 |
| 75+ | 129 | 155 | 202 | 214 |
| Blank | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 1175 | 1465 | 1925 | 2067 |

Table 8 details the number of bids placed annually since 2015. Table 9 details the number of properties let per band each quarter. These two tables below illustrate for every property advertised in the first quarter of each year going back to 2015/16, there are an average of 6 bids per property.

- 2015/16 Qtr 1 168 bids for 24 properties = 7 bids per property
- 2016/17 Qtr 1 212 bids for 45 properties = 5 bids per property
- 2017/18 Qtr 1 216 bids for 39 properties = 5 bids per property

Table 8: No of applicants bidding per month

| 2014/15 | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Total annual bids |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------------|
| | 33 | 54 | 101 | 90 | 47 | 141 | 45 | 56 | 113 | 38 | 36 | 41 | 795 |
| 2015/16 | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | |
| | 44 | 36 | 88 | 67 | 41 | 117 | 33 | 42 | 98 | 25 | 39 | 96 | 726 |
| 2016/17 | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | |
| | 46 | 56 | 110 | 32 | 57 | 126 | 70 | 57 | 101 | 48 | 58 | 145 | 906 |
| 2017/18 | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | |
| | 37 | 54 | 125 | | | | | | | | | | |

Over the past 2 years (from Qtr 1 2015/16) 997 properties have been let in Fylde through MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast. Of those 55% have been allocated to Priority Bands on the MyHomeChoice register A to D. 17% to households in employment and 28% to households in low priority.

- 4% have been allocated to households in Band A
- 24% to households in Band B
- 2% to households in Band C
- 25% to households in Band D
- 17% to households in Band E
- 28% to households in Band F

Table 9: No of properties let per band at the end of each quarter from Qtr 1 2015/16

| Band | Q1 2015/16 | Q2 2015/16 | Q3 2015/16 | Q4 2015/16 | Q1 2016/17 | Q2 2016/17 | Q3 2016/17 | Q4 2016/17 | Q1 2017/18 | TOTAL |
|-------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| A | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 34 |
| B | 5 | 27 | 35 | 48 | 10 | 24 | 42 | 44 | 7 | 242 |
| C | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 23 |
| D | 9 | 29 | 44 | 60 | 8 | 18 | 32 | 39 | 10 | 249 |
| E | 5 | 12 | 20 | 34 | 9 | 18 | 27 | 31 | 10 | 166 |
| F | 4 | 24 | 34 | 51 | 16 | 29 | 50 | 67 | 8 | 283 |
| Total | 24 | 95 | 137 | 199 | 45 | 96 | 165 | 197 | 39 | 997 |

Over the past 2 years (from Qtr 1 2015/16) 997 properties have been let in Fylde through MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast. Of those 55% have been allocated to Priority Bands on the MyHomeChoice register A to D. 17% to households in employment and 28% to households in low priority.

- 4% have been allocated to households in Band A
- 24% to households in Band B
- 2% to households in Band C
- 25% to households in Band D
- 17% to households in Band E
- 28% to households in Band F

Table 10 details bids per property type and as would be expected there is demand for flat and house accommodation. Demand for sheltered housing appears to have remained static over the past three years, despite the growth on the housing register (Table 7) of households aged over 65.

Table 10: Bids by property type

| Property Type | 31/03/2015 | 31/03/2016 | 31/03/2017 | 30/06/2017 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Bedsit/Studio | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Sheltered Bedsit / Studio | 2 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Bungalow | 70 | 50 | 21 | 49 |
| Sheltered Bungalow | 22 | 19 | 13 | 9 |
| Flat | 194 | 201 | 344 | 221 |
| Multi-storey Flat | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheltered Flat | 69 | 42 | 74 | 68 |
| House | 256 | 230 | 364 | 531 |
| Sheltered House | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Maisonette | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Sheltered Maisonette | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Kirstine Riding
Housing Services Manager
October 2017

DRAFT REVISED

Consistent Assessment Policy October 2017



for the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* Scheme



Working in Partnership with:



Version Control

| Date | Version | Details | Responsible Officer |
|------------|---------|-----------------------------------|--|
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1. Introduction

'MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast' is the Choice Based Lettings scheme which operates across the Fylde Coast region. This Consistent Assessment Policy underpins the scheme and has been developed by the three Fylde Coast local authorities working in partnership with the social housing providers listed below. In the drafting of this Policy, the legal provisions of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011, together with the related Codes of Guidance issued by the Government have been taken fully into consideration.

Blackpool Council
Fylde Borough Council
Wyre Council

Blackpool Coastal Housing
Great Places Housing Group
Muir Group Housing Ltd
ForHousing

Progress Housing Group
Places for People
Regenda Group

To gain access to the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* Scheme, eligible applicants only have to register once. They are then able to bid for suitable properties as they are advertised by all of the major social housing providers in the area.

Although *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* provides greater choice for applicants, the scheme in itself does not increase the number of properties available. Properties are advertised and applicants are encouraged to take an active part in the process by bidding on a property. The system is transparent and is expected to provide applicants with a realistic view of their prospects of securing accommodation.

The scheme's key objectives are:

- To create a customer led choice based lettings scheme
- To widen the choice of housing
- To ensure the scheme is open, fair and accountable
- To increase understanding and satisfaction of the letting system
- To give new tenants a feeling of ownership of their property and community
- To help create sustainable communities
- To make more efficient use of the available housing stock
- To help tackle low demand and reduce void turnaround times
- To create a single point of access to all social housing on the Fylde Coast
- To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in Part VI of the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002) and the Localism Act (2011)

1.1 Consistent Assessment Policy

This Policy sets out how applicants to the MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast scheme will be assessed and priority awarded. The policy forms the principal element of the allocation scheme of each Fylde Coast local authority.

Each local authority has a statutory duty to have an allocation scheme in place that sets out how social housing will be allocated. This is formulated and regularly reviewed in consultation with Local Authority members, housing providers and the public. It takes into

account the level and patterns of the demand for social housing, the profile of the stock and the vacancies which are likely to become available, and also reflects any agreed strategic priorities.

This Policy seeks to ensure that housing needs are met, to make the best use of the social housing available, and to build strong and stable communities. The Policy aims to deliver a fair and efficient mechanism for the allocation of social rented homes, including properties owned by Blackpool Council and managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing, and properties owned and managed by other major social housing providers across the Fylde Coast.

In drafting this policy the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* partners have had regard to:

- The Children's Act 2004.
- The Equalities Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 1988

1.2 Overview of My Home Choice Fylde Coast

To have access to social housing through My Home Choice Fylde Coast, applicants must meet nationally defined eligibility criteria for social housing, have a local connection, and not have been excluded for any other reason (see Section 1.3).

Eligible applicants who have a statutory housing need complete a full application and are placed on a Housing Needs register in the My Home Choice system with a priority band.

Eligible applicants who do not have a statutory housing need complete basic details on the My Home Choice system and are registered without a priority band.

Social housing providers who are participating partners in the scheme are committed to advertising their available properties to those who have applied to the scheme and been registered on the system. Adverts will include a description of the property and indicate which applicants are eligible to apply. Applicants can then apply for the property of their choice provided they meet the stated eligibility criteria.

While all homes are advertised through the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* website, there are two different routes for allocating homes:

1. Homes reserved for applicants on the Housing Needs register

A minimum of 50% of properties advertised will be made available exclusively for applicants on the Housing Needs register. High demand properties, such as but not limited to, 4+ bedrooms, Extra Care Housing and adapted stock will always be reserved initially for those in the housing need stream.

Properties will be advertised for a 5 day cycle, with the cycle starting as soon as the property becomes available, on any working day.

Applicants from the Housing Needs register who express an interest in these properties will be shortlisted for homes in order of priority need for housing and the length of time the applicant has been in that band.

2. Homes open to all applicants registered on the system

A maximum of 50% of properties advertised will be made available to all applicants registered on the system - those on the Housing Needs register and those who are not. Applicants expressing an interest in these properties will be shortlisted in order of when their bid was placed, with the preference given to the earliest bids.

In order to recognise and reward those who work and make a contribution to the community, 20% of lettings available to all applicants will prioritise people who meet the working households and community contribution criteria (see Appendix Three).

Properties will be advertised for a minimum of **1-2 days**, as soon as the property becomes available, on any working day.

Applicants who are on the Housing Needs register will have access to housing through both routes. The local authorities will monitor the proportion of all homes that are allocated to applicants on the Housing Needs register. The local authorities aim to enable two thirds of all homes to be allocated to applicants from the Housing Needs register.

1.3 Eligibility

1.3.1 Eligibility

Anyone aged 16 or over is eligible to apply to the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* housing register unless they are in one of the excluded groups below. (see section 5.6 - 16 & 17 year olds)

1.3.2 Ineligibility (Non qualifying persons)

There are a number of circumstances in which an applicant will be ineligible to join the housing register:

- Persons from abroad who the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government has deemed ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation
- In addition are people who, although not subject to immigration control, are not habitually (permanently) resident in the Common Travel Area (which includes the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland.)

These exclusions do not apply to anyone who is already a tenant of a Local Authority or Social Housing Provider, who has been allocated his home by a Local Authority.

There are a number of other circumstances in which applicants will be ineligible from joining the housing register:

- Transfer applicants who apply with no housing need
- Applicants with no local connection (other than those exempt due to having served in the armed forces in the last five years or who are currently serving, and homeless applicants where a statutory duty to rehouse has been accepted by either Blackpool, Fylde or Wyre Council. (see section 3.3 – local connection)
- Households whose gross household income exceeds £60,000 pa
- Applicants and households aged under 55 with savings exceeding £30,000

- Households that have been evicted for ASB within the last five years, including evictions from an assured or secure tenancy from a social landlord, or evictions under section 8 of an assured shorthold tenancy from a private landlord.

There is a right of review for each decision made by the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* partners on a case by case basis, having regard for exceptional circumstances, (see section 9 – Requesting a review)

1.3.3 Local Connection

When deciding eligibility, applicants must be able to show they have a local connection.

Applicants have a local connection if they can demonstrate one of the following:

- Local residency – they have lived in the Fylde Coast area consecutively for the last three years (does not include those that have been placed in the area)
- Permanent employment in the Fylde Coast area (see Appendix Three – working Households)
- Close family association – has a parent, adult child, adult brother or sister who is living in the Fylde Coast area and has done so for the last 5 years
- Applicants who are serving in the Armed Forces and who are either employed or are resident in the Fylde Coast area
- Former Armed Forces personnel who had a previous residence in the Fylde Coast area as a result of a former posting to the area, within the last 5 years
- Homeless applicants where there is a statutory duty to provide housing by Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Council

For priority when bidding, there are 3 levels of priority:

1. Connection to the borough – as above but to the individual borough
2. Connection to the Fylde Coast – as detailed above
3. No connection to either of the above (Armed Forces only)

Note that partner organisations may also define particular requirements for local connection when setting the eligibility criteria for individual properties – for example, the requirement to be resident in a particular parish, settlement or borough, and may be subject to a condition of a Section 106 agreement.

1.4 Availability and Use of Information

1.4.1 Advice and Information

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast Partner Organisations believe that applicants should be given every assistance when they apply to join the scheme, access the scheme and search for suitable properties.

A full copy of the consistent assessment policy will be available online and from each of the Local Authorities and Housing Providers.

Advice on how to join the scheme and how the scheme works will be available online and at each of the offices of the Local Authorities and Housing Providers. Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Authorities provide free independent housing advice to everyone in their district.

1.4.2 False Information

All partner organisations are committed to taking legal action against any applicant found to have gained a tenancy based on false information in their application form. (see section 3.5 – false information)

1.4.3 Data Sharing

Any information provided in the application form will be made available to all the partners in the scheme.

The *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* partnership has agreed to scan all appropriate documentation belonging to an application, and to electronically attach these to the applications on the system.

1.4.4 Confidentiality

Information relating to an application is held on a computerised database and is used to assist *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* to assess their eligibility for housing and then used to help a partner re-house a person in an appropriate home and supply and manage support services where applicable. All relevant information will be passed to the appropriate housing provider and any agency that will provide housing related support. The Partner Organisations reserve the right to check information and to pass information on to organisations to assist in this, such as, Police, Local Councils, Hospitals, Employers, Probation, Former/Current Landlords, Banks and Building Societies, Health Visitors, Social Services, Doctors, Credit Reference Agencies or any other organisations that we need to. Consent to do this is sought via the Declaration on the Application Form.

All Information will be treated with the highest level of security and confidentiality.

1.4.5 Data Protection Act

Information held in respect of a Housing Application will be processed by computer for the proper conduct of *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* housing function. Data will also be used for statistical purposes. Although information will not be identified, individuals may ask to see information which is being held about them on non-computer files, with certain limited exceptions, for example, information provided by other professionals which is exempt from disclosure. Statistical data that does not identify the applicant is not subject to data protections. Any information which identifies sensitive personal data (race, sexual orientation, religion or disability) requires explicit consent from the data subject before this can be released.

2 Application

2.1 Making an application

Anyone can register an application by visiting www.myhomechoicefyldecoast.co.uk website. Applicants should answer all questions in the application form fully and accurately and be prepared to provide supporting evidence as required.

Where applicants are eligible for social housing, they will be able to login to the website immediately and bid on properties.

Where applicants may be in housing need and eligible for the Housing Needs register, the assessing partner will normally process the application within 10 working days of the application being submitted or, if a homeless applicant, once a decision has been reached on a person's homelessness application. Dependant on the content of an application, further checks may need to be carried out and applicants will be informed if this is the case.

Applications will be assessed by the Assessing Partner relating to where the applicant lives or would like to live.

2.2 Online Security

On registration, applicants will be issued with an application registration number and memorable date (normally the main applicants date of birth) which they will use to login to the service. Applicants should take responsibility for keeping this private.

If an applicant forgets their password, this can be reset from the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* website. Password reset/reminder information will be sent to the e-mail address of the main applicant, for this reason it is important that all applicants provide their own e-mail address.

Partners will never ask an applicant for their user name and password.

2.3 Information required

The application form for *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* will ask for information including:

- Contact details of the applicants current landlord, type of tenancy and if a formal notice to quit has been served.
- Addresses for the last 3 years including the Landlords name and address for address and the reason for leaving.
- Details of anyone on the application who has any unspent criminal convictions, details of the crime, date and length of sentence given and how long they served. (please see Appendix Two on 'spent' and 'unspent' convictions).
- Details of action taken against anyone on the application for Anti Social Behaviour including type of action e.g. court action or written warning and if an ASB Order has been granted.

It should be noted that if any information is provided on the application form which could impact on the conduct of a future tenancy the exclusion or suspension policy will apply. Reference can also be made to 'Suspensions' giving examples of unacceptable behaviour. (see section 3.11 – suspensions)

2.3.1 Application Date and Effective Date

All applications will be given an 'Application Date'. The date used for the application date will be the date the application was received for assessment.

Within each band, applicants are listed in date order by the effective date. The effective date is the date of application, or where applicants circumstances have changed resulting in a higher band, the effective date will be the date the higher band applies.

2.3.2 References

Applicants will be required to provide two references to the Partner Organisation once they have successfully bid for a property:

- One reference must be from the current or most recent landlord from those applicants who have previously held a tenancy; this may include a staff reference from interim or supported accommodation. Further landlord references may be requested as required
- References will not be accepted from family or friends
- If an unsatisfactory reference is received from a Landlord, the application will be reviewed by the partner organisation.

If an applicant has not held a tenancy previously or is unable to provide any of the above, reference will be considered from the following: (this list is not exhaustive)

- Successful completion of a recognised tenancy training program
- Current/former employer
- Teacher/College Lecturer
- Person of standing in the community.

2.3.3 Documentation Requirements

Below is a list of what may be required to verify an application dependent on the applicant's circumstances:

| What needs verifying: | Documents required – one of the following must be provided: |
|---|--|
| The identity of the applicant and other members of the family | Birth Certificate, Passport, Immigration papers |
| The applicant is eligible to register for housing | Passport, national identity papers, Home office documents, wage slips, proof of housing benefit/local housing allowance, proof of local connection |
| The applicant and other household members live where they say they do and the terms of which they live there (e.g. tenancy agreement) | Electoral register entry, proof of rent payments, utility bills, pension book, confirmation from employer or DWP, tenancy agreement, full driving licence, recent bill for Council Tax or telephone, recent bank statement |
| The children being registered are the responsibility of the applicant or their partner | Proof of child benefit or other benefits such as fostering allowance, residence order, confirmation from DWP, social services, Health and Education authorities, full birth certificate. Where children have previously been cared for by another person, including an ex-partner, and in the absence of a residence order from the courts, a combination of this evidence must be provided. <i>MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast</i> will consider each case on its merits |

| | |
|---|---|
| Non-dependants have a medical or social need to live with the applicant | Confirmation from either social services or other relevant statutory agency |
| Proof of pregnancy | Antenatal card/book from hospital, doctors letter, MATB1 |
| Threatened with eviction | Tenancy agreement, valid Notice to Quit, court order |

If an applicant is unable to provide the necessary documents the case will be considered in light of individual circumstances by the relevant Partner Organisation.

All offers are subject to verification and the above documents may be required.

2.3.4 Pre-tenancy Checks

Once an offer of accommodation is made, individual landlords may undertake relevant verification of their identity, circumstances and housing conditions. This may be an online form, interview, home visit and/or telephone call.

Evidence of antisocial behaviour and outstanding housing debts will be checked and include police checks where applicants have indicated an 'unspent' conviction.

Landlord references (current/previous) will be sought where the applicant has held a private or social housing tenant. A credit check may also be carried out.

All applicants may be required to provide the following documents:

- Proof of identity and residence for all persons included on the application, including but not limited to: passport, identity card, phot driving licence, birth certificate or written confirmation from a professional person or support agency
- Proof that they are still eligible persons
- Proof of current address
- Proof of income
- Other documentation as appropriate

Offers may be withdrawn from an applicant who does not participate in pre-tenancy checks within a reasonable timescale.

3 Application Assessment

3.1 Priority Bands

Each application is assessed in line with criteria and once eligibility has been proven will either be:

- Classified as 'no housing need' (no banding) who are either:
 - Adequately housed and are therefore in no housing need
 - Do not meet any of the criteria within the housing need bands
 - Awaiting a decision on a homeless application or further eligibility checks
 - Armed forces personnel, who are currently serving or have served in the last five years who cannot demonstrate local connection; OR
- Placed on the Housing Needs register, with a demonstrated housing need and awarded a priority band.

On the Housing Needs register there will be three priority bands: A, B and C.

3.1.1 BAND A

The main group in Band A are:

- Homeless applicants where there is statutory duty to provide housing by Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Council.

Other applicants to be placed in this band must be able to demonstrate a local connection and at least one of the following:

- Be a vulnerable person , who faces imminent discharge from hospital or temporary residential care and for whom there is no suitable accommodation to return to
- At the discretion of *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast*, have exceptional circumstances including being in immediate danger, for example, of physical violence.

3.1.2 BAND B

To be placed in this band, applicants must be able to demonstrate a local connection and one of the following:

- Occupy a property where category 1 hazards have been identified by Environmental Services and in relation to which the landlord has failed to take the required action
- Live in a property, which one of the Partner Organisations requires to be demolished or vacated
- Are an existing tenant of a partner within the Fylde Coast area who under-occupies their existing home and is looking to move to a smaller, more suitable property. This also applies to applicants no longer in need of a property with a disabled adaptation. (this will only apply if the under occupation has arisen after the start of the tenancy, e.g. because some people in the household have moved out.)
- Need to move because of urgent medical or disability reasons and there is a medical assessment that current housing conditions are having a serious detrimental impact on the applicant or members of the applicant's household's health or ability to live independently. The assessment will consider the applicants (or member of the household included in the application) medical condition, the effect their property has on that condition and how moving to an alternative property could help that condition
- Armed forces personnel, who are currently serving or have served in the last five years who need to move and meet one or more criteria from Band C (see Appendix Four – Armed Forces Personnel)

- Need to move because of urgent social or welfare reasons. This can include but is not limited to:
 - The likelihood of admission to residential care or hospital if not re-housed
 - The likelihood of a child being accommodated by the Local Authority if not re-housed
 - The need to give or receive essential care and support
- Have a serious risk of harm in their present accommodation. This can include but is not limited to:
 - Victims of domestic abuse, serious harassment including racial or homophobic, crime, serious anti-social behaviour and witnesses of crime
- Threatened with homelessness (as determined by the Local Authority)
- Are unintentionally overcrowded in their current accommodation and in need of 2 or more additional bedrooms
- Leaving Local Authority care from the relevant Local Authority with appropriate tenancy support, where there is a statutory duty to provide housing under the Leaving Care Act 2000
- Are rough sleeping, threatened with or have a history of rough sleeping and are supported and referred by the housing teams of Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Council
- Currently living in supported housing or rehabilitation and are ready for independent living as agreed by the provider and tenancy support (as appropriate) is in place, if required

3.1.3 BAND C

To be placed in this band, applicants must be able to demonstrate a local connection and one of the following:

- Need to move because of medical or disability reasons. This is because there is a medical assessment that current housing conditions are affecting the health or ability to live independently, but there is no detrimental impact. The assessment will consider the applicant's (or member of the household included on the application) medical condition, the effect their property has on that condition and how moving to an alternative property can help that condition
- Need to move because of social or welfare reasons, which can include but is not limited to:
 - Applicants who need to move to a particular locality within the borough to avoid hardship to themselves or others
- Occupy a property where Category 2 hazards have been identified by Environmental Services and the landlord has failed to take the required action
- Are unintentionally overcrowded in their current accommodation and in need of one additional bedroom
- Are assessed by the partner Local Authority as being homeless but there is no priority need to banding
- Are assessed by Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Council as being intentionally homeless and there is no statutory duty to re-house
- Currently reside in supported accommodation or rehabilitation and are not yet ready for independent living and have no tenancy support in place
- Armed Forces personnel who are currently serving or have served in the last five years and meet the local connection criteria

3.2 Home Visits

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to carry out a home visit. Home visits can be used for, but not limited to:

- As part of application verification
- As part of pre-tenancy checks
- Where clarification is required

Applicants are expected to allow the visiting officer access to all parts of their home.

If the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* partner organisation has not been able to complete a visit, this could result in the applicant being removed from the scheme.

3.3 Relationship to Interested Parties

As part of the assessment and at the point of offer any relationship to interested parties as defined on the application form will be noted and the partners individual procedures will be followed, thus ensuring that in each individual case there is no conflict of interests.

3.4 False Information

It is a criminal offence for anyone applying for housing, from a housing authority to knowingly give false information or to withhold information which is relevant to their application. An offence is also committed if an applicant allows a third party to provide false information on their behalf.

Ground 5 in schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by s.146 of the 1996 Act) enables a housing authority to seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenants instigations.

Applicants who have provided false or misleading information on their application will be suspended from the housing register.

Examples of providing false information will include but not be limited to:

- Missing out tenancies or addresses from their application form
- Using a different surname from a previous application and not declaring this
- Not declaring a property that is owned or previously owned in the UK or abroad
- Not declaring any unsuitable behaviour
- Not declaring rent arrears and any housing related debt

Before a decision is made on whether an applicant is suspended from the housing register under this criteria, applicants will be contacted and advised to provide further information and details of any mitigating circumstances. Applicants will be given eight weeks to provide this information and it is their responsibility to provide this. If no information is provided by the applicant then a decision will be made based on the information (however limited) that we have.

Applicants who are suspended from the housing register under this criteria, will be advised of this in writing.

All partner organisations are committed to taking legal action against any applicant found to have gained a tenancy based on false information in their application form.

3.5 Access to Personal Information

Individuals are entitled under the Data Protection Act (1998) to request details of their personal data held by *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast*. A charge may be made for providing this information.

The information received from housing applications may also be used for housing management and research purposes.

3.6 Notification of Change in Circumstances

If an applicant's circumstances change, they must contact *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* as soon as possible.

If the applicant is already in the scheme their details will be updated and a re-assessment will be made.

If the applicant moves into a higher band, the new priority will be awarded from the date of the notification of a change in circumstances and this will be the effective date of application. If the applicant moves into a lower band then their effective date will remain the same as the application date.

Checks will also be made at the time of the offer to ensure that the household details are correct and the property is suitable for the household size. If a household's current housing situation is different from their housing registration details, then a housing offer may be withdrawn. The application may be suspended until the applicant provides proof of their change of circumstances.

3.7 Application Checks

Application details will be checked on a regular basis. Applicants may receive a renewal letter asking them to confirm or update their details. If no response is received to the renewal request letter within 28 days, the application will be cancelled and a letter confirming this will be sent to the applicant. Applications may be reinstated in exceptional circumstances.

3.8 Applicants who fail to bid

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast may from time to time review applicants who have not taken part in the bidding process and ascertain the reason for not bidding. This may result in their application being re-assessed or cancelled, or additional support services being put in place.

3.9 Cancelling Applications

An application will be cancelled from the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* scheme in the following circumstances:

- At the request of an applicant
- An applicant does not respond to an application review, within the specified time limit
- A Local Authority or registered social landlord has housed the applicant
- A tenant completes a mutual exchange
- An applicant does not maintain their application through the review process, or where the applicant moves and does not provide a contact address
- An applicant has died
- An applicant has not supplied the relevant information requested within the given timescales. An applicant becomes ineligible for housing as defined by this policy.

Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision (see section 9 – Requesting a review/appeal)

Where an applicant applies to re-join the scheme at a later date their new date of application will be the date they reapply.

3.10 Suspensions

In certain circumstances applications will be suspended. This can occur at any time from initial registration to the offer stage. This means the applicant cannot 'bid' for a *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* property. Applicants who fall within the suspension criteria, which are set out below, will remain 'held' on the system.

Where a suspension is applied to an application the applicant will be informed in writing of the reason for suspension, the timescale and steps the applicant could take to remove the suspension. It is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the assessing partner organisation at the end of the suspension period to request a review of the suspension.

The review will seek to establish if the reason for the suspension has been resolved satisfactorily, or if there is evidence of an improvement in the behaviour of the applicant(s) over a sustained period. The maximum length of suspension is five years.

There is a right to review for each decision made by *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* partners on a case by case basis having regard for exceptional circumstances. (see section 9 – Requesting a review/appeal) (see section 1.7.2 Ineligible applicants)

3.10.1 Suspension Criteria

Suspension may apply where the applicant:

- Owes rent arrears or any other housing related debt, excluding Council Tax, to a landlord and has not made and maintained a satisfactory arrangement to repay the debt (see section 3.11.3 – Debt)
- Has deliberately or negligently caused damage to a property belonging to a partner organisation or any other landlord, whether they are the tenant of that property or not
- Has made false or misleading statements (see section 1.7.4 – false information)

OR; the applicant or any member of the household:

- Has engaged in anti-social behaviour (whether or not they were at the time a tenant of a Local Housing Authority or social housing provider) and has not maintained a satisfactory undertaking to address that behaviour (see section 3.11.2 – anti social behaviour)
- Is a current tenant of a participating landlord in the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* scheme (or any other social housing provider) and is, or has been, the subject of action for breach of tenancy.
- Has been convicted of using their home, or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes (see Appendix Two – convictions)

Other applications may be inactive on the system and therefore unable to bid:

- *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* is waiting for more information and about an applicant's circumstances. (The application will remain held until all the relevant information has been provided)
- Offenders in custody, the application will remain held until 28 days before their release date

3.10.2 Anti-Social Behaviour

The meaning of behaviour for the purpose of this policy encompasses a past action or activity on the part of an applicant but also an omission, failure to act, passivity or inactivity. This extends to any past or present member of the household.

Suspension will be considered for any acts of anti-social behaviour that have occurred within the last 2 years. Evidence of acts of anti-social behaviour include but are not limited to:

- Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours, visitors or the community
- Being violent towards a partner or family member
- Allowing the condition of a rented property to deteriorate
- Damaging/destroying or disposing of furniture provided by the landlord
- Paying money illegally to obtain a Local Authority or registered social landlord tenancy

Suspension will also be considered regardless of time of occurrence in the following circumstances:

- A current Probation risk assessment level of Medium or above
- A current ASBO/CRASBO in place
- Conviction for a serious unspent criminal offence

Suspensions for cases of ASB will be for no less than 12 months and no more than 5 years.

It should be noted that to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour problems, all partners of *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* may use starter tenancies or introductory tenancies for all new tenants.

3.10.3 Debt

Applicants with arrears or housing related debt of under £500 owed to a landlord including any of the partner organisations, may only be registered as live on the system if they agree to meet the conditions of an agreed payment plan; which typically will mean the payment of a minimum of 12 consecutive weekly payments. Alternatively, a lump sum to reduce the debt - as agreed – may also be accepted.

An offer of accommodation will only be made if the payment arrangement has been met unless there are exceptional circumstances. Each case will be considered on its own merits e.g. reasons for the arrears and previous steps taken to tackle arrears.

Applicants with arrears of over £500 will usually be suspended. This will be based on a decision made by the partner organisation taking into account all circumstances. A decision will be made on the length of suspension and repayment arrangements and these decisions will be reviewed by SOD to ensure consistency.

In both sets of circumstances the applicant will be informed in writing of any decision made together with information about the right to request a review of the decision.

Where there are both rent arrears and housing related debt(s) the whole amount will be added together. The total amount to repay will determine which course of action is followed, detailed above.

Debt owed to private sector landlords (arrears and/or damage) will only be taken into account if an unsatisfactory reference is received.

4. Letting of properties

Most applicants will be able to access the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* system to find a home. When an applicant sees a property advertised that they would like to live in, they should express an interest in that property by submitting a bid online. The decisions in respect of allocation of housing will be made by officers of the respective partner organisations.

4.1 When properties will be advertised

Properties may be uploaded at any time. Each listed property will have a closing date within which the customers will need to register their bids.

Properties advertised only to applicants on the Housing Needs register will be advertised for a minimum of 5 days.

Properties advertised to all applicants will be advertised **between 1 and 5 days**.

Applicants should only bid for properties that they are eligible for and the type of property and area that they would like to move into.

Shortlisting of applicants for a property advertised only to applicants on the Housing Needs register will be based on the priority of bids received, with emergency band applicants having the highest priority and low band applicants having the lowest priority. If bids are received from applicants in the same priority band, then the person who has been registered longest in that band will be offered the property. If two or more applicants were awarded priority on the same date then the property will be provisionally offered to the applicant with the earliest registration date.

Where a property is adapted for use by a disabled person, the property will be offered to the applicant with the highest priority whose needs best match the facilities of the advertised property.

Applicants who have bid for a property that is available to all applicants, will be listed in order of the time they bid, with the earliest bid appearing first in the shortlist, regardless of housing need.

For all advertised properties, bids will be checked against the criteria used in the advertisement. Any bids that do not meet the criteria may be bypassed.

4.2 Pre-tenancy checks

Once an offer of accommodation is made, individual landlords will undertake relevant verification of household members identity, circumstances and housing conditions. This may take the form of an online form, interview, home visit and/or telephone call.

Evidence of anti-social behaviour and outstanding housing debts will be checked and include police checks where applicants have indicated an 'unspent' conviction.

Landlord references (current/previous) will be sought where the applicant has held a private or social housing tenancy. A credit check may also be carried out.

All applicants and household members may be required to provide the following documents:

- Proof of identity and residence for all persons included on the application; acceptable proof of identity is:
 - Passport
 - Identity card (issued to certain foreign nationals)

- Photo driving licence²
- Birth certificate
- Or written confirmation from a professional person or support agency
- Proof that they are still eligible persons
- Proof of current address
- Proof of income
- Other documentation as appropriate

Offers may be withdrawn from an applicant who does not participate in pre-tenancy checks within a reasonable timescale.

The applicant to be offered the property will be contacted to verify their circumstances. Provided the applicant is eligible and suitable for the property (and in case of applicants on the Housing Needs register, that the applicant's priority has not changed), a provisional offer of the property will be made and a viewing arranged.

If the applicant refuses the property then it will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist.

4.3 Local lettings

The partners have the discretion to apply local lettings policies where there are specific issues. Local lettings policies can also assist in the management of existing stock to help resolve issues such as child density, anti-social behaviour, mixed communities and worklessness. It should be noted that local lettings policies may be required on affordable new build sites. There may also be planning restrictions and local lettings policies which apply to specific properties such as a Section 106.

4.4 Property sizes

The numbers of bedrooms for which applicants are normally eligible for is determined by the size of the household and in line with DWP regulations. As there is a shortage of larger homes, applicants are advised to consider a property that has two living rooms where one can reasonably be used as a bedroom.

The number of bedrooms allowed is calculated as follows:

One bedroom for:

- Every adult couple
- Any other adult aged 16 or over
- Any two children of the same sex
- Any two children regardless of sex under age 10
- Any other child

On occasion providers may under-occupy a property and this will be indicated on the individual advert and will be subject to affordability and pre-tenancy checks. Bedroom need will be assessed as above, however applicants will be permitted to bid for a property one bedroom size larger than their calculated need.

4.4.1 Expectant mothers

Consideration will be given for unborn children in terms of bedroom entitlement but priority will only be awarded according to the current household needs.

Following the birth, and receipt of birth certificate/s, a re-assessment will be made. It is the applicants responsibility to notify the assessing partner in order to update their circumstances.

4.5 Property descriptions

Properties advertised will carry (where possible) a photograph of the property and a full description. As a minimum the description will include:

- Type of property
- Number of bedrooms
- Location of property
- Any adaptations (e.g. disabled facilities)
- Services provided (e.g. support, caretaker, cleaning)
- Heating type
- Energy Performance Certificate rating
- Rent charges and any service charges
- Eligibility criteria

4.6 Joint tenancies

Where there is a joint tenancy, both tenants are jointly and individually responsible for ensuring the tenancy agreement is adhered to.

Both parties to a joint tenancy must individually qualify to join *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* and be eligible for an offer, or to bid on a property. If a joint tenancy is refused by any of the participating partner organisations, a clear reason will be provided to the applicants in writing. Applicants can request a review of the decision if required (see section 9 – requesting a review). When one of the joint tenants gives notice to the relevant partner organisation, discretion may be used when deciding to offer the property – or an alternative property – as sole tenancy to the other joint tenant.

In certain circumstances joint tenancies may be granted to more than two people.

4.7 Successions and Assignments

When an introductory or secure tenant dies, a member of the family living with them at the time of their death may have a right to succeed the tenancy.

When an introductory or secure tenant dies and no family member has such succession rights but a member of the household has:

- a) Been living with the tenant for 12 months prior to the tenants death; or
- b) Accepted responsibility for the tenants dependants

Then the social housing provider has discretion to grant an introductory tenancy to that person either in the same home or in suitable accommodation.

An introductory or secure tenant may be able to assign the tenancy to someone else so long as the tenancy has not already been passed on by assignment, or succession. It is usually assigned:

- By a court order following matrimonial or civil partnership breakdown or family proceedings; OR
- To a member of the tenant's family who would qualify to succeed to the tenancy if the tenant had died.

4.8 Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange is where two tenants with secure and assured tenancies are in agreement to swap their properties (in their current state) and tenancies. The landlord's written permission is required prior to the exchange.

An exchange can only be refused in certain circumstances for example if the landlord thinks the home is too big or too small for the person who wants it, or if the tenancy agreement had been breached (i.e. no longer secure due to suspended possession order or Notice of Seeking Possession). All mutual exchanges will be dealt with by the relevant partner organisations.

4.9 Transfer policy

All existing tenants of partners have the right to apply for a transfer, subject to being in housing need and any restrictions that apply to their tenancy. Applications for transfers are considered in the same way as a new application. Tenants' housing needs will be assessed and placed in the relevant band in the scheme together with all other applicants.

In order to qualify, tenants must give access for a property inspection, viewings and sign ups and leave their home in good repair and decorative order. Tenants with rent arrears or other breaches of the tenancy agreement may be suspended from the scheme (see section 3.11 – suspensions)

In addition the organisation may decide to carry out Emergency or Management moves which are not advertised but are recorded on the system for auditing and reporting purposes. (see section 7.1 – properties not advertised)

5 Definitions and exceptions

5.1 Support in Accommodation

The *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* Partner Organisations will work closely with all the relevant health and social services departments to identify opportunities to rehouse those in need of housing with care packages and other means of support in suitable accommodation. Where such a package is not immediately available, the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* Partner Organisations reserve the right not to offer accommodation until care or support arrangements are agreed and the client has signed up to the package. This is dependent on suitable and appropriate accommodation being available.

5.2 Supported Accommodation

Applicants who are currently living in supported housing or rehabilitation will not be awarded priority Band A until they are ready for independent living and/or tenancy support is in place if required.

5.3 Sheltered Housing or Independent Living

Sheltered housing or Independent Living is normally for people aged 55 years or over. Schemes are for applicants who can live independently and are able to manage alone but would benefit from the security of an alarm system and the services of a Scheme Manager or Sheltered Housing officer in an emergency. This includes people who can live independently with the aid of a social services care package.

Where a single applicant or both joint applicants are over 55, the application will automatically be eligible for Sheltered / Independent Living properties.

People who are below the age of 55 years may be eligible for sheltered housing or Independent Living because of illness, disability or vulnerability. Sheltered housing applicants will not be listed separately on the Housing Register, but will be assessed in accordance with their housing need and placed within the appropriate band.

5.4 Extra Care

Extra care housing is sheltered housing with special facilities and additional services. A small number of schemes are located across the Fylde Coast.

5.5 Adapted Homes and Ground Floor Accommodation

An adapted home has equipment fitted or adaptations made to it, to help a person with illness, disability or where there is a need. Applications will automatically be registered for suitably adapted accommodation in accordance with identified need and placed in the appropriate band. An Occupational Therapy assessment may be required before an offer is made. Adapted property allocations will be prioritised to those with appropriate need.

Applications from people with an illness or disability will automatically be considered for ground floor accommodation. Allocations for this type of property will be prioritised to those with the appropriate need.

5.6 16 & 17 year olds

People aged 16 and 17 years of age can apply to go on the housing register although they would not usually be offered a tenancy until they are 18 years old unless there is a statutory duty to house for example because:

- They are leaving care
- They are lone pregnant or already have a child/children
- They are homeless and owed a main duty under s.193 of the Housing Act 1996 (part VII) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- They are residing in supported accommodation and ready for independent living, as agreed by the support provider and appropriate tenancy support is in place if required

People who fall in the above categories may need to provide details of a guarantor (professional person, parent or responsible adult) prior to being offered a tenancy.

Young people will only be considered for a tenancy on the condition that they accept a referral to a floating support provider to ensure that the tenancy succeeds.

5.7 Offenders

Offenders may apply to the housing register whilst in custody, or submit a change of address form if already a current applicant prior to committal.

The application will remain inactive but the applicant will accrue waiting time on the list, therefore when the application is made live the original date of application will be the effective date. The application will remain inactive until 28 days prior to the offender being released from prison, unless any of the suspension criteria apply.

Offenders will be assessed in line with the service level agreement between Lancashire Probation Trust and each of the three local authorities.

5.8 Rough Sleepers

Applicants who are rough sleeping (or are threatened with rough sleeping or have a history of rough sleeping) and who are supported and referred by the relevant local authority will be awarded the appropriate priority once all information has been verified

5.9 Mobile Homes/Caravans

Applicants will be considered to have a local connection if they live in a mobile home or caravan in the Fylde Coast area, which is classed as their permanent residence and meet the other local connection criteria.

6 Homeless Applicants & Supported Accommodation

The Local Authority has a duty to secure suitable accommodation to applicants who are accepted as homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (part VII) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011. Applicants will be entered on the scheme and can initially have full choice of areas for four weeks. However, if after four weeks (from the date of the decision to accept the applicant as homeless) the applicant has not found alternative suitable accommodation, staff from the relevant LA may bid on their behalf and they will be offered the first suitable property (except in extreme mitigating circumstances).

6.1 One Offer Policy

The Local Authority duty will come to an end if the homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation. The applicant will be informed that the relevant local authority has discharged their duty under section 193 of the above act.

If the homeless applicant is dissatisfied with the Local Authority's decision the applicant has the right to request a review regarding the suitability of any accommodation offered as a discharge of a homelessness duty.

7 Direct Lets

7.1 Properties not advertised

In some exceptional circumstances, *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* may allocate properties directly. Examples include:

- Tenants who need to be decanted
- Specially adapted properties
- Extra care vacancies
- Applicants who have succeeded to a tenancy who need to move to alternative accommodation
- Emergency management transfers, where there is a severe risk of harm, one offer in line with the policy will be made.
- Multi Agency Public Protection Panel cases
- Homeless households owed a main duty by one of the three local authorities under S.193 of the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. One offer, in line with the policy will be made.
- Witness protection cases where a referral is received direct from the Home Office. Referrals direct from Police Authorities will be dealt with under the normal allocation policy.
- Assisting a Local Authority in relation to Homelessness Duties.

7.2 Refusals of direct lettings

If an applicant refuses a direct let the applicant must give their reasons for refusal. An investigation will then take place to assess if the offer was reasonable or unreasonable. Consultation will take place with other officers or professionals as part of the investigation if required. If the Partner Organisation decides that the offer made was a reasonable one, the applicant will be advised in writing of the reasons of this finding and the effect this decision has on their application.

The applicant will also be advised of the right to request a review. (see section 9 – requesting a review) If the offer was found to be unreasonable, it will be withdrawn with no consequences to the applicant.

8 Allocating Properties

8.1 Selection Process

For properties advertised as MyHomeNeed:

Priority is decided first by any specific local connection criteria, band and then by effective date within the band. A bid for a property will not be considered if the applicant's household does not meet the size, age or disability requirements for that property unless there are exceptional circumstances which need to be taken into account. If more than one person from the same band bids for a property, it will go to the person who has the longest waiting time within that band.

For properties advertised as MyHomeChoice:

Subject to any specific lettings criteria, which will be detailed within the advert, properties will be allocated in bidding order.

Partner landlords advertising properties will select and interview the top applicant/s before an offer is made. Each individual landlord is responsible for the verification of the successful applicant's circumstances, including taking up references.

Selected applicants will be given the opportunity to view the property prior to tenancy sign-up.

If the applicant chooses to refuse the property, the reasons for the refusal will be recorded by the partner landlord advertising the property.

8.2 Refusal following a bid

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast will offer assistance and guidance to applicants, including vulnerable applicants to help them through the application, bidding, viewing and sign up process.

Where an applicant has successfully bid for a property and then refuses it, generally no penalty will apply. In most cases, the applicant will be free to bid again according to the normal bidding process.

Where an applicant does not keep an appointment to view a property, or refuses it, the next highest-ranking bidder will normally be offered the property.

8.3 Feedback on successful bids

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast will publish details of the number of bids for each property giving details of the successful applicant's band and their band date. This will help applicants determine their prospects of success in obtaining housing.

8.4 Withdrawal of offers

An applicant who is not satisfied with the allocation process may register a complaint under the relevant partners complaints procedure.

9 Requesting a review/appeal

Applicants can request a review or appeal any of the *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* Partner Organisation's decisions regarding their application. This includes:

- The level of priority awarded
- Eligibility for entry on to the housing register
- Suspension or exclusion from the register
- Entitlement of the size of property required
- Removal of the applicant from the register other than at the applicants own request

9.1 Procedure

Requests for a review/appeal must be made within 21 days of the original notification and should include the applicant's reasons for believing the decision made was wrong. The Partner Organisation has the discretion to extend the time if it considers this would be reasonable. Requests should be directed to the assessing Partner Organisation.

Requests can be made by applicants or their representatives by the following methods:-

- In writing, by letter or email
- By telephone
- In person

9.2 How the decision will be reviewed

A senior officer of the Partner Organisation who has not been involved in the original decision will look at the request for a review and consider whether there has been any error or whether there are any exceptional circumstances. The officer will base his or her decision on the known facts at the time of the review. In some cases, they may need to ask for more information to help them make a decision.

The review will be dealt with within eight weeks of the applicant notifying the relevant Partner Organisation that they wish a review to be carried out and they will be informed, in writing of the decision. The Partner Organisation has discretion to extend the time if it considers this would be reasonable.

If the original decision is upheld, the letter will give reasons supporting the review decision.

If the original decision is not upheld, the letter will explain the reasons and what action the Partner Organisation will take in the respect of the applicants status and/or priority on the Housing register.

If the review is regarding the withdrawal of an offer (or refusal to make an offer), by one of the Partner Organisations, the property in question will not be 'held' whilst the review takes place. It will be offered instead to the next successful applicant. If the original decision is not upheld, the applicant will be offered the next suitable property of their choice. In certain circumstances the Partner Organisation may make the applicant a Direct Offer. **Please also see section 8.4 - Withdrawal of offers**

An applicant has the right to complain to the appropriate Ombudsman if they feel that they have been unfairly treated as a result of maladministration.

An applicant may wish to take their own independent legal advice through a solicitor or the Citizens Advice Bureau.

10 Monitoring and Review of the Scheme

A number of outcomes within the scheme will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the system is operating in the most effective way.

10.1 Policy Review

The *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* Consistent Assessment Policy will be regularly reviewed. Minor changes that do not significantly affect the spirit of the policy will be approved by a majority agreement amongst the partners.

Unless decided by statutory legislation, the Partner Organisations have the right to use discretion when allocating properties. This means that in certain circumstances, the Partner Organisation can make decisions that supersede the detail in this policy.

Major changes to the policy will be consulted on with all partners and customers. Approval will then be gained through the appropriate governance arrangements including Council members and RSL board members.

10.2 Equal Opportunities Statement

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast is committed to promoting equality, combating discrimination and promoting good community relations and will ensure that discrimination does not take place in the allocation of properties and services it provides.

There is a commitment to:

Make sure our services and how they are delivered meet the diverse needs of the local people

- Make sure our buildings are as accessible as possible
- Provide information about our services in accessible formats such as large print, Braille, on audio cassette or computer disk and providing information in languages other than English or translators, including British sign language interpreters where they are needed.
- Promote inclusive communities that have a shared sense of belonging and pride in the Fylde Coast
- Challenge unfairness and discrimination
- Engage with the diverse communities of the Fylde Coast to ensure their needs are identified and met
- Value the important contribution the community and voluntary sector make to the Fylde Coast
- Work in partnership to share good practice and promote a consistent approach
- Value and train staff to deliver services fairly, efficiently and effectively
- Actively seek feedback to continually develop and improve our approach

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast will regularly review its practices, policies, staff training and monitoring arrangements to ensure that people are treated fairly regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation and that they can access what they need.

The Partner Organisations have adopted corporate policies and action plans aimed at promoting equality and valuing diversity. Further local policies and action plans may be developed to address the needs of other disadvantaged and under represented groups.

The Partner Organisations will conduct regular monitoring to ensure that no group is unfairly disadvantaged.

10.3 Complaints

Any complaints regarding administration should be directed initially to the organisation processing the application. An applicant has the right to complain to the appropriate Ombudsman if they feel that they have been unfairly treated as a result of maladministration and their complaint has not been adequately dealt with.

Contact Details:

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

11 **Appendix One Qualifying persons and immigration chart.**

| Class of Applicant | Conditions of eligibility | How to identify/verify |
|---|--|--|
| Existing social tenant (allocation accommodation by LA) | None | |
| British Citizen | Must be habitually resident in the CTA | Passport |
| EEA Citizen | Must be habitually resident in CTA unless, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant is a 'worker' (3) • Applicant has a right to res the UK (4) | Passport or national identity card |
| Person subject to immigration control granted refugee status | None | Stamp in passport or Home Office Letter |
| Person subject to immigration control granted indefinite leave to remain | Must be habitually resident in CTA and if ILR was granted on undertaking that a sponsor(s) would be responsible for maintenance & accommodation and 5 years have not elapsed since date of entry to UK or undertaking – then at least one sponsor must have died | Stamp in passport of Home Office |
| Person subject to immigration control who is a citizen of a country that has ratified ECSMA (3) or ESC (6) | Must be lawfully present (3) in UK Must be habitually resident in CTA | Passport |

1. CTA: the Common travel area includes the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland
2. EEA countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom
3. A 'worker' for the purpose of the Council Regulation (EEC) no. 1612/68 or (EEC) No. 1251/70
4. A right to reside pursuant to Council Directive No.68360EEC or No.73/148/EEC
5. ECSMA is the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance. Non EEA ratifying countries are: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.
6. ESC is the European Social Charter. Non EEA ratifying countries are: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia.
7. Persons subject to immigration control are not lawfully present in the UK unless they have leave to enter or remain in the UK. Asylum seekers are generally only granted "temporary admission" and do not have leave to enter or remain.

12 Appendix Two How a conviction becomes spent.

The way in which a conviction can become 'spent' under the ROA will depend upon the sentence received for the offence, and the rehabilitation period that applies to that offence sentence. The principles apply to convictions in a criminal court, findings in a juvenile court, certain offences in service disciplinary proceedings and hospital orders under the Mental Health Act 1983. The time required before the conviction is spent – the rehabilitation period – will be different depending upon the nature and length of the sentence, be it a term of imprisonment, a fine, a surcharge order, probation, or an absolute or conditional discharge. Relevant rehabilitation periods are set out below. Unless otherwise stated, the rehabilitation period runs from the date of the conviction and will generally depend upon compliance with the sentence.

12.1 Relevant rehabilitation periods

Prison for more than two and a half years - Never

Prison for more than six months but less than two and a half years - 10 years

Youth custody* for more than six months but less than two and a half years - 10 years* Corrective training for more than six months but less than two and a half years - 10 years* Dismissal with disgrace from Her Majesty's service - 10 years*

A sentence of Borstal training - 7 years Prison for six months or less - 7 years* Dismissal from Her Majesty's service - 7 years*

Imprisonment or detention in YOI or youth custody for six months or less - 7 years* Detention in respect of conviction in service disciplinary proceedings - 5 years* (Most) fines - 5 years*

Young offender detention for over six months but less than two and a half years - 5 years

Probation order or community order (person 18 or older) - 5 years

Probation order or community order (person under 18) - Either 2 ½ years from conviction, or until the order ceases to have effect – whichever is the longer

Hospital order under Mental Health Act 1983 - Either 5 years, or 2 years after order ceases to have effect, whichever is the longer

Young offender detention for six months or less - 3 years

Conditional discharge, binding over, care order, supervision order, reception order - Either 1 year after making of order, or 1 year after the order ends, whichever is the longer

Absolute discharge - 6 months

Disqualification - The period of disqualification

Cautions, Warnings and Reprimands - Spent as soon as they are issued

Conditional cautions - Spent as soon as conditions end.

*Note: These periods are reduced by half if the offender was under eighteen at the date of conviction.

13 Appendix Three: Definition of Working Households and Community Contribution

13.1 Working Households

Households where at least one of the applicants is currently in employment. For the purposes of this consistent assessment policy employment is described as;

- Over 16 hours per week (unless the remuneration is substantial)
- The main place of work is within the authority
- Offers of employment should be regular, intend to last for more than 12 months and there is a genuine intention to take up the offer of work
- For applicants working outside the Fylde Coast, evidence will be required that this employment will continue
- Appropriate evidence is provided which may include contract of employment, wage/salary slips, formal offer letter and tax and benefits information.

It should be noted that this must be confirmed at point of application and evidenced at point of offer.

13.2 Community Contribution

Households where at least one of the applicants is currently undertaking voluntary work. For the purposes of this consistent assessment policy, voluntary work (community contribution) is described as:

- Choosing to give your time to benefit other people without being paid for it; for example completing voluntary work in a charity, voluntary organisation or community group, public sector organisation (local council) a social enterprise or a local business
- The voluntary work must have been held for a minimum of 6 months prior to the application for the award in order to be eligible.
- It is not volunteering if you help out a family member, are given money apart from expenses, or are under contract to do it (this does not include any volunteer agreement you may have).

It should be noted that this must be confirmed of application and evidenced at point of offer.

13.3 Exemptions

This may include people who are able to demonstrate they are unable to work due to disability, age or gender.

14 Appendix Four: Armed Forces Personnel

References to “Armed Forces Personnel” include persons who meet the following criteria:

- (i) is currently serving in the regular forces
- (ii) formerly served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of housing,
- (iii) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service
- (iv) is serving or has served in the reserve forces within five years of their application for an allocation of housing and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service.

The regular forces and the reserve forces are defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(2) as follows:

- “the regular forces” means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force
- “the reserve forces” means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force



Fylde Borough Council
Area Lettings Plan
2016-17

Final Draft document May 2016

Fylde Area Lettings Plan

1. Background

Each local authority has a statutory responsibility to make best use of its scarce housing resources and ensure that, as far as possible, priority for re-housing is based on a combination of re-housing needs and waiting time. It does this by setting out how social housing will be allocated to people in need within its area in an Allocation Scheme. The Allocation Scheme for Fylde comprises two elements – a Consistent Assessment Policy and a borough-specific Area Lettings Plan.

The role of the Consistent Assessment Policy is to set out how applicants for social housing are assessed when they register their requirements for a home, and to provide consistent procedures for the operation of the MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast system across the three local authority areas.

This Area Lettings Plan maps out the supply and demand issues impacting on social housing specifically in the borough of Fylde. Using this information, the Area Lettings Plan sets out priorities and vision of how social housing is let in the borough over the next 12 months. The Registered Providers where possible will work to achieve the priorities in the plan when letting their stock. The appropriate mechanisms will be set up within the choice based lettings IT system to ensure the plan can be monitored and reviewed each year. The plan is a strategic tool that enables lettings by registered providers to be linked to wider strategic issues and ensures best use is made of their stock available. This ensures that Fylde Borough Council is carrying out its duty as a non-stock holding strategic housing authority and is making best use of the scarce social housing stock.

While the needs of applicants will be assessed in a consistent way across the Fylde Coast, each local authority has its own Area Lettings Plan to reflect different demand and supply issues and local priorities. Fylde BC will consult with registered providers on the detail of the lettings plan when it is developed each year. As lettings are made by registered providers because they own and manage the social housing stock, the local authority is reliant on them for delivery of the priorities set out in the Area Lettings Plan. The MyHomeChoice Fylde Coast system provides comprehensive data on lettings that is monitored to understand the extent to which the priorities of the Area Lettings Plan are being implemented, and to review the Plan on an area basis.

The existing plan was developed as part of the implementation of MyHomeChoice. The priorities have been reviewed and will change to reflect future lettings in particular an increase in new build properties.

2. Strategic priorities

The Fylde Coast Housing Strategy 2009 sets out the overall challenges and priorities for providing Fylde Coast residents with a great place to live – both in terms of individual homes that meet households' needs at a price that they can afford, and in providing attractive residential neighbourhood environments where people can lead fulfilling and productive

lives. There are three objectives that particularly need to be taken into account in framing Area Lettings Plans:

- provide more of the affordable homes that are in the highest demand
- reduce concentrations of deprivation on large social housing estates by improving the neighbourhood environments, re-developing unpopular housing stock, and diversifying tenures
- provide new opportunities for people at risk of homelessness, and those without work, to make a positive contribution to the local community

Social rented housing plays a small but important role within the whole housing market. Along with private rented housing subsidised through Housing Benefit, it provides homes that are affordable to people on low incomes, and is therefore critical in meeting a fundamental need for a significant proportion of the local population. Social rented homes offer security of tenure, low rents that people can afford without further assistance if they are in low paid work, accommodation at Decent Homes standards, and reliable standards of management and repair. The Fylde Coast Housing Strategy sets out the need for the provision of additional social rented properties because the existing stock of socially rented homes cannot meet the high demand.

Despite efforts to provide more new homes, a shortage of social rented homes, will continue for the foreseeable future. This means that difficult decisions have to be made to prioritise who gets access to a limited resource. It also means that we need to be using existing social rented homes to their full potential, and it may be appropriate to use the allocations scheme to help people who want to move out of social rented homes that are larger than they need (“under-occupying”) to smaller homes.

Issues and actions in Fylde?

It should be noted that the Fylde Coast Housing Strategy 2009 has come to the end of its lifespan and will be refreshed. It should be noted that the issues below may be changed or added to:

Fylde’s more detailed issues and priorities for action from the Fylde Action Plan include:

- The shortage of available social rented accommodation compared with demand is especially high in Fylde. We need to carefully manage expectations and offer alternative options.
- Younger people are not being attracted to Fylde, nor persuaded to stay; the high cost of housing is driving them out of the area.
- Sustainability of rural communities / services
- Large and growing population of older people - making effective use of properties suitable for people with mobility problems / close to support services
- Establish a plan for changing the balance of specialist support for older people – may become appropriate to widen access to properties currently designated as sheltered if support is increasingly provided wherever people live rather than focused on designated accommodation.

- Agree and deliver plans for meeting the housing needs of people requiring long term care, including people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities -
- We need to provide opportunities for people in specialist supported accommodation to move on to general needs properties when they no longer need specialist support.

Appendix 1 contains an analysis of current applicants registered on MyHomeChoice for 2015/16.

3. Fylde Coast Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Within Fylde there are a significant number of detached properties, particularly in the rural areas, while there has been substantial delivery of flats in Lytham & St Annes such that almost 90% of the borough's flatted stock is located within this area.

Overall, with regards to tenure, owner occupation levels are high, while in the context of national levels the proportion of social rented stock is low. Whilst the proportion of private rented stock is lower than in Blackpool, there are higher concentrations in the urban areas. The housing stock is typically relatively large in Fylde, with larger dwellings historically delivered in the rural areas in particular, and coupled with an older population, there is a relatively high level of under-occupation. House prices are high in Fylde, relative to the rest of the Fylde Coast, with properties on average invoking a premium of at least £40,000 over comparable properties elsewhere, and areas of the borough remain among the least affordable in the Fylde Coast.

For Fylde, if the economy is to grow, there will need to be in migration of working age people to replace the large numbers of people who are going to retire in the period to 2032. New housing will be needed to accommodate these people. The SHMA across the Fylde Coast was first published in February 2014 and updated in November 2014 following an updated analysis of housing need in light of the 2012 Sub National Population Projections. The SHMA forms part of the evidence base of the Emerging Local Plan to 2032¹.

For Fylde, the 2012 Sub National Housing Projections project an increase of 4,641 households over the period 2011 – 2032, equivalent to an average of 221 new households per annum over this period, this is translated into a modelled need for approximately 237 dwellings per annum. Historic market conditions, including slightly worsening affordability and historic under-provision of housing against plan targets, in Fylde are likely to have impacted upon projections of household formation rates of selected younger households groups. Therefore need for affordable housing remains high at 247 dpa, this suggests the need to ensure that the level of provision is uplifted in relation to basic demographic derived demand to ensure the balance between supply and demand does not exacerbate affordability issues.

¹ <http://www.fylde.gov.uk/council/planning-policy--local-plan-/local-development-framework/evidence-base/>

4. Supported People Funding

Lancashire County Council identified £4million of savings to the Supporting People budget implemented April 2015. Various client groups within the Supporting People Programme have had budgets cut including funding for sheltered housing to be reduced by £2.5million. The County council need to deliver £176 million of savings by April 2018. All areas of the County Council are considering budget options therefore further funding cuts to Supporting People cannot be ruled out. To note Supporting People budget funds the support costs for people who are eligible for assistance whilst housing benefit funds the housing element. This proposal relates to the support element only for sheltered residents.

On the 16th November 2015 the LCC published proposals to deliver further savings of £65m over the next 2 years and on the 11th February 2016 LCC full Council made its decision to approve budget proposals to deliver further savings.

The Proposals to cease non-statutory element of Supporting People funding

- Cease the non-statutory element of the Supporting People service from 1st April 2016
- Revenue funding to be provided to support homeless 16 and 17 year olds (current proposal approx. half of current SP funding for young people's services)
- Use £10.15m reserves in 16/17 to fund the 12 month 'transition period' to enable appropriate cessation of Supporting People contracts/arrangements
- Apply waivers, as appropriate, to Supporting People contracts during the transition period
- Where contracts are in place until March 2017 or beyond, contracts will cease on 31st March 2017
- Appropriate notice will be given for services/contracts which expire on a date after March 2017 to bring them to an end on 31st March 2017

A report was taken to Environmental Health and Housing Committee, Fylde BC on the 5th January 2015 that detailed the proposals announced on the 5th November 2015 by Lancashire County Council (LCC), to cease the non-statutory element of the Supporting People Funding from the 1st April 2015 as part of measures to deliver further savings of £65m over the next 2 years.

The Committee expressed concerns in the strongest possible terms regarding the removal of the proposed funding. Fylde BC held an event on the 22nd January 2016 that brought together Service Providers, Fylde BC Housing Benefit and Homelessness and Housing Advice teams and Supported People Team at Lancashire County Council to consider the implications on services within Fylde and direct impact on service providers. The findings from the session were split into two Parts and have been used to inform a full consultation response sent to Lancashire County Council that is intended to gather views about the budget proposals and any ideas or concerns respondents had, running from 05/04/2016 to 24/06/2016;

- Part I considers the wider implications on service provision for vulnerable adults within Fylde and transitional arrangements prior to the funding being withdrawn

completely in March 2017 and alternative options available to provide the service and support required.

- Part 2 gives information on the direct impact on service providers as a result of the funding being withdrawn for non-statutory services.

Implications from withdrawal of SP funded services in Fylde

- Will affect the most vulnerable people
- Housing Benefit unable to fund service charges
- Increase in homelessness within Fylde with more vulnerable clients in crisis approaching the local authority
- Joint working between service providers will be affected as services become over stretched organisations from a resource planning perspective will need to consider what they can realistically provide with the funding and paid or voluntary resources available to them.
- Accommodation based services will be lost
- Purpose built single use buildings once used for accommodation based services will need to be reconfigured, then cannot be reinstated.
- Shift from long term funding to short term annual funding will impact on resource planning with services being spot purchased based on individual needs
- Ultimately there will be a loss of skilled staff and service restructuring.

5. Area Lettings Plan 2016-2017

In Fylde, priority will be given to applicants who have a local connection to the borough of Fylde, either through current residence or work. This will be achieved through the following mechanism.

When deciding eligibility applicants must be able to show they have a local connection. Applicants have a local connection if they can demonstrate one of the following:-

- Local residency – they have lived in local authority of Fylde consecutively for the last three years
- Permanent employment in the area of Fylde
- Close family association – has a parent, adult child, adult brother or sister who is living in the area of Fylde and has done for the last 5 years
- Applicants who are serving in the Armed Forces and who are either employed or are resident in the area of Fylde
- Former armed forces personnel who had a previous residence in the area of Fylde as a result of a former posting in the area of Fylde within the last 5 years
- Homeless applicants where there is a statutory duty to provide housing by Fylde Borough Council.

For priority when bidding, there are 3 levels of priority:

1. Connection to the local authority
2. Connection to the Fylde Coast
3. No connection to either of the above (Armed forces only)

This means that - for example - in Fylde properties will be offered to those with a Fylde connection first and then will only be made available to people from the other two authorities if no one with a qualifying Fylde connection, as outlined above has bid for the property. The property will then only be made available to people outside Fylde Coast area if no one from the three local authority areas has bid.

This means that generally properties will be allocated as follows:

- Band A – Local connection (e.g. Fylde)
- Band B – Local connection (e.g. Fylde)
- Band C – Local connection (e.g. Fylde)
- Band D – Local connection (e.g. Fylde)
- Band E – Local connection (e.g. Fylde)
- Band F – Local connection (e.g. Fylde)
- Band A – Partner connection (e.g. Blackpool and Wyre)
- Band B – Partner connection (e.g. Blackpool and Wyre)
- Band C – Partner connection (e.g. Blackpool and Wyre)
- Band D – Partner connection (e.g. Blackpool and Wyre)
- Band E – Partner connection (e.g. Blackpool and Wyre)

Band F – Partner connection (e.g. Blackpool and Wyre)

6. Section 106 Agreements

The 2015-16 Area Lettings Plan noted that the priority for bidding is not aligned to current S106 agreements which only allow lettings to those with a Fylde connection; the aim of the plan was to resolve this anomaly. The Environment Health and Housing committee made a recommendation to the Development Management Committee in September 2015 which was discussed in detail. The Development Management Committee resolved that future S106 agreements should not reflect occupancy restrictions as set out in the local lettings policy. It was resolved to engage with representatives of registered social landlords to help feed into a review of policy for truly affordable housing.

7. Low demand issues

The 2015-16 plan noted low demand for some properties in particular sheltered housing. On the 14th May 2015 a MyHomeChoice Operational Group meeting was called to discuss issues emerging with the letting of properties across the Fylde Coast. One approach the group was in favour of was piloting letting a percentage of properties outside of MHC in order to attract a different client group.

The group were unanimous in favour of this approach for the following reasons:

- Potential economies of scale doing this as a partnership
- It would allow partners to compete directly with the private rented sector and raise the profile of Social Housing
- There is an opportunity to attract new customers – balance communities
- The changes through “Right to Move” will allow an element of wider Local Connection eligibility for households with an offer or employment

However there was discussion around some areas of concern in particular the need to ensure that statutory allocation requirements are met (reasonable preference) and the need to ensure that statutory guidance is considered, for example transparency as to who gets social housing in the area.

On the 17th June 2015 a separate meeting was arranged with the Fylde Coast Housing Providers to work up the parameters of the pilot.

- A need to comply with local connection to each authority
- Possible flexibility around other prioritization of need
- Opportunities to attract new customers, and enable applicants to find somewhere quickly
- Ensure that the process is transparent for all partners to be clear on what is expected

- A need to meet statutory requirements to house people in housing need, by demonstrating that a majority of lets go to people in a 'reasonable preference' category
- It was agreed in principal to pilot a new approach to letting a proportion of properties outside of MHC for 3-6 months
- Proposed that 10-25% of lettings are completed outside MHC
- RSLs would be given some freedom to define which properties to let outside of MHC but it was required that a report be brought back to the partnership detailing which properties were let and to whom.
- A need for clear monitoring arrangements

Results

A summary of the main findings:

- Pilot ran from 1st July to 31st December 2015
- Local connection applied in all cases
- It was for historically hard to let properties
- It was used to gauge demand in traditionally low demand areas
- All properties were let to households with a local connection to Fylde
- Methods used – Rightmove, McDonalds, Moving Soon
- Majority of properties were Upper Floor Flats
- It attracted households who would not traditionally register for social landlord stock
- It attracted employed households
- The majority of lets demonstrated housing need

8. Moving forward on low demand issues

Within Fylde it is accepted that the ability to be able to advertise properties outside of the Choice Based lettings scheme allows for greater flexibility when allocating properties to applicants.

The results of the pilot have been reviewed and the ability to advertise properties outside of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme will be presented to members for their approval. It is proposed that this amendment could start once a new Partnership Agreement is signed.

When RSLs are operating within Fylde and adopting to use the flexibility of letting outside of MHC Fylde Coast, the following criteria is proposed:

- Properties should always be advertised for one bidding round on MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast.
- The local connection criteria is applied in all cases
- It is used in historically hard to let areas or hard to let property types and/or in areas where historically there has been limited affordable housing provision
- Applicants will need to demonstrate a housing need

- It can only be used for 25% of lettings
- All partners will be asked for lettings details on a quarterly basis

If this proposal is approved by Members it will be reviewed after year one. It is important to note that this proposal is one tool available in attracting new customers to MyHomeChoice. The pilot has highlighted a gap in the advertising and marketing of MyHomeChoice which will need to be addressed over the coming months.

9. Scheme / Area specific lettings restrictions

In some parts of the borough, or for some specialist housing stock, there is a need to have further restrictions on who can live there. These restrictions will be made clear to people on the waiting list when these properties are advertised.

Broadly, there are two types of restrictions:

a). Where priority is given to applicants from particular localities, rather than to people from the whole of the borough (or wider Fylde Coast). This is especially the case in rural areas where affordable housing has been built on the understanding that priority will be given to people from the immediate local area. In some cases, these restrictions are legally enforceable through Section 106 Agreements signed when the homes were given planning approval. The areas of Fylde that have such restrictions are:

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Willowfieds Wesham | S106 local connection to Kirkham or Wesham required. Widest connection is to Fylde | NFH |
| Crossing Gates Wesham | S106 local connection to Kirkham or Wesham required. Widest connection is to Fylde | Muir |
| Clifton Drive North St Annes | S106 first preference to people with a connection to Lytham or ST Annes. Widest connection is to Fylde | Great Places Housing Group |
| Mythop Road Weeton | S106 local connection to Parish of Weeton-with-Preese required. Then connections to Staining, Greenhalgh, Medlar with Wesham and Westby will be considered. | NFH |
| Lytham Quays Lytham | S106 local connection to Lytham or St Annes (current residence, employment, give/receive care). Widest connection to Fylde | Great Places Housing Group |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Rock Works St Annes | S106 local connection to Fylde | Great Places Housing Group |
| The Close Kirkham | S106 local connection to Parish of Medlar with Wesham or Kirkham. Widest connection to Fylde | NFH |
| Wrea Green | S106 local connection to Ribby-with-Wrea Parish | Great Places |
| Orders Lane | S106 local connection to the Parish of Medlar with Wesham or Kirkham and age restriction 40 years+ or disabled. | NFH |
| Yew Tree Gardens Whitehills Westby | S106 local connection to Westby, Staining, Weeton, Wrea Green, Warton, Lytham St Annes. After 6 weeks can be offered to a Fylde connection | Muir |
| Harbour Lance Warton | S106 local connection to Freckleton or Warton. After 6 months can be offered to a Fylde connection | NFH |
| Chain Lane, Staining | S106 local connection to Staining. In the event that after a reasonable time as agreed by the local authority, there are no qualifying persons meeting the criteria for local connection can be offered to a Fylde connection. Reasonable time 3 letting cycles or 3 weeks. | ForViva |

b). Where eligibility for certain types of housing is restricted by age, type of household, or health conditions. Within the current stock there are a number of ground floor properties and adapted properties. Priority for these properties will be given to people with a specific ground floor need and or a need for an adapted property.

The social housing in Fylde that has these types of restriction is:

| | | |
|-----------------|--|----------|
| Saltcotes Place | Local Lettings Plan implemented by New Fylde Housing | Progress |
|-----------------|--|----------|

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------|
| Heyhouses Rigby Court | As part of the planning consent the upper floor flats are to be let to people aged 55+. The Ground floor flats are to be let to people who are disabled with no age limit set. | Progress |
| Orders Lane Kirkham | As part of the planning consent the upper floor flats will be let to a person aged 40+. For couples the age of the eldest tenant will be taken into account. Ground floor flats will be let to applicants with a need for an adapted property or specific ground floor need | Progress |
| Heyhouses mobility bungalows | As part of the planning consent 4 fully adapted bungalows are available. They will be let to applicants with the appropriate need e.g. full wheelchair users | Progress |

10. Rural Lettings – existing stock

There are properties located in Little Eccleston, Elswick, Greenhalgh, Singleton, Weeton, Clifton, Newton, Staining, Wrea Green, Salwick and Singleton and are considered to be rural lettings. These properties require a local connection to the parish which includes current residence in the parish, family residing in the parish, the need to give or receive care in the parish, or other long standing connection. Therefore properties in these areas will be allocated as follows

(Local Plan period to 2032 divides rural settlements into Tier 1 Larger Rural Settlements: i.e. Newton, Staining and Wrea Green or Tier 2 Smaller Rural Settlements: i.e. Clifton, Elswick, Singleton and Weeton)

Band A – Local connection (Parish)

Band B – Local connection (Parish)

Band C – Local connection (Parish)

Band D – Local connection (Parish)

Band E – Local connection (Parish)

Band F – Local connection (Parish)

Band A – Local connection (Fylde)

Band B – Local connection (Fylde)

Band C – Local connection (Fylde)

Band D – Local connection (Fylde)

Band E – Local connection (Fylde)

Band F – Local connection (Fylde)

Band A – Partner connection (Blackpool and Wyre)

Band B – Partner connection (Blackpool and Wyre)

Band C – Partner connection (Blackpool and Wyre)

Band D – Partner connection (Blackpool and Wyre)

Band E – Partner connection (Blackpool and Wyre)

Band F – Partner connection (Blackpool and Wyre)

Appendix 1**MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast**

As of the 31st December 2015 there were 945 active applicants for re-housing on the Register as detailed in Table 1. Of the year 15/16 to December 2015, 126 applicants had been housed.

Table 1: Status of registered applicants

| Application Status | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Active | 922 | 944 | 945 | 975 |
| Cancelled | 246 | 8 | 38 | 151 |
| Closed | 179 | 59 | 83 | 32 |
| Enquiries Complete | 100 | 120 | 160 | 260 |
| Housed | 23 | 70 | 33 | 34 |
| Online Application Complete | 7 | 0 | 29 | 63 |
| Online Application Incomplete | 98 | 103 | 80 | 107 |
| Pending Enquiries | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Requesting Closure | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Suspended | 102 | 115 | 97 | 96 |
| Under Review Active | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Under Review Suspended | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 1680 | 1424 | 1469 | 1723 |

Table 2 illustrates the majority of applicants are Housing Register applicants with 14% being Transfer applicants.

Table 2: Application types

| Type | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q2, Q3 Change |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
| Homeless Applicant | 0.37% | 0.23% | 0.30% | 0.27% | -0.02% |
| Housing Register | 82.04% | 82.41% | 80.68% | 79.18% | -1.5% |
| Transfer Applicant | 15.49% | 15.61% | 14.88% | 13.79% | -1.09% |
| Blank | 2.10% | 1.75% | 4.15% | 6.76% | 2.61% |

Of these applicants the majority are tenants of a private landlord 528, with 278 being transfer applicants from their current Housing Association tenancy. Numbers living with friends or relatives and stating they have No Fixed Abode has remained fairly static over the year.

Table 3: Who owns your current accommodation?

| Owner of Accommodation | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| I am the Owner | 146 | 154 | 152 | 153 |
| Living with Friends/Others | 32 | 30 | 34 | 36 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Living with Relatives | 130 | 119 | 122 | 132 |
| No Fixed Abode | 24 | 23 | 21 | 28 |
| Occupier/Leaseholder | 18 | 18 | 25 | 25 |
| Other (please state) | 70 | 73 | 70 | 72 |
| Shared Ownership | 15 | 17 | 18 | 16 |
| Social Services | 6 | 8 | 8 | 10 |
| Tenant of a Private Landlord | 511 | 502 | 528 | 590 |
| Tenant of Council | 47 | 47 | 53 | 58 |
| Tenant of Housing Association | 288 | 277 | 278 | 303 |
| Tied Accommodation | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Blank | 41 | 37 | 35 | 34 |
| Total | 1336 | 1313 | 1351 | 1465 |

Table 4 details the number of people in each household requiring accommodation. Currently within Fylde there are significant single and two person households. Demand for three and four bedroom accommodation remains high, with accommodation for 5+ bedrooms being less. Therefore within the borough and the period of this lettings plan there is a need to secure one and two bedroom accommodation.

Table 4: Number of household members

| No. of Household Members | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | 564 | 570 | 567 | 615 |
| 2 | 393 | 384 | 403 | 445 |
| 3 | 202 | 183 | 193 | 100 |
| 4 | 101 | 100 | 109 | 115 |
| 5 | 50 | 49 | 53 | 64 |
| 6 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 14 |
| 7 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10+ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blank | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 1336 | 1313 | 1351 | |

Table 5 gives the breakdown for households by banding. Applicants are assessed and a priority banding awarded based on their current circumstances. MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast uses 6 Bands to demonstrate housing need – A to F, with Band A being the highest priority. All applicants have to be able to demonstrate a local connection to Fylde. Further explanation of housing circumstances that determine banding are provided in Appendix 1.

Table 5: Banding for Active applicants

| Band | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A | 6 | 7 | 7 | 8 |

| | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| B | 106 | 98 | 105 | 110 |
| C | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| D | 126 | 129 | 133 | 137 |
| E | 176 | 185 | 185 | 187 |
| F | 505 | 521 | 511 | 528 |
| No Band | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Blank | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 922 | 944 | 945 | 975 |

Table 6 analyses the number of active applicants that are employed. Band E is specifically for applicants working, employed or voluntary. Band B and Band D determine a fairly high need for re-housing, and has just under 30% of employed households within each banding. This level of need amongst employed households would justify development of low cost home ownership tenures within the borough.

Table 6: Active applicants that are employed

| Fylde Coast | A | B | C | D | E | F | No Band | Total |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Employed | 0 | 29 | 0 | 44 | 169 | 99 | 0 | 341 |
| Active Applications | 8 | 110 | 4 | 137 | 187 | 528 | 0 | 975 |
| %age | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 0.00% | 26.36% | 0.00% | 32.12% | 90.37% | 18.75% | 0.00% | |

Table 7 illustrates that the majority of households requiring affordable accommodation are age between 26 and 49. Households under the age of 35 would have been affected by the changes to the Welfare Reform Measures, where if in receipt of housing benefit they would only be eligible for the shared room rate of £61.50 per week. This may make housing association and many private sector tenancies unaffordable.

Table 7: Age group of main applicant.

| Age Group | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 16-18 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| 19-25 | 147 | 123 | 121 | 125 |
| 26-40 | 378 | 358 | 384 | 436 |
| 41-59 | 414 | 426 | 431 | 467 |
| 60-65 | 109 | 107 | 118 | 119 |
| 66-74 | 136 | 146 | 148 | 158 |
| 75+ | 149 | 151 | 147 | 155 |
| Blank | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 1336 | 1313 | 1351 | 1465 |

During Quarters 1 to 3 2015/16 137 properties were let by 424 offers/bids made which averages out per let to 3 bids per property. The table below illustrates the numbers of properties let.

| Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 11 | 3 | 8 | 13 | 33 | 31 | 10 | 6 | 22 | 10 | 13 | 20 |

Table 8a and 8b illustrates bids by property type and number of bedrooms required. In Quarters 1 and 2 there was a high number of bids for one and two bed roomed accommodation which were flats, which lessens off in Quarter 3. There are still sufficient bids being received for three bedroom accommodation.

Table 8a: Bids by property type

| Property Type | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Bedsit/Studio | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheltered Bedsit / Studio | 4 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Bungalow | 131 | 107 | 45 | 50 |
| Sheltered Bungalow | 49 | 32 | 6 | 19 |
| Flat | 236 | 446 | 128 | 201 |
| Multi-storey Flat | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheltered Flat | 79 | 67 | 54 | 42 |
| House | 352 | 384 | 295 | 230 |
| Sheltered House | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Maisonette | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheltered Maisonette | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 855 | 1041 | 528 | 549 |

Table 8b: Bids by number of bedrooms required

| Min Bedrooms Required | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Studio | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| 1 Bed | 332 | 421 | 131 | 229 |
| 2 Bed | 302 | 378 | 182 | 239 |
| 3 Bed | 209 | 236 | 204 | 72 |
| 4 Bed | 8 | 5 | 8 | 4 |
| 5 Bed | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| 6+ Beds | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 855 | 1041 | 528 | 549 |

Appendix 2

Priority Bands

Each application is assessed and the applicant(s) will be awarded a priority band according to their current circumstances. The scheme uses 6 Bands – A to F, with Band A being the highest priority.

BAND A

The main group in Band A are:

- Homeless applicants where there is a statutory duty to provide housing by Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Borough Council

Other applicants to be placed in this band must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following ...

- Be a vulnerable person, who faces imminent discharge from hospital or temporary residential care and for whom there is no suitable accommodation to return to
- At the discretion of *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast*, have exceptional circumstances including being in immediate danger, for example, of physical violence

BAND B

To be placed in this band, applicants must be able to demonstrate one of the following:

- Occupy a property where category 1 hazards have been identified by Environmental Services and in relation to which the landlord has failed to take the required action
- Live in a property, which one of the Partner Organisations requires to be demolished or vacated
- Are an existing tenant of a partner within the Fylde Coast area who under-occupies their existing house and is looking to move to a smaller, more suitable property. This also applies to applicants no longer in need of a property with a disabled adaptation. (This will only apply if the under occupation has arisen after the start of the tenancy, e.g. because some people in the household have moved out.)
- Need to move because of urgent medical or disability reasons and there is a medical assessment that current housing conditions are having a serious detrimental impact on the applicant or members of the applicant's household's health or ability to live independently. The assessment will consider the applicant's (or member of the household included in the application) medical condition, the effect their property has on that condition and how moving to an alternative property could help that condition.
- Armed Forces Personnel, who are currently serving or have served in the last five years who need to move and meet one or more criteria from Band D
- Need to move because of urgent social or welfare reasons. This can include but is not limited to:

- the likelihood of admission to residential care or hospital if not re-housed
- the likelihood of a child being accommodated by the Local Authority if not rehoused
- the need to give or receive essential care and support.
- Have a serious risk of harm in their present accommodation. This can include but is not limited to:
 - victims of domestic abuse, serious harassment including racial or homophobic, crime,
 - serious anti social behaviour and witnesses of crime
- Are in a priority need group as outlined in the section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 and as amended in the legal provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002 and are potentially homeless through no fault of their own. This priority will only be awarded by the relevant Local Authority once evidence has been verified and the applicant is co-operating with the local authority to prevent their homelessness.
- Are unintentionally overcrowded in their current accommodation and in need of 2 or more additional bedrooms.
- Leaving Local Authority Care from the relevant Local Authority with appropriate tenancy support where there is a statutory duty to provide housing under the Leaving Care Act 2000.
- Are rough sleeping, threatened with or have a history of rough sleeping and are supported and referred by the Housing Teams of Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Borough Council
- Currently living in supported housing or rehabilitation and are ready for independent living as agreed by the provider and tenancy support (as appropriate) is in place, if required.

BAND C

To be placed in this band, applicants must be able to demonstrate ...

- Meet more than one criterion from Band D

BAND D

To be placed in this band, applicants must be able to demonstrate one of the following ...

- Need to move because of medical or disability reasons. This is because there is a medical assessment that current housing conditions are affecting the health or ability to live independently but there is no serious detrimental impact. The assessment will consider the applicant's (or member of the household included in the application) medical condition, the effect their property has on that condition and how moving to an alternative property can help that condition.
- Need to move because of social or welfare reasons, which can include but is not limited to:

- Applicants who need to move to a particular locality within the borough to avoid hardship to themselves or others
- Occupy a property where Category 2 hazards have been identified by Environmental Services and the landlord has failed to take the required action.
- Are unintentionally overcrowded in their current accommodation and in need of one additional bedroom
- Are assessed by Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Borough Council as being homeless but there is no priority need for housing
- Are assessed by Blackpool Council, Fylde Borough Council or Wyre Borough Council as being intentionally homeless and there is no statutory duty to re-house
- Currently reside in supported accommodation or rehabilitation and are not yet ready for independent living and have no tenancy support in place.
- Armed Forces personnel, who are currently serving or have served in the last five years and meet the local connection criteria.

BAND E

To be placed in this band, applicants entering must be able to demonstrate one of the following ...

- At least one adult member of the household is in employment either in the local areas or elsewhere.
- At least one adult member of the household is contributing to the community through voluntary work.

The Common Assessment Policy (CAP) Appendix 3 provides a definition of working households and community contribution as follows:

Working for 16 hours per week or more. The employment must have been held for a minimum of 6 months prior to the application for the award in order to be eligible. It should be noted that this must be confirmed at point of application and evidenced at point of offer.

Choosing to give your time to benefit other people without being paid for it for example completing voluntary work in a charity, voluntary organisation or community group, public sector organisation (local council), a social enterprise or a local business. The voluntary work must have been held for a minimum of 6 months prior to the application for the award in order to be eligible. It should be noted that this must be confirmed at point of application and evidenced at point of offer.

Further information is available from:

<https://www.myhomechoicefyldecoast.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/176.aspx>

BAND F

This Band is for applicants who can demonstrate:

- Are adequately housed and are therefore in no housing need
- Who do not meet any of the criteria within the bands above
- Who are currently suspended due to meeting the suspension criteria

- Awaiting a decision on a homeless application

This Band is also for applicants who are:

- Armed Forces personnel, who are currently serving or have served in the last five years who cannot demonstrate a local connection.

Changes to how you access social housing in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre

Blackpool, Fylde, and Wyre Councils, together with local housing associations, are proposing to make some changes to how people find and are offered social housing in the area. We want to make the My Home Choice Fylde Coast system easier to use and fairer, and we want to know your views.

How are things working now?

There are currently 6,000 people who are registered on the My Home Choice Fylde Coast system but only 2,200 have high priority (Bands A-D) because they have the greatest housing need.

Last year just under 1,200 social rented homes were let through the system, with 64% of homes let to people in Bands A-D and 36% let to everyone else.

What do we want to change?

While we can't easily make more homes available, we want to make it quicker and easier for you to find the home that you are looking for. We plan to upgrade the system and reduce the amount of information that we ask for. Homes will be advertised as soon as they are available rather than all being advertised at the same time each week.

We also want to make some changes to how we prioritise people for our homes:

One local connection to the Fylde Coast

This means that local residents who have moved between the three Fylde Coast boroughs will now be able to get onto the housing register when previously they may not have met the local connection requirement. But priority will still be given to Blackpool residents for Blackpool homes, Fylde residents for Fylde homes, and Wyre residents for Wyre homes.

Two ways of letting homes

The new system will offer at least 50% of homes, including those in the shortest supply, only to people in Bands A-C; each of these homes will be offered to the "bidder" with the highest priority. The rest of the homes will be available to everyone on the list and offered on a first come first served basis.

This is designed to ensure that people in the greatest need still have access to the most homes, while offering opportunities to everyone who needs to move quickly to find a suitable home as soon as it is available. There is a target that across the whole system two thirds of lettings will go to people in Bands A-C.

Three Priority bands

We plan to simplify the priority bands for people with a legally defined housing need so that there are only three bands, with the current bands C and D now becoming a single band C. There will be no bands given to everyone else, making application simpler, while still allowing everyone to bid on first come first served homes.

Existing social housing tenants can only use the system if they have a housing need

We want to prioritise new applicants who are not already housed in social housing. Social housing tenants who **do** have a good reason to move because their situation has changed will still be given a priority band and be able to use the system to find a new home.

Some homes will be offered with priority to people in paid or voluntary work

We want to encourage people in work to access social housing, and propose that 20% of homes made available on a first come first served basis will be offered with priority to people in paid or voluntary work.

More flexibility to get a home with an extra bedroom

Instead of only allowing you to express an interest in a home that meets your household's minimum needs, we want you to be able to get a home that has more space, as long as the rent is affordable to you. We hope that this will make social housing attractive to a wider range of people.

The full draft new Policy is available at

Tell Us What You Think

You can tell us what you think by using the on-line survey at

Or, complete a survey form and return it to

Please let us have your views by Friday 8th December 2017 so that we can take them into account in the new system.

The new system will be developed and tested in the first part of 2018, and is expected to go live in September 2018. The current policy and system will continue to operate until then.

My Home Choice Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree with the revised local connection requirement?

Yes No

Any comments

2. Do you agree with the introduction of two ways of letting?

Yes No

Any comments

3. Do you agree with how applicants are awarded a priority band?

Yes No

Any comments

4. Do you agree with restrictions on the use of the system by existing social housing tenants?

Yes No

Any comments

5. Do you agree with the proposed priority for working applicants for some homes?

Yes No

Any comments

6. Do you agree with giving more flexibility in the size of properties that applicants can bid for?

Yes No

Any comments

7. Do you think that, overall, the proposed new arrangements will enable us to make the best use of the social housing stock in the area?

Yes No

Any comments

MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast Consultation Plan
November to December 2017

Consultation by:

'MyhomeChoiceFyldeCoast' is the Choice Based Lettings scheme which operates across the Fylde Coast region. Blackpool, Fylde, and Wyre Councils, together with local housing associations.

Consultation will be carried out with anyone who lives or works in the Blackpool, Fylde or Wyre areas and any organisations or professionals with an interest in this issue.

| Organisation | Approach |
|---|----------|
| Members of the public visiting local authority and housing association offices | C |
| Applicants currently registered on MHC | A |
| Website link to documents and survey on all Fylde Coast Housing Providers website, local authority website and MyHomeChoice website | A |
| CAB Fylde and Wyre | A |
| F2F Fylde Coast YMCA | A |
| Salvation Army | A |
| Creative Support | A |
| Fulfilling Lives | A |
| Health and Well Being Service | A |
| Progress Housing Group | A |
| Great Places | A |
| Age Concern | A |
| Blackpool Coastal Housing | A |
| Home Start Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre | A |
| Street Life | A |
| Ashley Foundation | A |
| Langley House Trust | |
| Muir | A |
| Community Gateway | A |
| Places for People | A |
| DelphiMedical | A |
| For Viva | A |
| Caritas Care | A |
| Addaction | A |
| Inspire | A |
| Ashley Foundation | A |
| Key Youth Charity | A |
| DISC | A |
| Lancashire County Council Complex Needs Team | A |
| LCC Children's Services | A |
| LCC Adult Services | A |
| Blackpool Council Children's Services | A |
| Blackpool Council Adult Services | A |
| Probation | A |
| Revolution | A |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Richmond Fellowship | A |
| Barnardos | A |
| Fylde Coast Women's Aid | A |
| DWP | A |
| Housing Benefits | A |

Aim of consultation:

To decide what changes will be made to the Consistent Assessment Policy (CAP) to how people find and are offered social housing in the area.

Method of consultation

- A. A letter and/or email with a doc link to electronic version on Fylde BC and MHC Fylde Coast websites of the document and questionnaire detailing the proposed changes.
- B. Proposed changes to be taken to the Members of the three local authorities.
- C. Hard copies of the leaflet and questionnaire to be available from customer service counters on request at each local authority and housing association offices.
- D. Other responses to the proposals can be made via email addresses of contact officers for the three local authorities.
- E. The Fylde BC Communications Team will be involved in putting out a press release to raise awareness of the consultation process in liaison with their counterparts in Blackpool and Wyre.

Results will be available

Closing date for responses will be the TBC December 2017. Following the consultation period the final draft of the allocations policy will be developed taking in to account the views and wishes of those responding.

A summary of responses will be prepared and made available via the councils' websites and awareness of this will again be raised through all the registered providers and the local media.

Consultation period

The consultation period will run between November and December 2017.

DECISION ITEM

| REPORT OF | MEETING | DATE | ITEM NO |
|--|--|-----------------|---------|
| DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE | ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE | 7 NOVEMBER 2017 | 5 |
| HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2018 | | | |

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

This report provides

- a. An overview on the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) gained Royal Assent on 27th April 2017 and will be implemented by Local Housing Authorities across England from 1st April 2018. The HRA will significantly reform England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'.

These include:

- a. An enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage;
- b. A new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
- c. The financial support available to local authorities to support the wider statutory responsibilities created by the Act and the new initiatives that Fylde Council has, or is proposing to, put in place to support its new range of statutory responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the new provisions within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 and, in particular the extended range of statutory homelessness duties the Council is obliged to perform under the new Act.
2. To note the new initiatives Fylde Council are intending to introduce with the additional financial support that has been made available by Government to support Local Housing Authorities in implementing the Homeless Reduction Act 2018.
3. To recommend to Council approval of a fully-funded revenue budget increase for the total sum of £122,900. £98,862 funded by DCLG Flexible Homeless Grant and £26,038 funded by DCLG New Burdens Funding.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

| | |
|--|---|
| Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money) | ✓ |
| Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green) | ✓ |
| Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy) | ✓ |
| To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live) | |
| Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit) | |

REPORT

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

1. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 gained Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. The Act follows the introduction of similar legislation in Wales and places new responsibilities on local authorities to provide advice and assistance to prevent and endeavour to relieve homelessness, regardless of priority need, at an earlier stage.
2. The HRA will significantly reform England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:
 - a) An enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage;
 - b) A new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
3. On 16th October 2017 the Draft Homelessness Code of Guidance was issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for consultation to local housing authorities in England under section 182 of the Housing Act 1996. In accordance with section 182 (1) of the 1996 Act, housing authorities are required to have due regard to this statutory guidance in exercising their functions relating to homelessness and prevention of homelessness.
4. In 2016/17 Fylde BC completed 84 homeless applications and all of these households were found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Prior to taking a Homeless Application households would have worked with the Authority through the preventative housing advice route to avoid the need for a homeless application. In 2016/17 we dealt with 355 cases for housing advice. Of these households, homelessness was prevented in 31 cases as they were able to remain within their own home and 31 households were assisted to find alternative accommodation prior to becoming homeless.
5. At the end of Quarter 2 2017/18 we have dealt with 132 requests for housing advice and taken 37 applications from households applying to the local authority as homeless.

Homelessness Services introduced by the HRA 2018

6. National Practitioner Support Service has been working with local authorities in advance of the HRA and have produced a diagrammatic chart of support provided to Customers. The chart is available in Appendix 1. The key points to note are as follows:

7. Under current legislation local authorities have a duty to take a homeless application and consider its statutory duties to any household approaching the local authority for assistance who is threatened with homelessness within 28 days; under the new Act this period is extended to 56 days.
8. The new Act places a requirement for local authorities to support everyone to prevent homelessness and/or obtain alternative accommodation (homelessness relief) regardless of 'priority need' as defined by the existing legislation – Housing Act 1996 part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. For those not in 'priority need', the current duty is for the authority is to use its best endeavours to provide accommodation but no formal duty to do so.
9. Local authorities will be obliged to agree a personal housing plan with **all** customers threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The plan will set out the action that need to be taken by both the authority and the customer to prevent and/or relieve homelessness. It will need to include an assessment of the applicant's support needs and tailor the plan accordingly.
10. The 56 days before the applicant becomes homeless is badged as the 'prevention phase' of the duty but, depending on what is agreed in the personal housing plan, this does not prevent the local authority and the applicant from agreeing that a homelessness relief option is preferable at this stage. Either way, the agreed solution should have a 'reasonable prospect' of being available for at least 6 months.
11. If, after the expiration of the 56 days, a solution has not been found and the applicant becomes homeless the 'relief' phase of the duty begins. Additionally some applicants will already be homeless when they first present to the local authority. The relief phase also lasts for a maximum of 56 days. For those in 'priority need' the authority will be obliged to provide temporary accommodation at the point of homelessness. The main way the authority can discharge the relief duty is to assist the customer to obtain suitable accommodation with a 'reasonable prospect' of being available for at least 6 months.
12. There are a number of additional ways in which a local authority's duties can be discharged at each stage of the process and these are outlined in the flow chart. One of these scenarios is where the applicant is notified that s/he has deliberately or unreasonably refused to cooperate outlined on page 6 and a s.193B decision can be made.
13. The prevention and relief phases of duty represent new statutory responsibilities for local authorities. If homelessness has still not been resolved and the duty has not been discharged by another means following the conclusion of these two phases, (page 3-4 Appendix 1), then the local authority is obliged to assess the application under the full homelessness duty.
14. The Act places significant additional administrative burdens on local authorities in exercising the new duties. There are potentially 10 to 15 stages in the new process where the local authority is required to issue a written decision and where these decisions are all subject to review.
15. In the flow chart at Appendix 1 each stage where a review is possible for the customer is highlighted with a red 'R'. Fylde BC currently receives on average one review per year to its homelessness decision. It is difficult to quantify how many reviews the Council is likely to receive under the new Prevention, Relief and Homelessness decisions from April 2018 and this will need to be monitored. Currently these are undertaken by a Senior Officer not involved in the original decision.
16. The process for homelessness data returns to government (The P1E) has also been overhauled and there is a significant increase in case level data required as a result.

Funding provided by government to implement the HRA 2018

17. **The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG)** is a new source of funding announced by government in 2017. Local authorities have been awarded this grant for a two year period 2017/18 and 2018/19. This grant is not directly designed to cover the costs of implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act, however it will be of assistance in preparing services in readiness.
18. The FHSG is a direct replacement for the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee' (TAMF), which was distributed to local authorities by the Department of Work and Pensions until the end of March 2017. The fee made £60 available per week per eligible temporary accommodation unit operated by local authorities in

England. The formula for calculating FSHG allocations was based on levels of homelessness, family size and housing costs in the area.

19. The funding is ring-fenced for two years, after which it will be a named grant. From April under the previous TA subsidy system Fylde BC would have received £1.9k, instead under the new arrangements the Council was awarded £45,834. The new grant will empower councils with the freedom to support the full range of homelessness services. This could include employing a homelessness prevention or tenancy support officer to work closely with people who are at risk of losing their homes. Table 1 below details the additional services the Local Authority will provide with the FSHG.
20. **New Burdens Funding** was announced by Government on the 16th October 2017 at the same time the draft code of guidance was issued. The funding is an additional national funding of £72.7m to support all housing authorities in England in acknowledgement of the transitional support required by local authorities implementing new processes and systems to prepare for commencement of the new Act.
21. Fylde Borough Council has been allocated £26,038 over three years from 2017/18. Table 2 details how the grant will be used to provide an upgrade to the IT system within Fylde in preparation for the Homeless Reduction Act 2018.

| Table 1 Flexible Homeless Grant | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| Tenancy Support Officer – see Paragraph 27 | £25,000 | £25,000 | £50,000 |
| Debt Advice Service - see Paragraph 28 | £18,835 | £21,027 | £39,862 |
| Additional interim units provided by the YMCA – see Paragraph 29 | £2,000 | £5,000 | £7,000 |
| Total | £45,835 | £51,027 | £98,860 |

| Table 2 New Burdens Funding – 3 year allocation £26,038 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/10 | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Upgrade IT system | £7,500 | £9,000 | £9,000 | £25,500 |
| Total Annual allocation | £8,409 | £7,703 | £9,927 | £26,038 |

Fylde Trailblazer Funding

22. In December 2016 Fylde BC, working jointly with Blackpool Council and Wyre Council were awarded two year Homeless Trailblazer funding from DCLG. The aim of the funding is to inform the development of policy and practice by local authorities in preparation for the Homeless Reduction Act. The funding will be used to develop innovative approaches to preventing homelessness by carrying out prevention activity earlier and work with a wider group of people and reduce the number of people who face a homelessness crisis in the first place.
23. This funding is assisting to change the Housing service at Fylde BC from a service that separates housing advice and homeless within 28 days with a focus on supporting households in priority need, to a service that focusses on the wider tenancy support needs of individuals. Ensuring tenancies are affordable and sustainable regardless of at what stage they have approached the local authority for housing advice, for example issues with anti-social behaviour, landlord complaints, housing benefit payment issues, section 21 notice served and initial support to source alternative accommodation.

24. Within Fylde the funding has been used to employ a Tenancy Support Worker to support a case load of vulnerable tenants across all client groups who are at high risk of tenancy failure to maximise their independence and minimise the risk of tenancy breakdown within both the social and rented sectors and the homeless. The post delivers a support service and coordinating packages of support for customers with complex needs such as mental health, drug or alcohol misuse issues, offenders and rough sleepers.
25. In addition a Housing Options Customer Services Specialist has been employed to provide a first point of contact, information and advice on Housing Options in respect of Fylde BC Homelessness, Housing Advice and Private Sector services, aiming to deal with 80% of customers at the first point of contact.

Preparing for the Act – New Initiatives

26. Table 1, paragraph 6 detailed the intentions Fylde BC have for the FHGS Funding Allocation. These plans have been directly informed by the new approach to working with customers enabled by the Homeless Trailblazer Funding and adopting an end to end approach to housing support.
27. A new **Tenancy Support Officer post with a focus on the Landlord Incentive Scheme** and clients accessing DFG funding. This post will be temporary for a 12 month period with the opportunity for further extension if funding is available to coincide with the ending of the Homeless Trailblazer funding. This post will need to go to the Job Evaluation Panel and be created as a new post within the authority. It is hoped the post will be awarded an apprentice levy to enable the post holder to develop within the position. A Chartered Institute of Housing qualification at Blackburn College has been identified. Learning from the Trailblazer tenancy support officer post is demonstrating the impact additional housing support for vulnerable clients can make in securing and sustaining accommodation.
28. The shared benefit service with Blackpool Council, Money Advice Service and CAB will be approached provide a **debt advice service** for households accessing the service that have debt issues. Initially the specification is for a 21 hour post for a two year period.
29. **Two additional interim units for Homeless Households** have been sourced through the YMCA. A one bedroom ground floor flat and two bedroom second floor flat. Prior to April 2017 and the changes to Housing Benefit the subsidy for Interim accommodation was 90% Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates plus management costs of £60. Due to the changes with Housing Benefit regulations in April 2017 these properties are no longer eligible for management costs as this funding is being paid direct to Local Authorities through the Flexible Homeless Grant. Fylde BC also have access to ten units of Interim accommodation provided by Progress Housing Group. Currently these are classed as exempt accommodation and levels of housing benefit are paid without reference to the LHA rates, as long as the full rental and services are deemed reasonable.
30. It is anticipated there will be a carry-over of FSHG funding into 2019/20 required which will coincide with a review of the Housing Service informed by the learning outcomes from the Homeless Trailblazer project and initiatives brought in via the FSHG and the impact of these on:
 - a. The change in the Housing Service following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act
 - b. The improved engagement and length of tenancies offered within the PRS via the introduction of a Landlord Incentive Scheme
 - c. The reduction in overall reliance of B&B accommodation by the Authority for households facing homelessness
 - d. The outcomes of the debt advice service
 - e. The outcomes for the customer working with the local authority through the new approach as defined by the HRA.

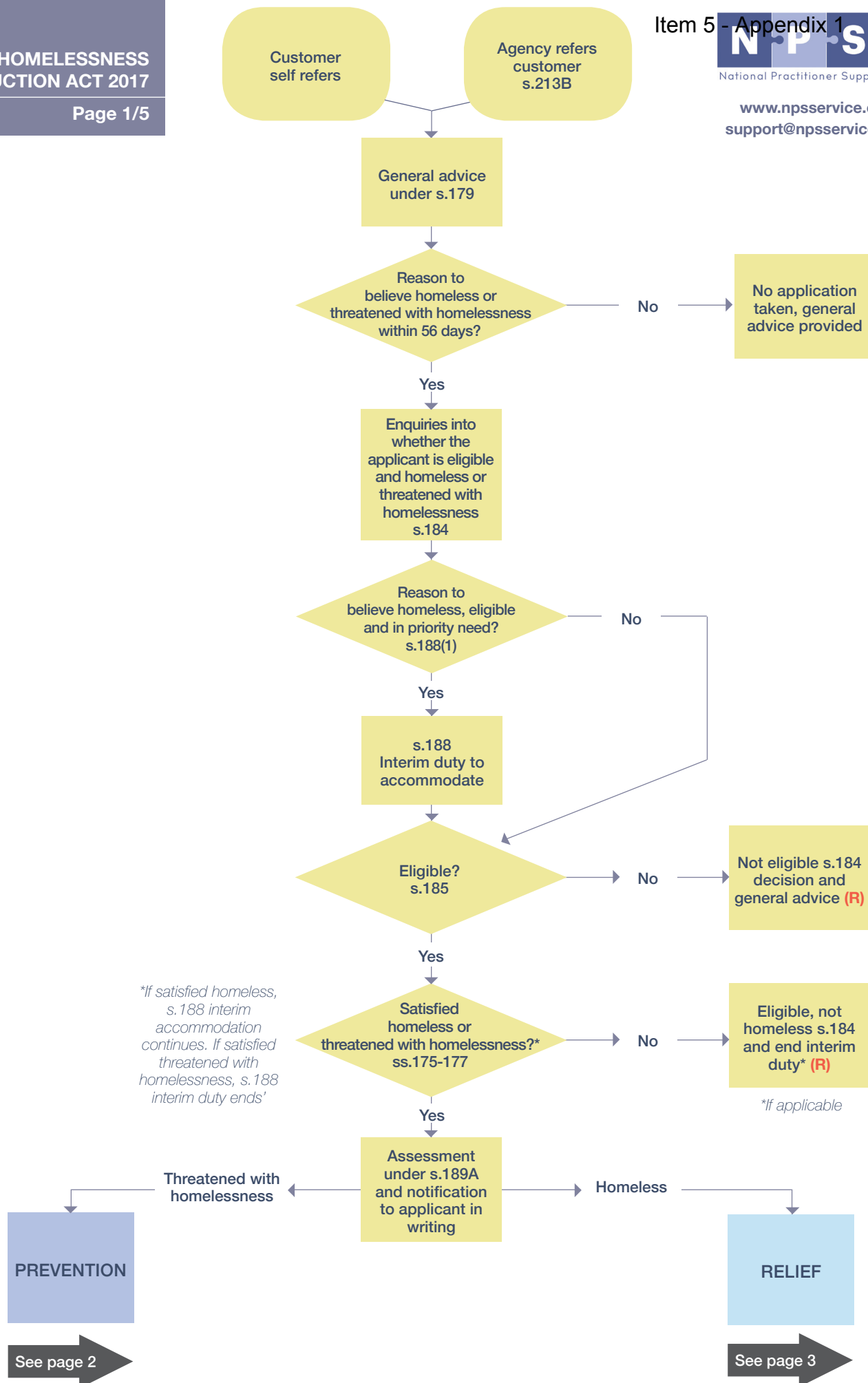
| IMPLICATIONS | |
|---|--|
| Finance | To recommend to Council approval of a fully-funded revenue budget increase for the total sum of £122,900. £98,862 funded by DCLG Flexible Homeless Grant and £26,038 funded by DCLG New Burdens Funding. |
| Legal | Introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2018 and Reviews to Statutory prevention, relief and homelessness decisions |
| Community Safety | None arising from this report |
| Human Rights and Equalities | None arising from this report |
| Sustainability and Environmental Impact | None arising from this report |
| Health & Safety and Risk Management | None arising from this report |

| LEAD AUTHOR | CONTACT DETAILS | DATE |
|-----------------|---|------------|
| Kirstine Riding | Kirstine.riding@fylde.gov.uk Tel 01253 658569 | 19/10/2017 |

| BACKGROUND PAPERS | | |
|--|------------|--|
| Name of document | Date | Where available for inspection |
| DCLG Draft Homeless Code of Guidance and New Burdens Funding | 16/10/2017 | https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652343/Draft_Homelessness_Code_of_Guidance.p df |
| Flexible Homelessness Support Grant | 15/03/2017 | https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexible-homelessness-support-grant-2017-18-to-2018-19 |

Attached documents

Appendix 1 – National Practitioner Support Service diagrammatic chart illustrating the practical implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act.



KEY

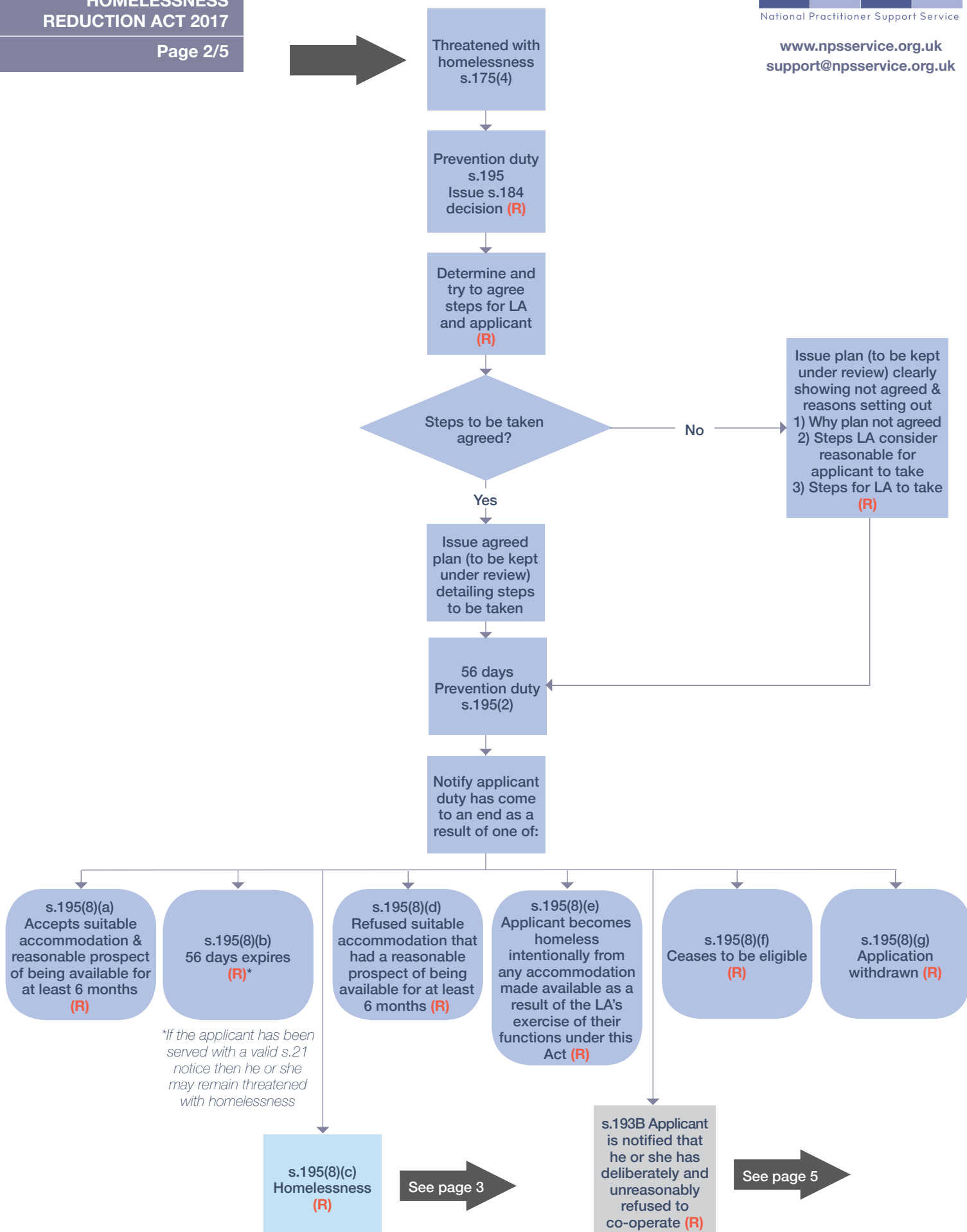
(R) Decision is reviewable

All statutory references are to Housing Act 1996, as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Disclaimer: The NPSS Homelessness Reduction Act flowchart was legally checked at the point of production by Liz Davies. NPSS recommends local authorities should always seek their own legal advice and satisfy themselves on any issues or questions raised.

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PREVENTION s.195



KEY

(R) Decision is reviewable

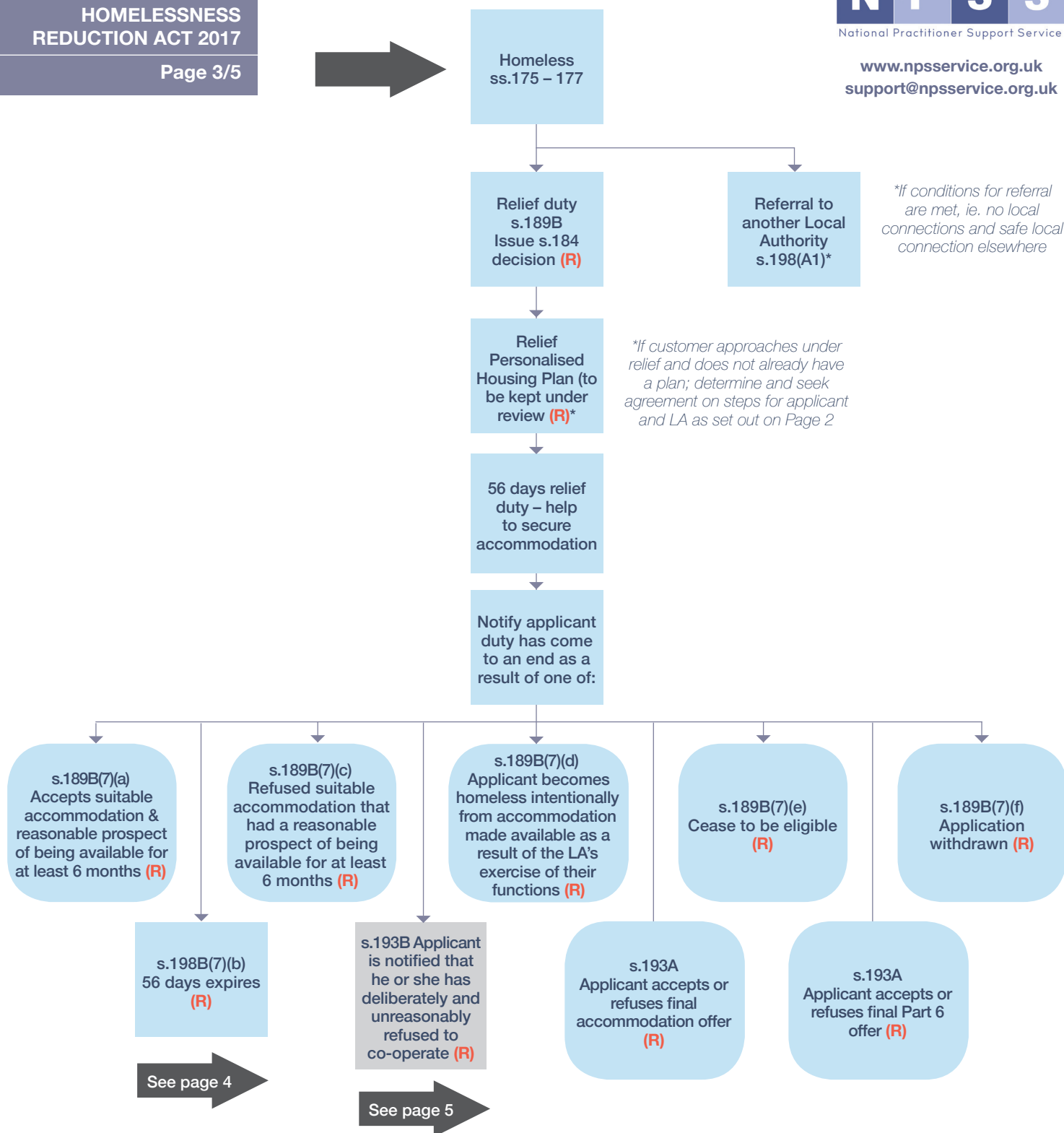
All statutory references are to Housing Act 1996, as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Disclaimer: The NPSS Homelessness Reduction Act flowchart was legally checked at the point of production by Liz Davies. NPSS recommends local authorities should always seek their own legal advice and satisfy themselves on any issues or questions raised.

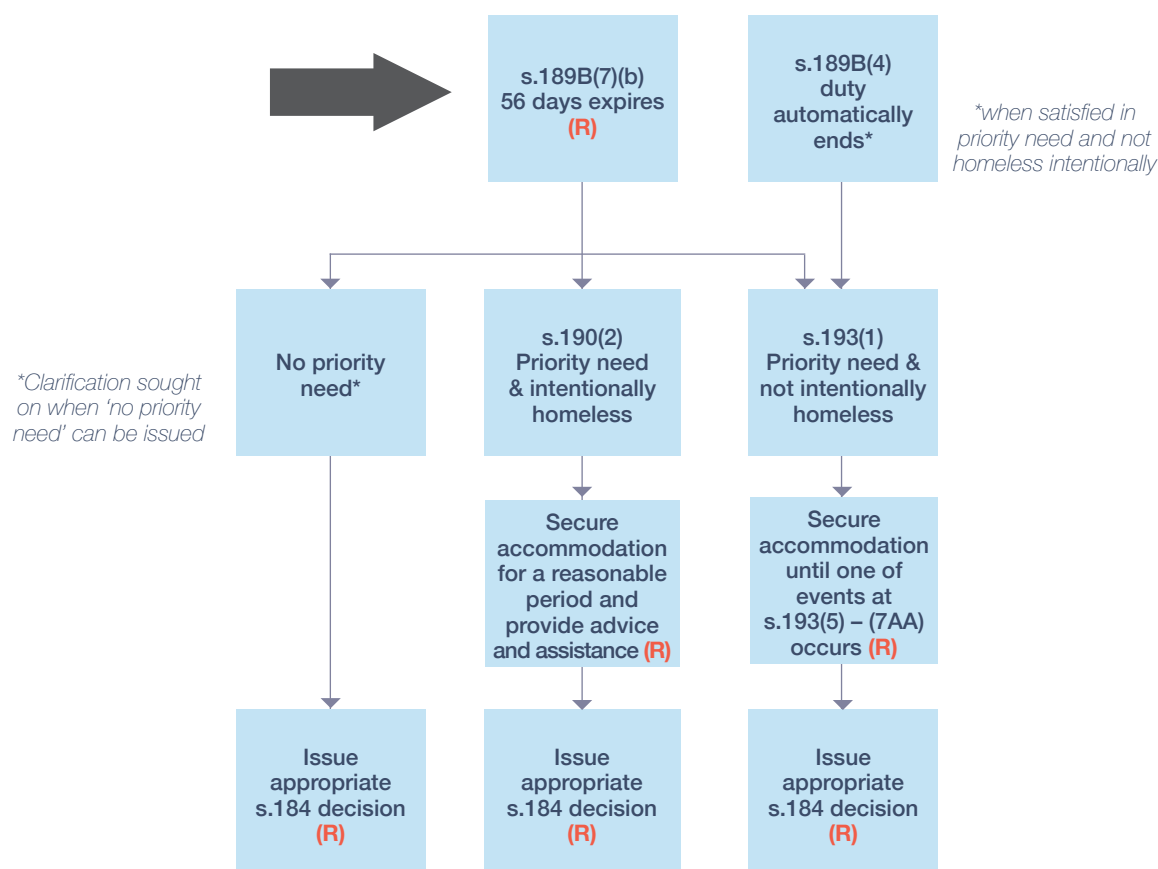
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RELIEF s.189B

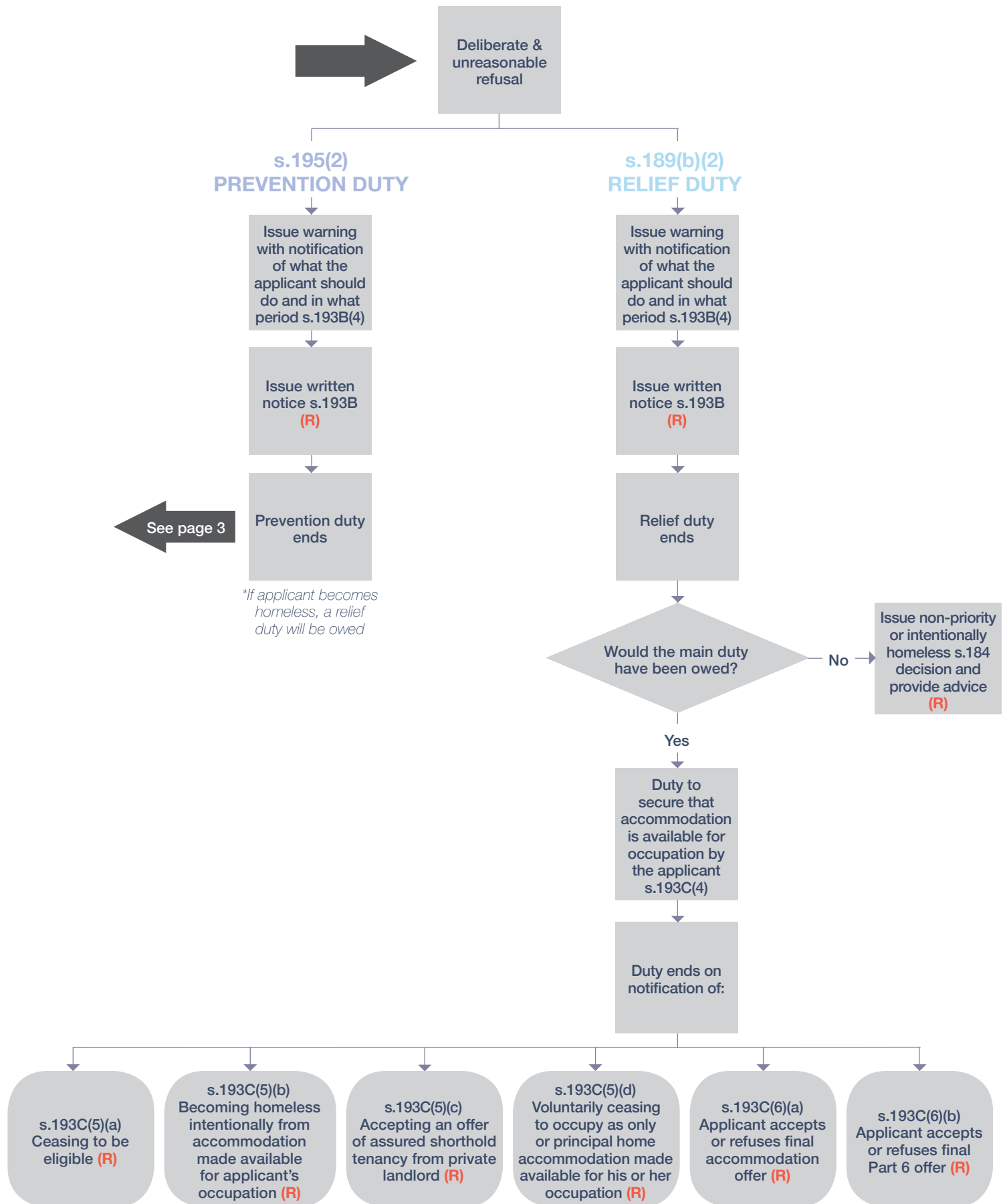
Item 5 - Appendix 1



RELIEF s.189B *continued*



Deliberate and unreasonable
refusal to co-operate
s.193A & s.193B



INFORMATION ITEM

| REPORT OF | MEETING | DATE | ITEM NO |
|--|---|-----------------|---------|
| RESOURCES DIRECTORATE | ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE | 7 NOVEMBER 2017 | 6 |
| OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT 2016/17 | | | |

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

This report is the first of what is intended to be an annual report covering the work and interventions of the Environmental Health department

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Chris Hambly, Environmental Health Manager

LINK TO INFORMATION

Information note attached to report.

WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

Following an internal audit relating to the work and performance of the Food Safety Team, a recommendation was made that an annual report be issued relating to the quality and performance of the service being delivered. The Food Safety team sits with Environmental Health and the report is submitted to inform Members of the work undertaken relating to not just Food Safety but the Environmental Health department in general.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact

Chris Hambly (Environmental Health Manager)

chris.hambly@fylde.gov.uk (01253 658422)

Kathy Winstanley (Head of Health and Environment)

kathy.winstanley@fylde.gov.uk (01253 658634)

INFORMATION NOTE

Environmental Health Overview

1. The Environmental Health department sits within the Health and Environment Service and has responsibility for the following areas:
 - a) Food Safety (1 Principal Officer, 2 Technical Enforcement Officers, 1 Technical Support)
 - b) Commercial Health and Safety (1 Senior Environmental Health Officer, 1 Technical Enforcement Officer)
 - c) Waste Enforcement and Environmental Protection (1 Principal Officer, 1FT & 1PT Technical Enforcement Officer, 2 x Waste Prevention and Enforcement Officers)
 - d) Licensing (2x Technical Enforcement Officers)
 - e) Dog Warden Service (2 x Dog Enforcement Wardens)
 - f) Pest Control (advisory service)
 - g) Community Safety and Partnerships (1 x Community Safety Officer, 1 x Partnerships Support Officer)
 - h) Emergency Planning
2. The purpose of the report is to update Elected Members on the range of work undertaken within the teams during 2016/17.

Food Safety

3. The Food Safety team consists of a Principal Officer, 2 Technical Enforcement Officers and a Technical Assistant. The role of the Food Safety Officers is to ensure that all food and drink provided for human consumption by Fylde's 800 food businesses is produced, stored, distributed and handled without risk to the health and safety of the consumer. The team publish details of their inspections on the [Food Standard Agency's \(FSA\) national food hygiene rating scheme](#).
4. In addition to the rating scheme, information regarding inspections and interventions for all local authorities is also published through the Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS) which may be accessed [here](#).
5. The team have been involved in a number of high profile cases during 2016/7, notably Harvey's takeaway on Poulton Street, Kirkham. This business was served with 2 emergency prohibition notices and legal proceedings were commenced relating to a number of food hygiene breaches. The operator has recently pleaded guilty to the offences and is scheduled to be sentenced at Preston Crown Court in November 2017.
6. Historically, businesses could appeal the decision of the inspecting officer (based on specific requirements), request a free of charge re-visit within a specified time scales or have the right to reply via Food Business Operator comments on the FSA register, explaining any mitigating actions taken in response to concerns raised during the inspection. Following a change in legislation it became possible to charge for a re-visit. Fylde participated in a pilot charging scheme and a charge of £120 was introduced for a re-visit. This resulted in an additional income of £1680 in the previous financial year.

7. Further information is provided below regarding the 2016-17 Food Inspection Program 2016/7:

| | |
|--|-----|
| On inspection program for 2016 / 2017 | 345 |
| Total % of Broadly Compliant establishments | 93% |
| Voluntary closure | 3 |
| Hygiene improvement notices | 9 |
| Total number of establishments subject to Written warnings | 370 |
| Total number of establishments subject to formal enforcement actions – Simple caution and prosecutions | 5 |

8. Registered medical practitioners in England and Wales have a statutory duty to notify their local authority or local Health Protection Team of suspected cases of certain infectious diseases. The team work closely with Public Health England to investigate, monitor and help to reduce the number of infectious disease notifications each year. 146 notifications were received in 2016-17, including:

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Campylobacter | 104 |
| Cryptosporidium | 17 |
| E. Coli | 2 |
| Norovirus | 1 |
| Salmonella Enteritidis | 7 |

9. The team are also responsible for carrying out food sampling to identify potential sources of infection.

10. The Food Safety team received a total of 247 service requests in 2016/17:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Suspect Food Poisoning | 24 |
| Food complaint (general) | 69 |
| General advice/guidance | 134 |
| Food Premises Condition | 14 |

Health and Safety

11. Health and safety at work is enforced jointly by the Council and by the Health and Safety Executive. Fylde Council is responsible for the lower risk businesses such as offices, shops, leisure facilities, warehouses and catering premises. The Health and Safety Executive enforce health and safety in high-risk and manufacturing premises.

12. The Council works closely with local businesses to help them meet their legal obligations and to improve health and safety of employees, customers and contractors who may be affected by their business. The Council's responsibility for Health and Safety includes:

- Enforcing Health and Safety matters in designated workplaces
- Investigating complaints about working conditions
- Dealing with accident notifications
- The team also has responsibility for Caravan Site licensing

13. The most significant event for the team was the conclusion of the Jane Bell investigation, aged 3, who drowned at the Dalmeny Hotel, St Annes. Following a thorough investigation, and with the assistance of the Council's Legal Department, the Dalmeny pleaded guilty to 2 counts of health and safety breaches and was fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £19,714.60. The Judge described what happened as a terrible, tragic event; that the defendant's breaches of health and safety legislation were significant in leading to the death of a young child and that it must take significant responsibility for what happened. The Judge added

that it was also an important warning to parents on the dangers of swimming pools.

14. Premises in the borough that have and operate swimming pools have subsequently been identified and visited to ensure health and safety policies and procedures are suitable and sufficient and where appropriate, Improvement Notices have been served.
15. The team has also worked in partnership with Electricity North West targeting illegal electrical abstraction in the Kirkham area and have conducted interventions in such areas as the risk of infection from the use of cut throat razors, risk of canopy collapse following an incident in Blackpool, gas safety and the illegal use of pizza dough rollers.
16. The Health and Safety team carried out the following targeted interventions in 2016/17:

| Intervention | Number of Visits Targeted | Number of Visits Achieved |
|--|---|---|
| High Risk | 1 | 1 (100%) |
| Guarding of pizza dough rollers | 18 | 14 (78%) |
| Gas Safety in commercial kitchens | 48 100% received information on their gas responsibilities | 11(23%) Provided copies of their gas safety certificates |
| Asbestos removal notifications 2 | 2 | 1 (50%) |
| Barbers- prevention of infections from cut throat razors | 2 | 2 (100%) |
| Swimming Pool Safety | 15 | 15 (100%) |
| Canopy and Sign Safety | 17 | 17 (100%) |
| Electricity Abstraction | 11 | 11 (100%) |
| Interventions 2016/2017 | 11 | 11 (100%) |

17. Responsibility for investigating accidents under the Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR) in local authority enforced premises also rests with the team. The table below provides a breakdown of notifications received:

| Accident Type | Investigated | No Investigation | Referred to CQC |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Contact with moving machinery | - | - | - |
| Hit by moving/flying object | 2 | 1 | - |
| Hit by moving vehicle | 1 | - | - |
| Hit something fixed or static | - | 3 | 1 |
| Manual Handling | 3 | 1 | - |
| Slip and trip | 7 | 36 | 25 |
| Fall from height | 3 | 11 | 1 |
| Drowned/asphyxiated | 1 | | - |
| Exposed to hazardous substance | 1 | 0 | - |
| Physical assault | 1 | 1 | - |
| Burns and scalds | | 1 | |
| Dangerous Occurrence | 4 | | |
| Another kind of accident | 8 | 8 | 2 |
| Total | 31 | 62 | 29 |

18. The Health & Safety team received a total of 420 service requests/complaints in 2016/17:

| Type of Request for Service/Complaint | Total Number |
|---|--------------|
| Registration for Skin Piercing | 22 |
| Caravan Site Licensing | 121 |
| Licensing Act 2003 | 8 |
| General Advice (visits requests from businesses) | 8 |
| Asbestos | 2 |
| Referral to another department | 0 |
| Accident investigation following a complaint | 2 |
| Dangerous occurrence following a complaint | 4 |
| Health and Safety Welfare complaint | 14 |
| No further investigation | 9 |
| Complaint referred to HSE | 2 |
| Smoke free complaint | 3 |
| Health and Safety Complaint Visit (Contact Interventions) | 103 |
| Health and Safety Complaint non-visit | 117 |
| Private Water Supplies | 5 |
| Total Complaints and Requests for Service | 420 |

Waste Enforcement and Environmental Protection

19. The team consists of a Principal Officer, 1 full time and 1 part time Technical Enforcement Officers who deal with complaints relating to statutory nuisances, anti-social behaviour complaints, permitted processes etc., and 2 x Waste Prevention and Enforcement Officers with responsibility for waste minimisation, education and enforcement relating to complaints relating to such as matters as bins being put out for collection early, misrepresented waste, etc. The team was also heavily involved in the roll out of the Green Waste subscription service.
20. Two particular issues stand out for the team in 2016/17 - a fly tipping case and a light nuisance case both of which received significant press coverage.
21. During May and June 2016 a number of fly tipping incidents were report to Fylde Council. Three separate large scale deposits were reported at Meagles Lane, Elswick; Bradshaw Lane, Weeton and Annas Road, Westby. Following a thorough investigation, the offender was eventually identified and prosecuted. He was sentenced to 12 weeks custody for each offence to run concurrently. The sentence was suspended for 12 months with 200 hours of unpaid work to be completed within 12 prior to the 4th June 2018.
22. Compensation of £1,437.00 was awarded to the Council together with prosecution costs of £2,600.00 and a Victim Surcharge of £115.00 (totalling £4,152.00, to pay £40 per week and a Collection Order made)
23. The light nuisance case related to a light in the rear of one property shining into the bedroom of the neighbouring complainant. There is a history of disputes between the two parties that prolonged and prevented any mutual agreements.
24. The case was complicated by the fact that the light illuminates a shared passageway and it was argued that this was a fire escape. Despite the advice given the light nuisance was not resolved and an abatement notice was served. The owner of the light replaced it with another but the problem continued. Officers revisited and confirmed light nuisance was still being caused. Officers continued to advise and many discussions and man hours were taken up trying to resolve the issue. All efforts were taken to prevent this from progressing to trial but unfortunately there was no option but to take formal action for breach of Notice.
25. On Tuesday 8th August 2017 the matter was taken before the Court and following long discussions between the Legal Teams the case was adjourned as the owner agreed to relocate the light in question. The light has now been removed and the matter closed. This is the first time a case like this has gone so far in Fylde but through no fault of the Local Authority. The Council has a legal duty to investigate and take action against a statutory nuisance and if not resolved must take the necessary steps to prevent recurrence. Court proceedings are always the last resort.

26. The Waste Enforcement Team have recently joined Environmental Health and have played a significant role in the implementation of the green waste subscription service, distributing 36000 leaflets by hand to each property, 3 awareness roadshows promoting the service, designing communication materials, leaflets, posters and subscription stickers and providing extensive back office support to the operational teams in facilitating the smooth collection of 17,000 authorised green bins.

27. The team has investigated a wide range of diverse service requests and complaints over the past year:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Noise Complaints - Commercial | 66 |
| Noise Complaints - Domestic | 338 |
| Light Nuisance | 10 |
| Odour Nuisance | 46 |
| Smoke/Burning Nuisance | 49 |
| Fly Tipping | 943 |
| Accumulations on Private Land | 189 |
| Filthy Premises | 64 |
| Planning Consultations | 80 |
| Licensing Consultations | 120 |
| Animal Welfare Inspections | 29 |
| Permitted Process Inspections | 21 |
| Abatement Notices Served: | |
| Noise | 4 |
| Light | 1 |
| Drainage | 3 |
| Accumulation | 1 |
| Equipment Seized | 2 |
| Public Health Funerals | 6 |
| Waste Enforcement Team | |
| Abandoned Vehicles | 87 |
| Assisted bin enquiries | 146 |
| Waste Analysis (extra bin requests) | 102 |

Licensing

28. The Licensing Team comprises 2 Technical Enforcement Officers with a responsibility for the issuing of licences in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005, taxi and private hire licensing, animal welfare (pet shops, zoo, riding establishments etc) and charitable collections.

29. The team also administers the Council's Event Notification procedure and provides support for the Safety Advisory Group meetings and processes road closures for local community events such as the Club Days. The Council was notified of 91 events in 2016.

30. The licensing team refers certain matters to the Public Protection Committee for consideration. The Committee met on 3 occasions last year to consider such matters as an application for a zoo licence, and applications for driver licences where the applicant has a criminal history; it also authorised a consultation exercise regarding the introduction of a revised Hackney Carriage and Private Licensing Policy.

31. Matters relating to alcohol licensing are referred to a Panel of the Licensing Committee. During the period 1/4/16 to 31/3/17, a Panel met on 7 occasions relating to 9 licence applications. 3 related to applications at Mill Farm and the Premises Licence for Harvey's (food premises) was revoked following a review. One decision of the Panel was appealed to the Magistrates Court and mediation subsequently took place.

32. 1531 applications were received and considered by the Licensing team in 2016/17:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Vehicle licences issued | 326 |
| Driver licenses issued | 374 |
| Disclosure and Barring Service checks requested | 156 |
| Premises Licence New/Variation applications | 44 |
| Personal Licence Applications | 73 |
| Temporary Event Notices received | 242 |
| Premises Inspections | 172 |
| Licences relating to animal welfare issued | 38 |
| Street Trading | 10 |
| Street Collections | 35 |
| House to House Collections | 16 |
| Gambling Act applications, including Small Lotteries | 45 |

Dog Enforcement Wardens

33. The Dog Enforcement Wardens became part of the Environmental Health department in February 2017 and consist of 2 Wardens working on rotation 0700 – 1400 and 1200 – 1900 (Mon – Fri) with 6 hours coverage each Saturday. An out of hours' service is provided through a Service Level Agreement with a commercial kennels licensed by the Council.

34. The Wardens are responsible for proactive and reactive patrols relating to fouling, stray and roaming dogs and are also responsible for the enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Orders which came into effect on the 1st October 2017 relating to dog control.

35. Following persistent complaints regarding dogs escaping into a neighbouring garden, a Community Protection Notice was issued utilising new powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act. This required the occupier to secure the garden to prevent further escape. There were 3 subsequent breaches resulting in fixed penalty notices of £100 being served on each occasion. The resident failed to pay the notices and was subsequently prosecuted in the Magistrates Court. She pleaded guilty and received a £500 fine, £406.15 costs (full costs to Fylde Borough Council after halving them), Victim surcharge £50 (Total fine: £956.15). Following the prosecution, there have been no further incidents of the dogs escaping.

36. A brief summary is shown below of the work undertaken by the Dog Enforcement Wardens:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Complaints Received | 166 |
| Pro-active Patrols | 640 |
| Reactive Patrols | 498 |
| Dogs to kennels | 56 |
| Dogs to owners by Wardens | 27 |

Community Safety and Partnerships

37. The Community Safety Officer sits within the department and submits an annual report to the Environment, Health and Housing Committee which may be seen [here](#). He also sits on various groups such as Early Action, MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), Tasking and Co-ordinating as the Council's representative and is responsible for delivering Prevent Training across the organisation.

38. The Council's public realm CCTV systems fall within the remit of the Community Safety Officer to ensure that CCTV Regulations are fully complied with and the Committee will be aware that a Working Group was recently established to consider the provision of rapid deployment CCTV in the Borough.
39. The Officer also represents the Council at the Lancashire Strategic Hate Crime and Cohesion Group, the Lancashire Prevent Delivery Partnership Group, the West Division Road Safety Group and West Division Reducing Reoffending Board. Furthermore, whilst essentially the community safety initiatives budget is funded externally, the Community Safety Officer has been successful in securing funding from several sources which benefit the Council, such as a successful bid to the Genga Partnership for body worn video to be used by enforcement officers.
40. The Partnership Support Officer works closely with the Community Safety Officer and there are many areas of crossover with Safeguarding and Prevent responsibilities however the post reports directly to the Head of Health and Environment.
41. The main focus of the post is to co-ordinate, facilitate and administer the Children's Trust initiatives across the Council services including the Troubled Families, Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help and Working Together with Families project. The Officer plays a key role in health and wellbeing initiatives, including project support to the NHS Healthy New Town Whyndyke Garden Village scheme and provides administrative support to partners working with the Council on corporate initiatives to ensure that partnership outcomes are consistent with the Council's priorities.

Emergency Planning

42. The Department is also responsible for providing the Councils Emergency Planning function as required by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. During the period April 2016 to March 2017, officers participated in a table top exercise for multi-agency incident training, exercises/familiarisation relating to Westinghouse and also represented the Council on incidents such as the Avian Flu outbreak, severe weather tele conferences.

Freedom of Information Requests

43. Finally, the department received 154 Freedom of Information requests over the period, all were dealt with within the required time scales (20 working days), with an average of 4.02 days per request. The majority of enquiries relate to Bona Vacantia (37), requests specifically regarding the Public Spaces Protection Orders for dog control (29) with other commonly requested information concerning food inspections, visits and reports, animal welfare registers, dog control issues, and licensing enquiries.

FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM

Chris Hambly, chris.hambly@fylde.gov.uk, 01253 658422.

INFORMATION ITEM

| REPORT OF | MEETING | DATE | ITEM NO |
|---|--|-----------------|---------|
| DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE | ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE | 7 NOVEMBER 2017 | 7 |
| PROGRESS HOUSING GROUP ANNUAL REVIEW FOR FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL 2016-17 | | | |

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

This report provide information on how Progress Housing are working towards their six strategic aims launched in their 2020 Business Plan in May 2015 and progress 2016/17.

1. Provide more and better homes
2. Support individuals and communities to achieve independence
3. Create opportunities
4. Work as one team to ensure we all contribute to our business achievements
5. Develop a stronger organisation to deliver maximum benefits
6. Put customers at the heart of what we do to ensure our decisions are driven by customers' needs and aspirations

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Progress Housing Group

LINK TO INFORMATION

Financial statements 2016/17

<https://www.progressgroup.org.uk/about-us/how-we-are-performing/performance/financial-statements/>

Corporate annual report

<http://progress.max-mediagroup.co.uk/annual-report-2016-17>

Tenant annual report

<https://www.progressgroup.org.uk/news-events/news/news-2017/tenant-annual-report-1617/>

WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

Progress Housing Group presented to Environment, Health and Housing Committee in November 2015 requesting consent to adopt the National Housing Federation new model rules and to recognise that when the rules were adopted by the company that the Council would no longer have the right to nominate a representative to the company's Board of management and therefore the Transfer Agreement schedule 6 part 2 section 2.8.1 would no longer have effect.

Committee resolved to consent to the adoption and requested a six monthly progress statement.

<https://fylde.cmis.uk.com/fylde/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/106/Committee/19/Default.aspx>

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact : Kirstine Riding, Housing Services Manager 01253 658569