

**Information, Advice and Letting  
Policy Consultation**



**Response to the Consultation**

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

A total of 13 responses were received, the vast majority of respondents were individual customers who filled in the questionnaire sent out with the 'Proposals for letting our homes' booklet.

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

Table 1 provides a breakdown by respondent type.

<b>Table 1 – Breakdown of respondents to consultation</b>			
	<b>Current Tenant</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Current Tenant Looking for new home</b>
<b>WLHP</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

Overall, every type of customer responded to the consultation.

## **Consultation Findings**

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

### **Closed Questions**

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

Please note not all respondents answered each question. Due to rounding the totals can vary between 99 – 101%. It should be noted that these results are based on small numbers of respondents.

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

- 8 out of 10 respondents agreed that if implemented the proposals would help make it more clear how we allocate our homes
- 7 out of 10 respondents agreed that if implemented the proposals would help those in greatest need of housing
- 7 out of 10 respondents agreed that if implemented the proposals would help make best use of available housing stock
- 7 out of 10 respondents agreed that if implemented the proposals would help tenants and applicants better understand their chance of being offered a home and be supported to consider alternative housing options.

The full breakdown of these results follow below.

<b>Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that, if implemented, these proposals would:</b>					
<b>i) help make it more clear how we allocate our homes?</b>					
<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Strongly Agree'</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree not disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
WLHP	4	4	1	0	1
	<b>8 out of 10 Agreed</b>			<b>1 out of 10 Disagreed</b>	

<b>Q1 (ii) Help those in greatest need of housing</b>					
<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree or disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
WLHP	5	2	1	1	1
	<b>7 out of 10 Agreed</b>			<b>2 out of 10 Disagreed</b>	

<b>Q1 (iii) Help make best use of available housing stock</b>					
<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
WLHP	6	1	0	2	1
	<b>7 out of 10 Agreed</b>			<b>3 out of 10 Disagreed</b>	

<b>Q1 (iii) help tenants and applicants better understand their chance of being offered a home and be supported to consider alternative housing options?</b>					
<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
WLHP	6	1	1	1	1
	<b>7 out of 10 Agreed</b>			<b>2 out of 10 Disagreed</b>	

**Open Text Questions**

Eleven questions asked through the consultation were closed questions requiring respondents to answer by writing their response in the space provided. Although only a small number responded, this information provides a wealth of qualitative information.

Generally respondents said that the proposals were transparent and appear to support a clearer understanding of how we let our homes including.

*“It helps you understand...and helps you know what is allocated”*

*(WLHP respondent)*

However for one respondent, there remains confusion between WLHP and West Lothian Council.

*“I have no idea when a house becomes vacant is it WLC or WLHP who allocates it” (WLHP respondent)*

Questions specifically probing the proposals for a move to priority Bands demonstrate general support for clear groups of customers and applicants being given additional priority. One respondent suggested the bands should be regularly reviewed to ensure they still match the needs of those in need.

Generally respondents feel that not advertising Band A and using automated bidding for Band E were good ideas, helping maximise chances at getting a home for the most in need. However, the importance of face to face contact at the right time was also mentioned by others.

When the consultation probed on the publication of percentage of lets being included in Locality Plans and determined by demand for the last year respondents were supportive.

Respondents generally acknowledge that homelessness is a problem, and that young people and those experiencing financial difficulty need to be supported. However, some did express that individual need must be carefully assessed and that support to these groups can't be at the expense of those who are older and experiencing health issues.

All respondents supported the change to our overcrowding criteria to ensure children 10 years or older are entitled to a room of their own.

Response to our proposal to allow people, where they can afford it, to under occupy by one room appears to have been given careful consideration with general agreement.

## **Stakeholders Perspective**

A summary of two key stakeholder submissions are provided below:

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

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

## **Customer Event**

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

However, at the event, our proposals to change the overcrowding criteria to recognise children 10 years or older are entitled to a room of their own, and - for those who can afford - allow people to under occupy by one room generated a lot of lively discussion. Customers voiced views that affordability and supply/demand factors respectively needed carefully considered for these proposals. For some, the provision of a

room of their own for children 10 years or over, or for a spare room for families own use was only considered desirable, and not essential. This raised questions of what a social landlord should be prioritising, particularly when there is limited housing stock. A number of quotes from the event table discussions is provided below to bring to life their mixed perspectives.

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

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

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

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