



**Report to** Cabinet

**Subject** Implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme

**Date** 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010

**Author** Head of Customer Services and Organisational Development

## **1. Purpose of the Report**

To explain the background of the Council's decision to work towards the implementation of a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system, in partnership with both Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Borough Councils. The report will also provide an overview of the implementation process, indicative timescales and operating process of the system, discussing the key benefits to both the local authorities, Registered Providers RP, (formerly housing associations/ registered social landlords), and most importantly local residents.

Members may recall a presentation on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and a further briefing on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 which provided information on both the CBL scheme and the allocations policy.

## **2. Background**

### Creating the working group

In 2008 a working group was set up between Gedling, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe to consider the benefits of progressing to a CBL scheme to allocate social housing. At this time, the then CLG, were also providing funding to partnership schemes to contribute towards the capital set up costs of CBL schemes.

The working group was successful in its joint application for funding and received £81,486 which equates to 60% of the estimated set up costs, the remainder to be shared equally by the boroughs. Since then the group has also applied for funding from the NIEG and received an additional £50,000 to deliver an enhanced CBL scheme.

### The Current System.

Following the transfer of the Council's stock to Gedling Homes in November 2008, the Council has continued to hold a waiting list to allocate properties owned by Registered Providers (housing associations) with whom it has nomination rights. These rights have arisen as part of the transfer process in relation to Gedling Homes who currently send 75% of their void properties to the Council. The other registered providers operating within the borough have provided the council with nomination agreements as part of their development agreements, e.g. Derwent Livings recent development at Calverton. This represents around 500 properties a year to which the Council nominates from the housing register.

The Council currently uses a banding system to prioritise those applicants in the greatest need. Once placed in a band, priority is determined by waiting time. The application form asks residents to select their preferred areas of residence in the borough and then the applicant waits for the Council to contact them with an offer. If an applicant refuses three offers they are then placed on hold for 1 year. If an offer is accepted their tenancy commences.

Currently residents seeking social housing in the borough would need to complete an application for both the Council and each of the RP's, including Gedling Homes. There are currently 20 RP's operating within the borough, which makes it both a time-consuming and confusing process. This level of duplication across the social housing providers in the borough could understandably be viewed poorly by any audits / inspections of the service.

### **Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**

The principles of CBL are to give a degree of choice regarding vacant properties to applicants, provide a customer focussed, easy to use and transparent system of letting vacant properties that applicants can understand and provide information to applicants about the likelihood of them being re-housed in such a way as to empower them to make choices about their future housing.

CBL is a way of informing housing applicants of available social housing in the borough through an advertising scheme.

In advance of a property becoming available to let an advert is prepared. Every one or two weeks, available properties are advertised on the council's website, in council offices and community areas such as libraries. Property adverts include information about the property type, number of bedrooms, any special adaptations, rental costs and neighbourhood details such as proximity to shops and schools. For those who struggle to get out, or do not have access to a computer, adverts can be mailed. Housing applicants can then express their interest in the available properties, either by phone, post, text, in person or through the website (normally around 70-80% of applicants use the internet). This is sometimes called 'bidding' for a property. The person who has the most priority according to the Council's Allocation Policy will be offered the property. A significant benefit of CBL is that as the applicant has selected the property they are far more likely to accept the tenancy. Currently a large number of offers made by the Housing Needs team are refused which is a considerable waste of time, and also could be viewed as a failure of the current system. With CBL, as the applicant has selected

the property, our research has shown a considerable reduction in the number of refusals. This helps to reduce the time for which properties are empty, which is a priority for all concerned.

As with the current system, an application form would need to be completed and registered to enable applicants to be considered. Applicants who are currently on Gedling Borough Council's waiting list may be asked to complete a new form or update their details in order to take part in the CBL scheme. Support will be provided to anyone requesting assistance.

The nature of a CBL scheme is such that housing applicants will be far more proactive in seeking and expressing an interest in properties. It will therefore be a priority that the scheme will be as accessible as possible for those people who may need extra assistance, for example older people, people with disabilities or those who do not speak English.

The working group have carried out extensive research into the area of CBL, and the majority of local authorities around the country have recognised the benefits of providing the customer with more information and choice and have moved over to a CBL system.

To facilitate the working groups knowledge in this area visits were undertaken to local CBL schemes such as 'Home Options' which is used across Erewash, Amber Valley, Derbyshire Dales and High Peak, and 'Home Link', Nottingham City Council's scheme. The group has also met with IT providers, and considered both the experiences of the above organisations, liaised with Robin Newby – the Communities and Local Governments lead officer for CBL, and researched good practice guides.

This has led to the groups conclusion that CBL would provide a far more efficient and more customer focussed, equitable and transparent method of allocating housing.

### **Housing Allocations Policy (HAP)**

The Housing Allocations Policy determines who has a priority for housing. The Council currently operates a banding system which allows us to address applicants with multiple needs by awarding a band composed of up to 3 components ranging from Band 1 to Band 12, however the current system could be confusing for applicants.

In July 2009, the Communities and Local Government Department produced statutory guidance entitled 'Fair and Flexible'. The guidance supports the use of a simple banding scheme to assess housing need and award priority, suggesting that there should be no more than 4 bands.

### **The Common Housing Allocations Policy (CHAP)**

To facilitate the introduction of a CBL scheme, the working group has developed a 'Common Housing Allocations Policy' which would be used to assess all applications across both the 3 boroughs and the RP's. As HAP's are closely defined by the legislation, the working group agreed a draft Common Housing Allocations Policy which was circulated for consultation along with the proposed CBL scheme. The outcomes of this consultation are detailed below.

## **Local Connection**

New applicants may apply to another local authority in whose area they do not currently live. As a result of amendments in the Homelessness Act 2002, authorities cannot exclude people from the waiting list who do not live in the district. However, housing authorities may take into account whether someone has a local connection with the district when determining relative priorities between applicants who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories. In this context someone has a local connection through residence, employment, family connection or some other special circumstance. The new Common Housing Allocation Policy will recognise those applicants with a local connection to each borough.

## **CBL Stakeholder involvement event**

On 23 March 2010 a stakeholder event took place in order to draw on the expertise and experience of stakeholders, in particular those who support vulnerable groups, to assess whether there are any barriers in place preventing people using or accessing the new service and to identify actions that may need to be taken to address issues and remove barriers. Prior to this meeting a specialist meeting had been held with RP's to gauge their opinion of the proposals and enter into conversations about them joining the scheme.

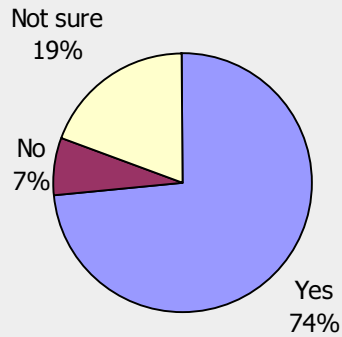
## **Preliminary Consultation Results**

As part of the consultation process, stakeholders were invited to comment on the proposals. A large part of this consultation involved writing to all waiting list and transfer applicants. 901 applicants across the three Borough Councils have responded to the survey. In total 6359 applicants were written to and 906 surveys have been received, giving a 14% response rate. The consultation period ran from 1<sup>st</sup> February until the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

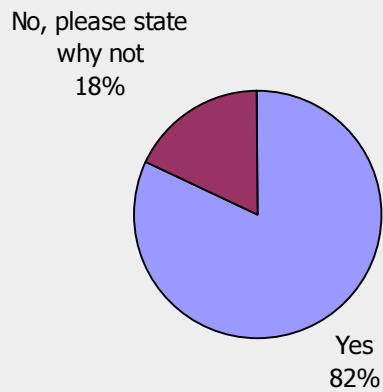
Findings from the survey showed a positive response in terms of the fairness of the new allocations policy, and consensus that the new approach would provide more choice for people seeking accommodation.

The key findings from the survey are shown over the page, and a complete analysis of the survey is contained in Appendix A.

**Do you think Homesearch will give you more choice about where you would like to live?**



**Do you think the draft policy will be a fairer way of allocating housing?**



As illustrated in the above analysis, the majority of respondents were in support of the new proposals with 73% of people considering that CBL will give them more choice about where they live and 82% of people believing the allocations policy will be a fairer way of allocating housing. Respondents were also able to provide written responses to many of the questions, for instance when it had been stated they did not agree with the proposed banding system or they did not consider CBL would be a fairer way of letting homes.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment (E.I.A)**

The working group has started to produce an EIA on both the Common Housing Allocations Policy and the CBL Scheme, and will draw on the results of the consultation exercise to complete it.

## **Supporting the Council's vision and five priorities**

The overall vision of the Council states :

“Gedling Borough – the part of Nottinghamshire where people want to live, work and do business.”

By progressing to a CBL scheme there is evidence to support both the vision and priorities, as CBL schemes are considered to be a fairer method of allocating housing and providing greater choice for residents. By allowing people to express an interest in the area they want to live, they are far more likely to remain there and contribute actively to the local community hence supporting delivery of the following objectives :-

A place of safe and strong communities

A place where people are treated fairly and have the opportunity to get involved.

A place where we take care of the environment.

## **Financial Considerations**

A detailed analysis of the costs is attached at Appendix B, showing the initial set up costs and the annualised costs. In summary 60% of the set up costs will be covered by the CLG funding, with the remaining 40% being split equally between the three boroughs. With regards to the annual costs, each borough's contribution will be around £21k, which can be managed within existing budgets. For 2010/11 this includes a carry forward of £7800. Any revenue received from RP's joining the scheme will offset these costs and the budget adjusted accordingly.

## **Conclusions.**

By moving to a CBL scheme we will be able to provide greater choice to residents who are seeking accommodation. We will also be able to address the problem of both the Council and Gedling Homes having their own application form and allocations policy, as Gedling Homes have confirmed they will be joining the scheme, which greatly improves the service from a customer's perspective. We have also engaged with the other RP's who have advised that they would also be interested in joining the scheme, which will enable our scheme to represent the significant majority of social housing providers in the borough, meaning that applicants can access accommodation through one application from and one web site.

## **3. Recommendations**

That a Choice Based Lettings Scheme is implemented in partnership with both Broxtowe and Rushcliffe borough councils, including the local Registered Providers

To approve the Common Housing Allocations Policy as attached at Appendix C  
**Appendix A**

Total Survey's sent – 6359

Gedling – 2195

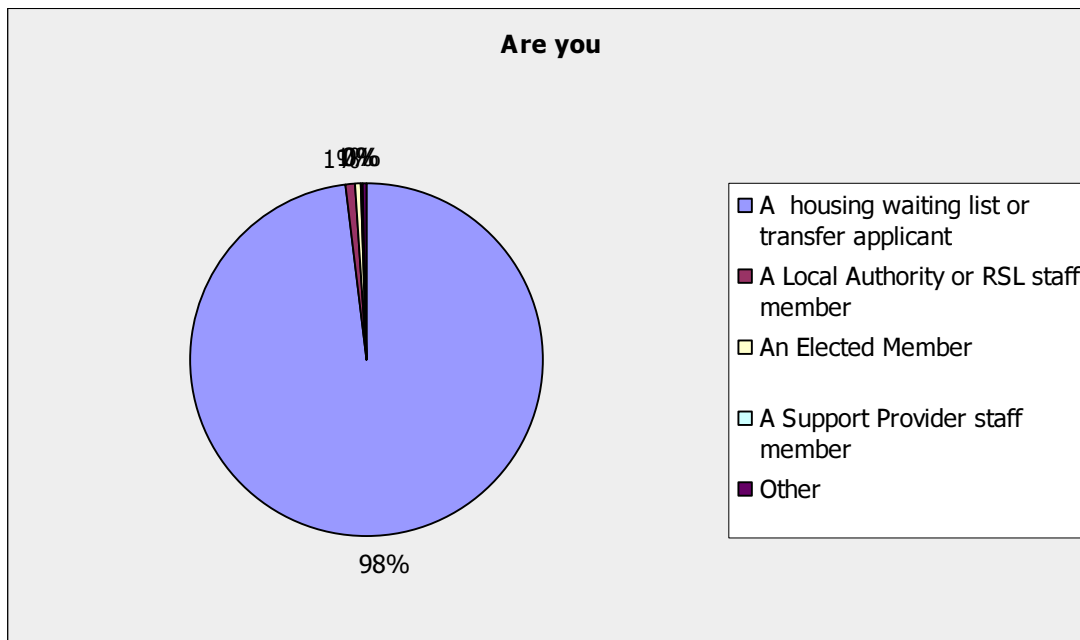
Broxtowe - 2716

Rushcliffe – 1448

Responses collected - 901

Overall response rate  
14%

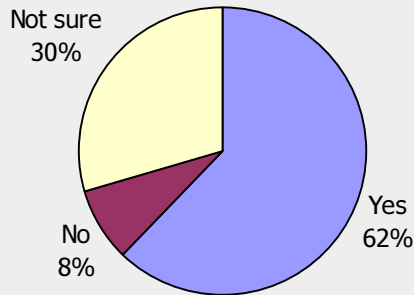
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A housing waiting list or transfer applicant	98.0%	901
A Local Authority or RSL staff member	0.8%	7
An Elected Member	0.5%	5
A Support Provider staff member	0.3%	3
Other	0.3%	3
<b>answered question</b>		<b>919</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>3</b>



**Q2. Do you think Homesearch is a fairer way of letting homes?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	62.3%	571
No	8.2%	75
Not sure	29.6%	271
<b>answered question</b>		<b>917</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>5</b>

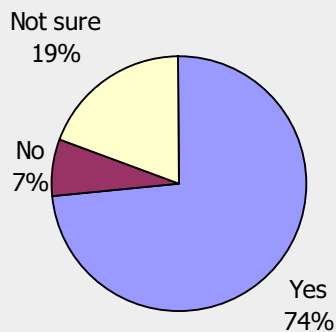
**Do you think Homesearch is a fairer way of letting homes?**



**Q3. Do you think Homesearch will give you more choice about where you would like to live?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	73.3%	660
No	7.3%	66
Not sure	19.3%	174
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>900</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>22</b>

**Do you think Homesearch will give you more choice about where you would like to live?**



**Q4. We intend to advertise vacant properties via free property sheets in the following places: - Council / Registered Social Landlord offices - Local**



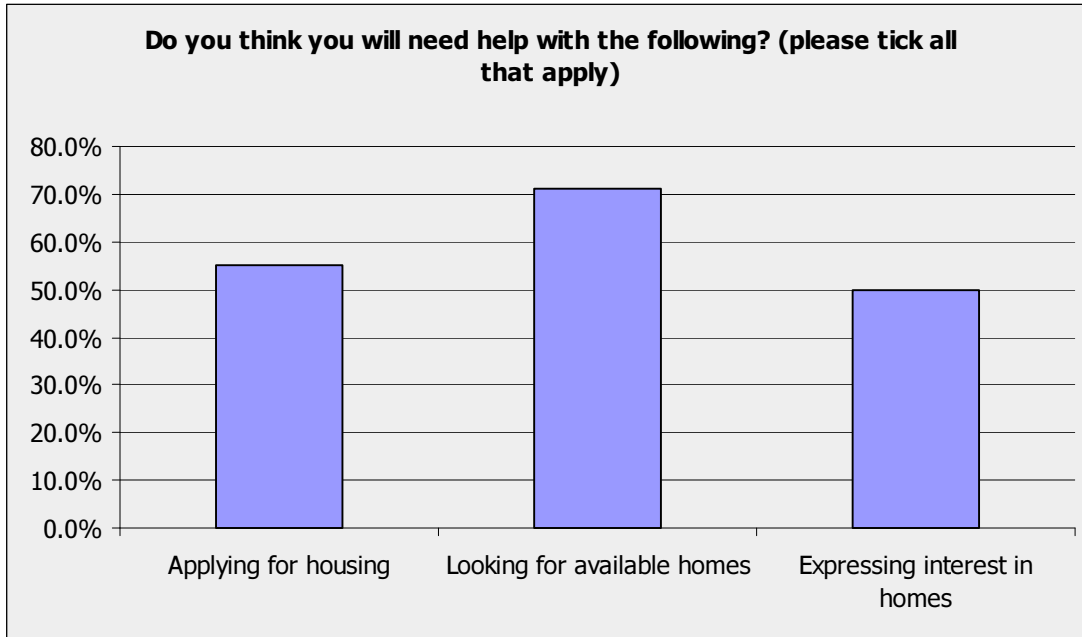
**Libraries - Advice and drop-in centres - Hostels and temporary accommodation** Would you like to see properties advertised anywhere else? (please state).

Answer Options	Response Count
	431
<i>answered question</i>	<b>431</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>491</b>

- Evening Post or Free Paper x130
- Internet x108
- Post office x12
- Doctors/Health Centres x10
- By post x15
- Sheltered schemes
- Supermarkets
- Leisure Centres
- Parish Council Notice Boards
- Job Centres
- Mobile libraries
- Sure start
- Age concern
- Local shops
- Shelter
- Gumtree website
- Email
- Council website

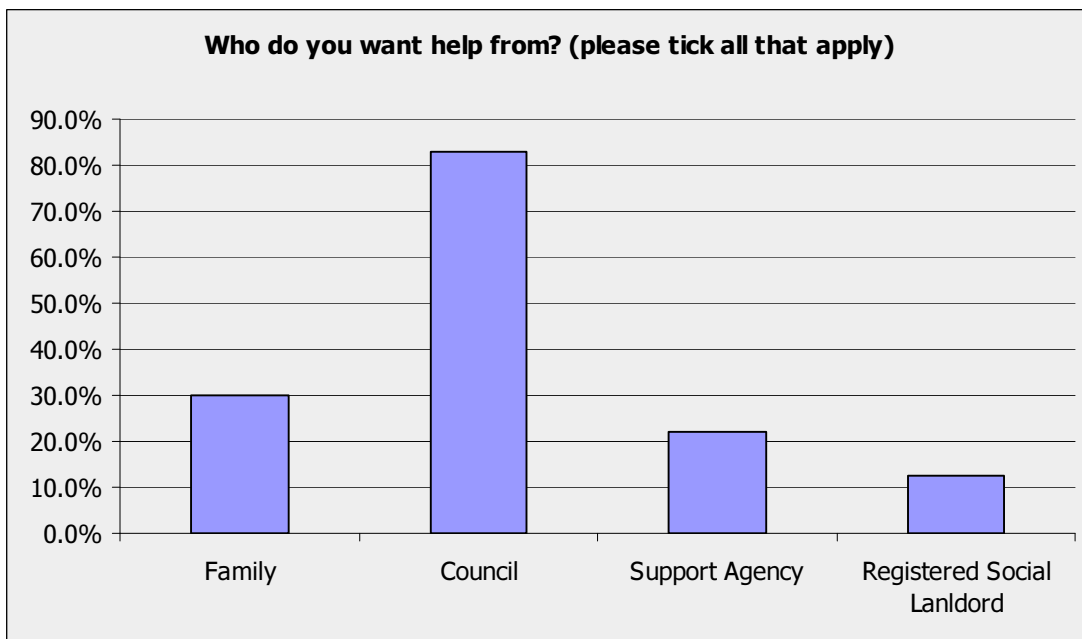
**Q5. Do you think you will need help with the following? (please tick all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Applying for housing	55.2%	342
Looking for available homes	71.0%	440
Expressing interest in homes	50.0%	310
<i>answered question</i>		<b>620</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>302</b>



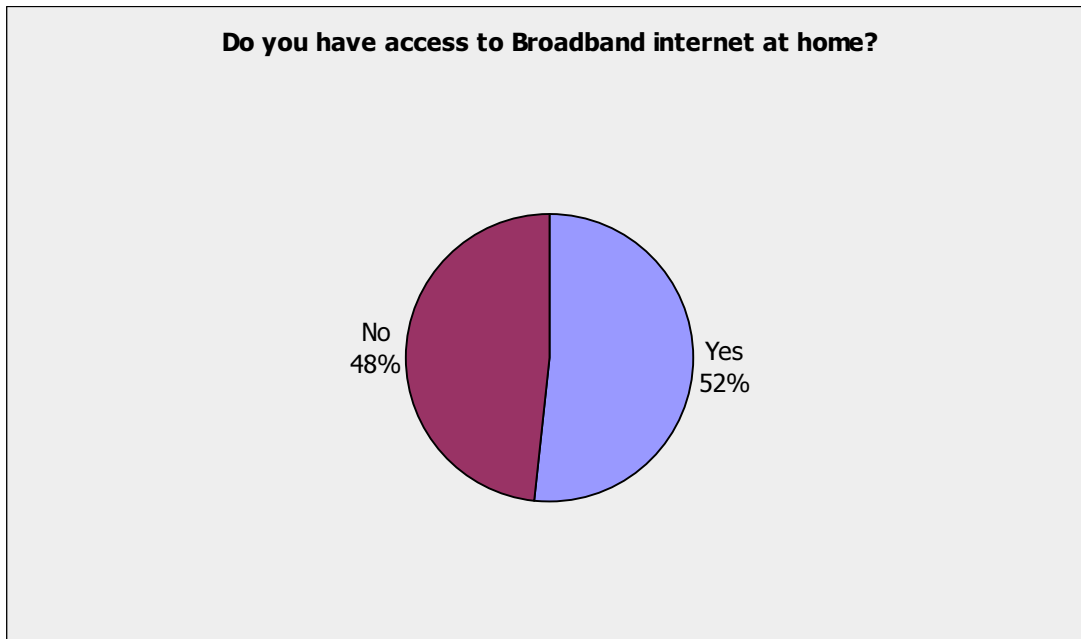
**Q6. Who do you want help from? (please tick all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Family	29.8%	197
Council	82.9%	549
Support Agency	22.2%	147
Registered Social Landlord	12.7%	84
<b>answered question</b>		<b>662</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>260</b>



**Q7. Do you have access to Broadband internet at home?**

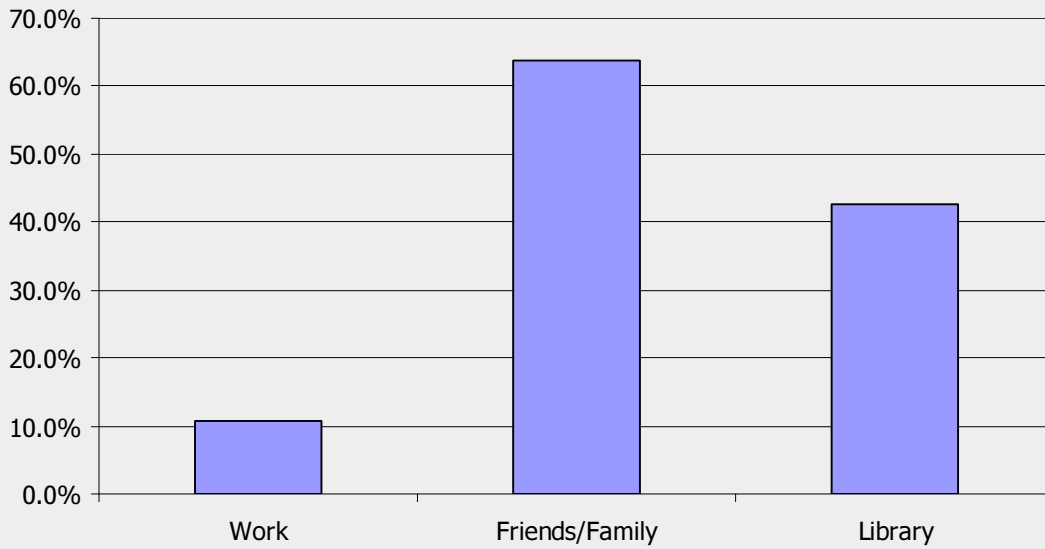
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	51.8%	463
No	48.2%	430
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>893</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>29</b>



**Q8. If you answered "No" to question 7, do you have access to Broadband internet elsewhere? (please tick all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Work	10.6%	29
Friends/Family	63.9%	175
Library	42.7%	117
Other (please specify)		92
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>274</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>648</b>

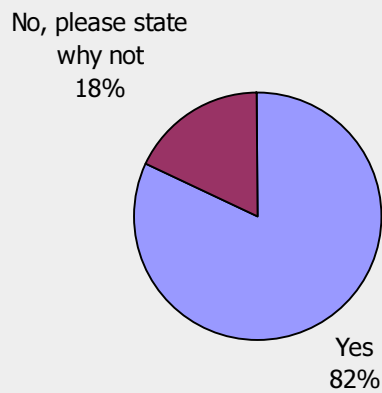
**If you answered "No" to question 7, do you have access to Broadband internet elsewhere? (please tick all that apply)**



**Q9 Do you think the draft policy will be a fairer way of allocating housing?**

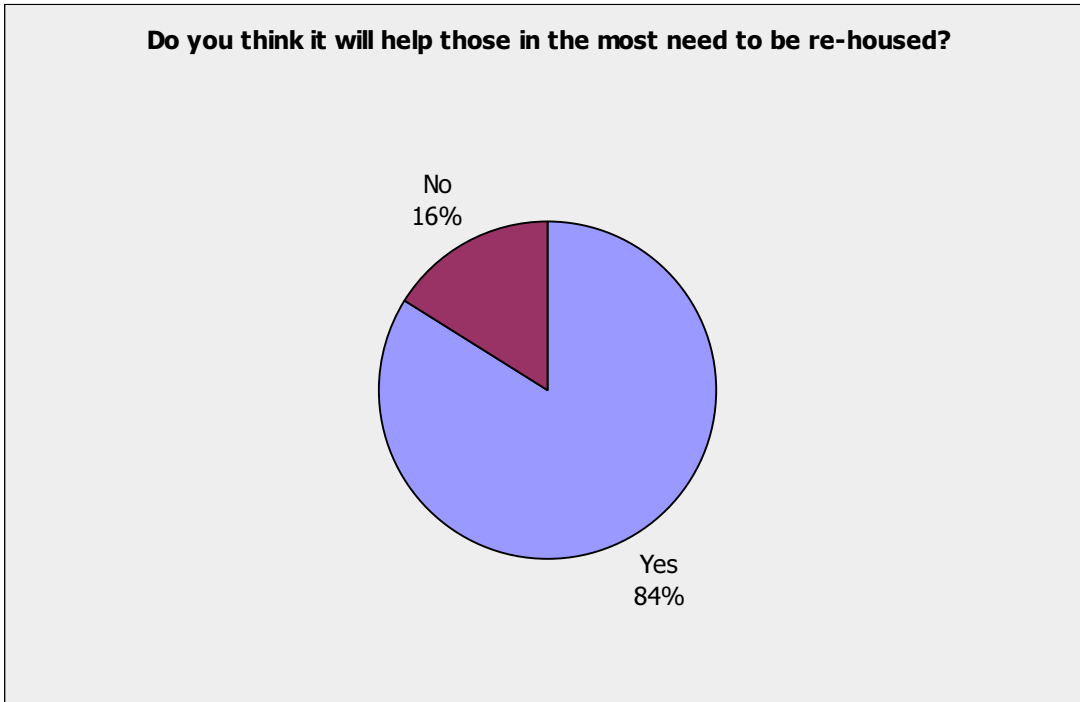
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	81.9%	720
No, please state why not	18.1%	159
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>879</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>43</b>

**Do you think the draft policy will be a fairer way of allocating housing?**



**Q10 Do you think it will help those in the most need to be re-housed?**

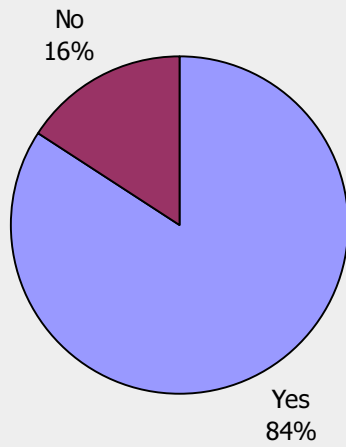
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.9%	734
No	16.1%	141
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>875</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>47</b>



**Q11 Do you agree with the proposed banding system?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	84.1%	736
No	15.9%	139
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>875</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>47</b>

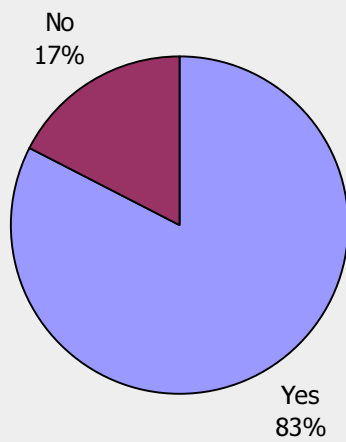
**Do you agree with the proposed banding system?**



**Q12 Do you agree with how we propose to band applicants?**

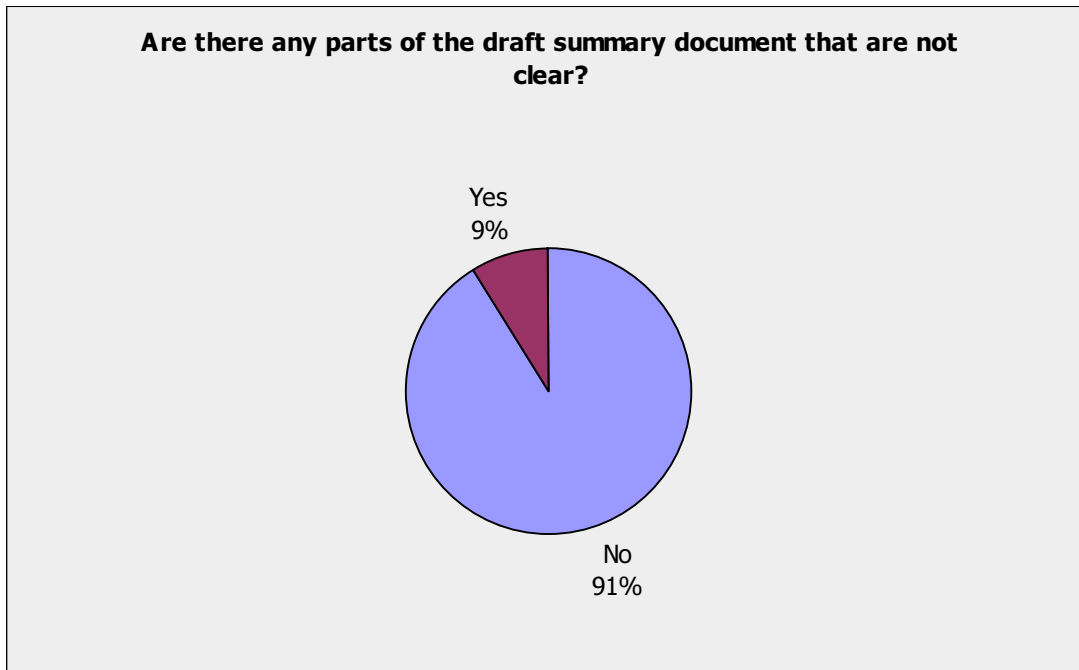
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	82.6%	719
No	17.4%	151
<b>answered question</b>		<b>870</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>52</b>

**Do you agree with how we propose to band applicants?**



**Q13. Are there any parts of the draft summary document that are not clear?**

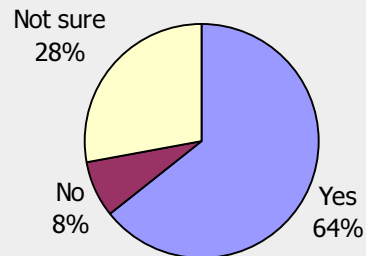
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	91.1%	788
Yes	8.9%	77
If yes, what are they		89
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>865</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>57</b>



**Q14. Do you think people who have more than one need within a band should be given more priority, for instance, moved up to the next band?**

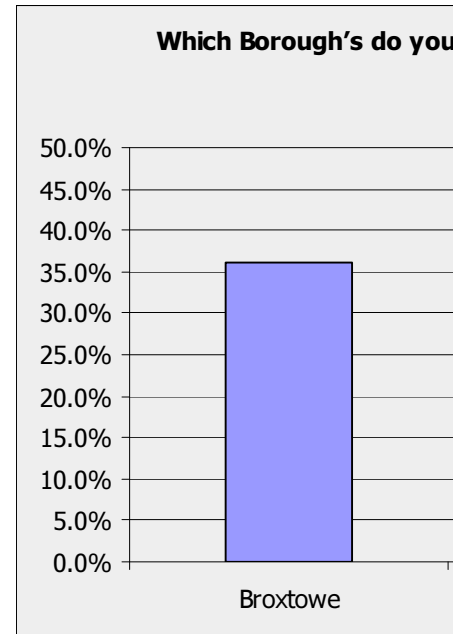
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	64.4%	563
No	7.8%	68
Not sure	27.8%	243
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>874</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>48</b>

**Do you think people who have more than one need within a band should be given more priority, for instance, moved up to the next band?**



**Q15. Which Borough's do you have a local connection to? (tick all that apply)**

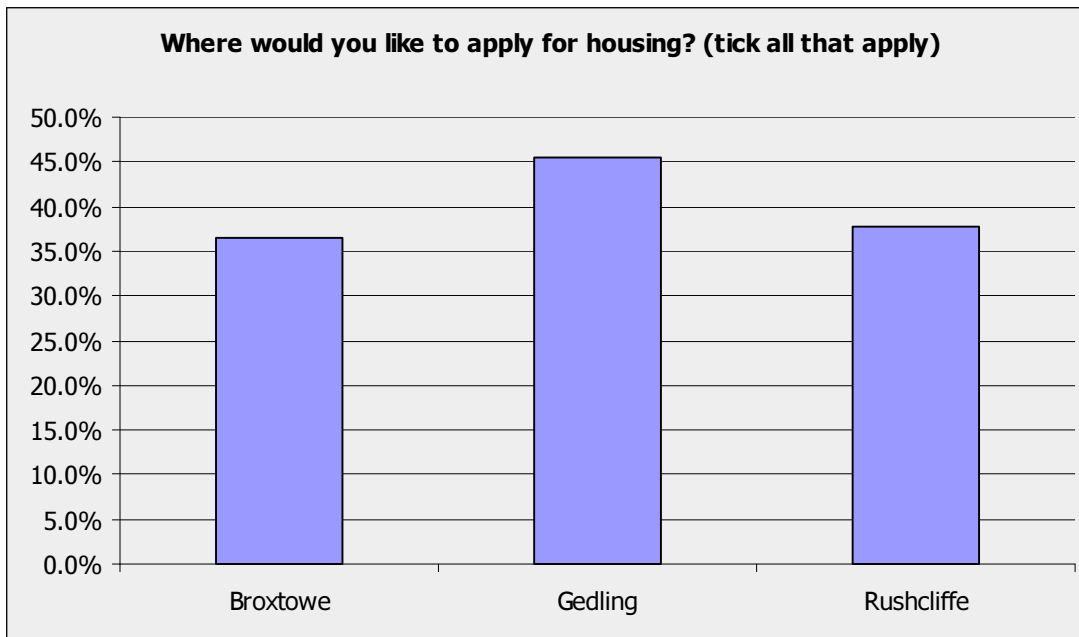
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Broxtowe	36.2%	317
Gedling	44.9%	393
Rushcliffe	32.1%	281
<b>answered question</b>		<b>876</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>46</b>





**Q16. Where would you like to apply for housing? (tick all that apply)**

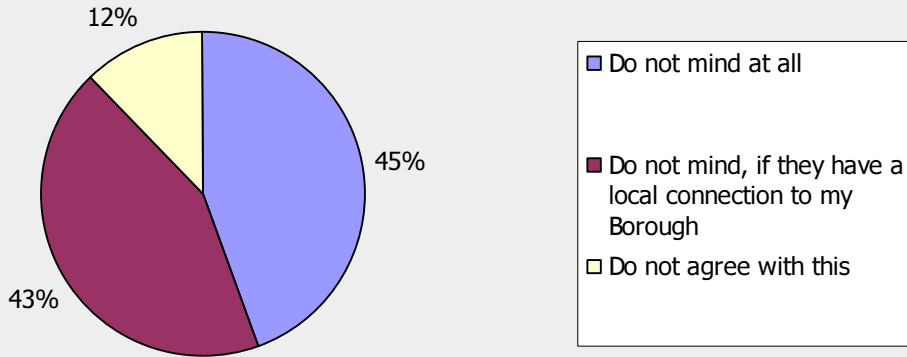
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Broxtowe	36.5%	317
Gedling	45.5%	395
Rushcliffe	37.7%	328
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>869</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>53</b>



**Q17. How do you feel about other people applying for housing in your area?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Do not mind at all	44.4%	391
Do not mind, if they have a local connection to my Borough	43.4%	382
Do not agree with this	12.3%	108
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>881</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>41</b>

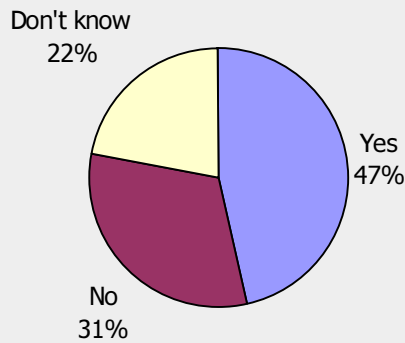
**How do you feel about other people applying for housing in your area?**



**Q18 Will the advertising of properties encourage you to look at areas you would not have considered before?**

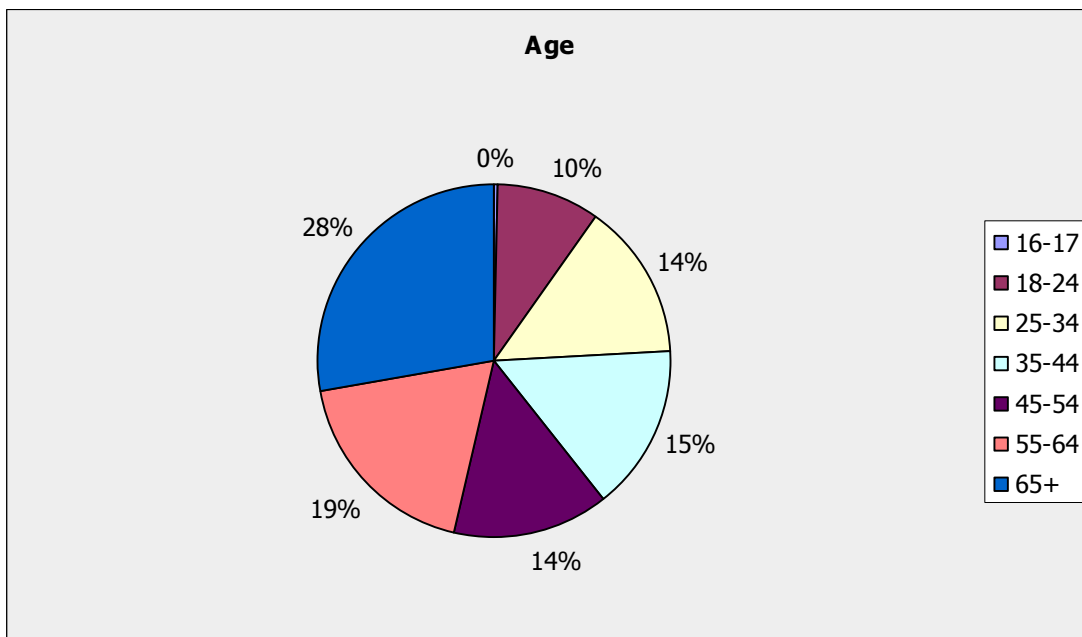
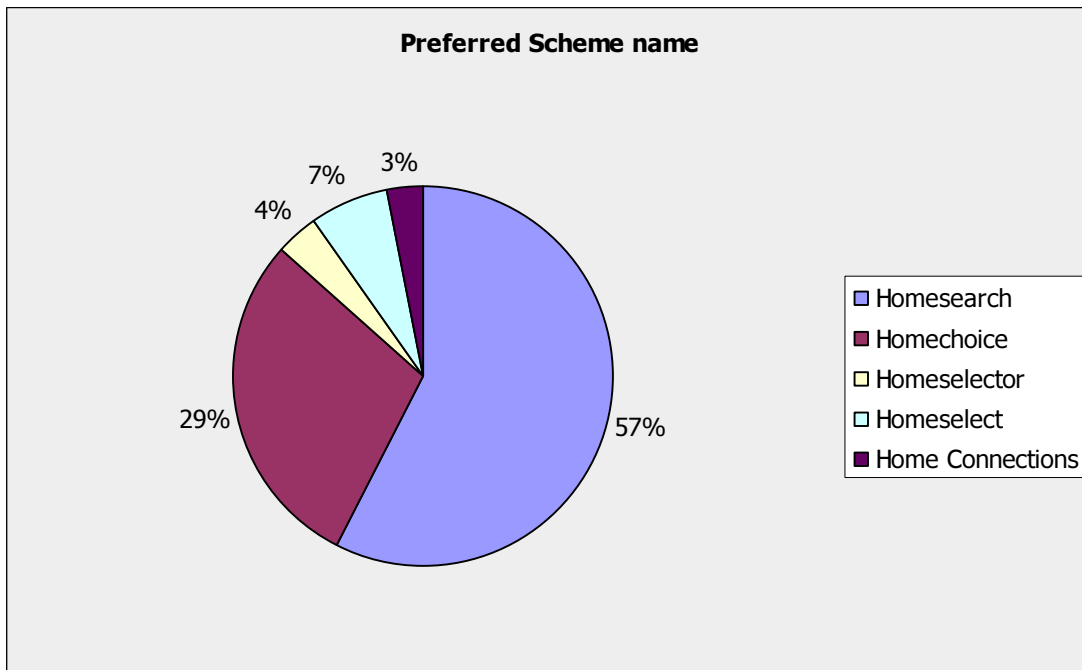
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	46.5%	408
No	31.4%	275
Don't know	22.1%	194
<b>answered question</b>		<b>877</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>45</b>

**Will the advertising of properties encourage you to look at areas you would not have considered before?**

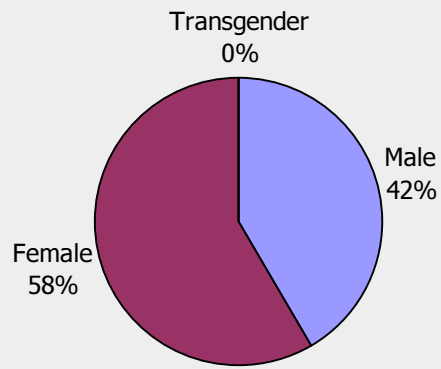


**Q19 Preferred scheme name**

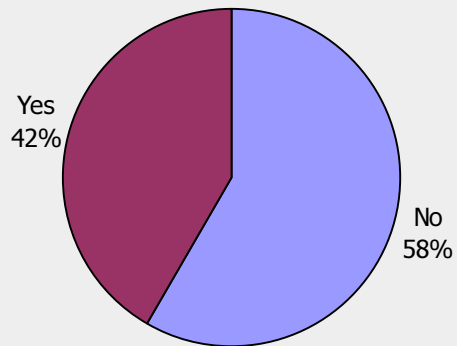
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Homesearch	57.5%	450
Homechoice	29.0%	227
Homeselector	3.8%	30
Homeselect	6.5%	51
Home Connections	3.1%	24
Alternative Suggestion:		50
<b>answered question</b>		<b>782</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>140</b>



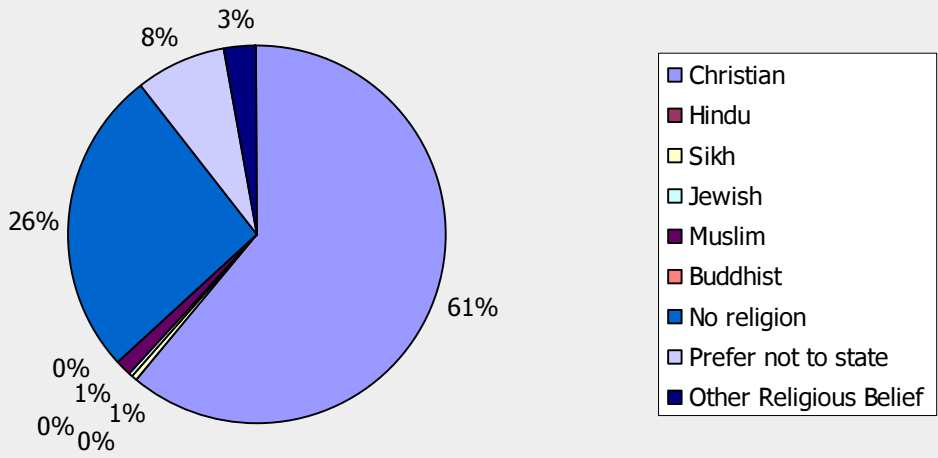
**Gender**



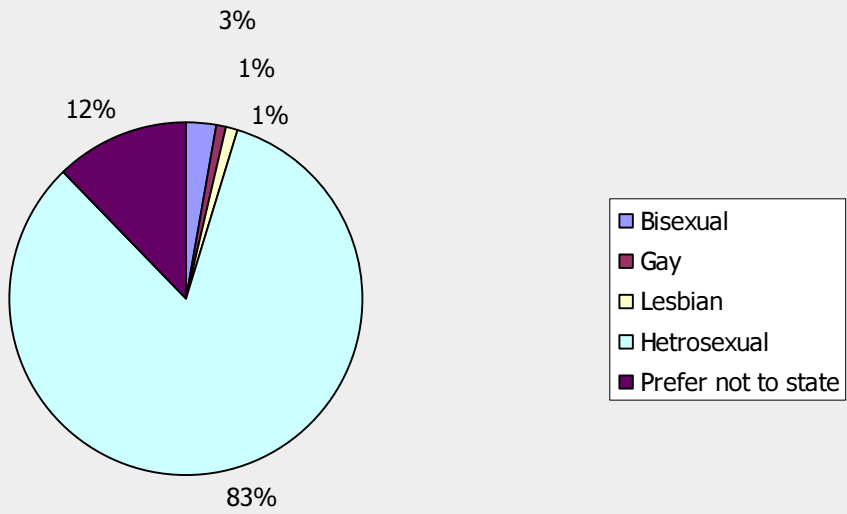
**Section 1 of the Disability Discr**



**Religion. Religion/Belief is any religion, religious belief, faith or similar philosophical belief.**



**Sexual Orientation**



## Appendix B

### Implementation budget

	2008/09 (£)	01/04/09 to 31/12/09 (£)	01/01/10 to 31/03/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	TOTAL (£)
Salary costs of project co-ordinator	11,242	24,348	8,100	24,300	67,990
Project implementation	0	0	28,200	56,400	84,600
Staff training, supplies and services incl. printing	0	0	0	37,800	37,800
Miscellaneous costs	336	64	100	500	1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,578</b>	<b>24,412</b>	<b>36,400</b>	<b>119,000</b>	<b>191,390</b>
Funded by:					
DCLG	5,750	15,739	17,800	38,900	78,200
Improvement and Efficiency Partnership	0	0	15,700	34,300	50,000
Three Councils in total	5,828	8,673	2,900	45,800	63,200

1. Each Councils total contribution for CBL project will be £21,100, this can be met from existing budgets including a carry forward from 2009/10 of £7,800
2. Improvement and Efficiency partnership grant is to be drawn down once IT related milestones have been achieved likely to be June and October
3. CLG funds are held with Broxtowe Borough Council

### Estimated annualised costs

	Total Cost (£)	Comment
<b>Hosting, Support and Maintenance.</b>	23,129	
Other Annualised Costs – please detail below		
<b>Enhanced housing options</b> (option to be decided upon)	3,500	
<b>Fee for 0300/0303 number processing</b> for up to 24,000 minutes per year in total across all partners	2,640	
<b>SMS Outgoing Messages</b> (bundle of 24,000 messages per year)	1,920	

<b>Ongoing welcome letters</b> (and user guide and coupon sheet) based on 1200 per partner and postage and packaging.	2,304	Abritas do not provide this service so price is estimated based on Home Options quote
<b>User guide</b> print cost based on 7000 copies	2,796	As above
<b>Application form</b> print cost based on 7000 copies	2,796	As above
<b>Estimated printing costs incurred within housing departments</b> for printing property advert lists for customers and to be displayed in public areas	15,000	As above
<b>TOTAL ANNUALISED COSTS</b>	54,085	18,028 per authority

1. RSLs who participate in the scheme are expected to contribute towards the annualised costs, an indicative charge would be £45 per property advert for those with fewer than 50 properties in the scheme. The fees for these RSL's are to be charged on a case by case basis. For larger RSL's the costs will be around £36 per advert for those with 50 or more properties, assessed at 10% turnover per annum and charged annually in advance. BC's are currently in discussions with them about charging and although they are broadly in agreement with the scale of charges, this will be finalised before scheme launch although the project group have agreed that there will be no charge for RSLs during 2010/11. The annual costs recovered will be in the region of £36,000 for the three authorities per annum.

**Appendix C**

**Choice Based Lettings and Housing Allocations Policy**

**For Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Borough Councils**



## ALTERNATIVE FORMAT OR LANGUAGE REQUIRED?

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format such as large print, Braille, audio tape or translated into a different language, please contact your local Customer Services Centre on:

### **Broxtowe Borough Council**

Foster Avenue  
Beeston  
Nottingham  
NG9 1AB

0115 9177777

### **Gedling Borough Council**

Civic Centre  
Arnot Hill Park  
Nottingham  
NG5 6LU

0115 9013901

### **Rushcliffe Borough Council**

Civic Centre  
Pavilion Road  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham  
NG2 5FE

0115 981 9911

[customerservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

This document contains the Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Housing Allocations Policy and details of the Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme.

### **Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Choice Based Lettings Scheme**

Applications for and allocations to social housing stock are administered through the Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe choice based lettings scheme, known as **Homesearch**.

The choice based lettings scheme has been developed to provide more choice for people looking for a home.

The way the Choice Based Lettings scheme works is detailed fully in this document. It sets out how available properties are advertised, who can bid, how bids are made and how lettings and offers of accommodation are made.

### **Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Allocations Policy**

Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Borough Councils have agreed an allocations policy through which the choice based lettings scheme is operated.

The allocations policy sets out who is eligible to apply and how priority is given to different applicants.

As there are not enough social housing properties in Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe to meet demand, it is necessary to prioritise applicants so that properties that become available are offered fairly.

The policy will be reviewed annually to reflect changes in legislation or local housing priorities.

### **Legal Framework**

The Housing Act 1996 Part VI states that all Local Authorities must have and publish an Allocations Policy and ensure that properties are let according to that policy.

This policy also adheres to the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 and subsequent statutory instruments and regulations.

Throughout this document, Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Borough Council's are referred to as "*the partnership*" and applicants for housing are referred to as "*homeseekers*".

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

The partnership Borough Councils are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices in the provision of services. We understand that communities thrive and prosper where individuals and groups are treated fairly, with respect and given equality of access to rights and services.

The aim of this document is to ensure that applicants for housing (homeseekers) are treated fairly. In the implementation of this policy, homeseekers who are eligible to join this scheme will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race/ethnicity, age, disability, gender, religion/belief or sexuality.

## **STATEMENT ON OFFERING CHOICE**

The partnership Borough Councils are committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of social housing in the partnership area. However, the ability to offer Homeseekers choice has to be balanced against a legal requirement for an allocation scheme to ensure that those in greatest housing need are given priority for social housing.

It must also be recognised that there is very high demand for affordable housing in the South Nottinghamshire region and that this demand cannot be fully met from the current social housing stock. Consequently, it is the expectation of the partnership Councils that in most cases only those applicants in greatest housing need will obtain social rented accommodation.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Details relating to each homeseeker, including the fact that you are registered on the scheme will not be divulged to any third party without the express consent of the homeseeker. Sometimes the Council is obliged to disclose information without consent of the applicant, such as to the Police for the prevention and detection of crime (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, S17).

Homeseekers will be asked on the application form to give permission for Broxtowe, Gedling or Rushcliffe Borough Council to share, where necessary the information provided with other members of the choice based lettings scheme and other relevant agencies. Information will only be shared if permission is given by the homeseeker.

You have the right to access the personal information we hold about you. This includes information we hold as paper and electronic records. If you would like to access the information we hold about you, please contact the Freedom of Information officer at your local council.

## CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Borough Councils (the partnership) offer available properties through a Choice Based Lettings scheme called **Homesearch**, which aims to give people looking for housing more choice in where they live.

The scheme is simple to use and easy to understand:

**Register** – Fill in an application form available from your local council or online at [www.....](#)

**Choose** – A property from the fortnightly adverts on the website, free property sheets and kiosks  
**Express your interest** – Tell us about the properties you are interested in (also known as bidding) by phone, post, text, website or in person

Once a homeseeker has applied to join the scheme, their application will be processed in accordance with the allocations policy and a priority band will be awarded. The priority band will reflect the urgency of the homeseeker's application and will also explain any limitations on the type of property a homeseeker can bid for (for example a house or flat)

All available properties are advertised every fortnight to homeseekers who have successfully registered to join the scheme. This is known as the "advertising cycle"

The adverts can be found on the website or through free property sheets at libraries, drop-in centres, advice centres and Council offices or even through special kiosks situated in many Council buildings.

The adverts give detailed information about the properties available such as number of bedrooms, location, rent, property type, whether pets are allowed. The adverts also say who is eligible to "Express an Interest" for the property (for example from which council area, from which bands, any age restriction etc)

Once a homeseeker has found a property that they are interested in and that they are able to “express an interest” in, they can let us know using the telephone number, via the website, by text, by post or in person.

Expressing an interest doesn't involve any money (except the cost of a phone call, text message or postage) and homeseekers can express an interest for up to 3 properties every fortnight. Expressions of interest won't count if a homeseeker tries to choose properties that they are not eligible to express an interest in (for example if a homeseeker tries to choose a 4 bedroom house when what they are eligible for is a 2 bedroom house).

Once the advertising cycle closes all expressions of interest received for each available property are drawn together in a shortlist. The property is offered to the homeseeker who has the highest priority band and who has been waiting longest.

If that applicant refuses, the property will be offered to the next highest applicant and so on until the property is let.

Feedback on all properties let through the Homesearch Scheme is given. This includes how many homeseekers were interested in the property, which band the successful homeseeker was in and how long they had been waiting.

All homeseekers will be offered housing options advice regardless of whether they have joined the scheme or not.

## REGISTRATION

Anyone can make an application for housing and most people are eligible to join the Homesearch scheme.

Some people are not eligible to join the scheme because of legal restrictions or because their previous housing history means they are not considered suitable to be given a tenancy.

### How To Register

If you wish to join the Homesearch scheme you will need to register on the scheme by completing an application form.

#### Online

You can complete the form online at [www.homesearch.gov.uk](http://www.homesearch.gov.uk)

Or print an application form from the website

Or request that an application form is sent to you

#### By Post

Paper application forms are available from the Civic Centre or from any of the Rushcliffe Contact points. Completed application forms should be returned to the Civic Centre or any of the Rushcliffe Contact points (see the back page of this policy for a full list of Contact Points and their opening times).

#### In Person

You can fill in an application form at in person at the Civic Centre

### Who Can Join

People aged 16 or over who live in the Common Travel Area

The Common Travel Area includes:

The United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)

The Channel Islands

The Isle of Man

The Republic of Ireland

You must have your main homes and be currently resident in the Common Travel Area when you make your application.

Therefore the main groups of people eligible to apply to join the scheme are:

- British and Irish Citizens
- Commonwealth Citizens permitted to stay in the UK
- People from the European Economic Area who have the right to reside in the UK
- People from the “A8” or EU countries who are a “worker” (People from the A8 EU states can only gain the status of worker once they have worked **continuously** for a period of 12 months)

A8 countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic

### **Refugees**

Refugees currently living in the Common Travel Area who have been granted leave to remain within the UK.

### **Other groups**

There are other people who are eligible to apply such as: vulnerable British nationals formerly resident in Zimbabwe who are part of the UK Government’s Zimbabwe Planned Resettlement Programme.

## **Who Cannot Join**

### **People under 16**

Applicants should be at least 16 years of age at the time of applying

### **People living outside the Common Travel Area**

You must be resident in the Common Travel Area at the time of applying

### **People who are not “habitually resident” in the UK**

Anyone, including British nationals who have lived outside the Common Travel Area within the last two years may not be classified as “habitually resident”. People who are not “habitually resident” are not eligible for re-housing.

### **People subject to immigration control**

People subject to immigration control as described by the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 are not eligible for an allocation of social housing

### **Perpetrators of Anti Social Behaviour**

People whose behaviour makes them unsuitable to be a tenant are excluded from being able to join the scheme. (See section the section on Exclusions from the Scheme below for further information).

## **Application Requirements**

This section tells you about the requirement applicants will be expected to fulfil.

### **Local Connection**

Any person can apply to join the scheme; however, applicants who meet the above criteria and who have a local connection to Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe will be given priority over applicants who do not have a local connection. **This means that most of the properties advertised will only be available to homeseekers who have a connection to the area the property is in.**

We define local connection as:

- Resident in the Borough for 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years (including those in HM Forces accommodation)
- Working in the Borough currently for 16 hours per week or more (including those employed in the area by HM Forces)
- Having a strong family connection with the Borough – i.e. mother, father, brother, sister or adult children who you are in close contact with and who have lived in the Borough for at least 5 years

Residence in the area must be by the applicant's choice so people who are currently in prison or probation hostels will not usually have a local connection.

There are homeseekers who do not need to have a local connection to receive priority on the scheme. These cases include:

- Applicants who have been accepted under homelessness legislation
- Applicants who have been accepted for priority re-housing as a reciprocal arrangement with another local authority or Registered Social Landlord (RSL)
- Care leavers from the partnership Councils who were placed outside the area but wish to return
- Applicants from outside the partnership Councils who have been accepted as part of a witness protection recommendation by the police
- Applicants living in temporary accommodation outside the partnership area who had a local connection to one of the Boroughs at the time they were placed
- Applicants from outside the partnership area who are victims of domestic violence and who cannot return to their place of origin for fear of violence

### **Mobility between areas**

Properties will normally be advertised by relevant local authority area within the Homesearch partnership. All Homesearch applicants will be encouraged to bid for any property they are eligible for and interested in irrespective of local connection. Properties are shortlisted in order of the applicant's local connection to that authority area. Should there be no applicants from within the local authority area, then applicants from the rest of the Homesearch partnership area will be considered. If there are no bidders from the rest of the partnership area, then out of area applicants will be considered.

Some properties will be advertised with no local connection requirement which means that any homeseeker can express their interest (as long as the property advertised is the right size and type).

### **Family Applications**

Applicants will be regarded as being a family household where at least one dependent child is living permanently within the household. The term dependent child includes children who are adopted or fostered.

Dependent children are defined as children aged up to 18 and who must be living with the applicant as their main home. Children aged over 18 but still living at home are regarded as adult members of the household.

Children who do not live permanently in the applicant's home, or who have their main home elsewhere (for example due to access arrangements) will not be counted as permanent members of the household.

### **Joint Applications**

Joint applications can be accepted from couples and people who are not couples but have a long term commitment to live together. Both joint applicants must agree that they are applying together.

Joint applications can include:

- People who want to share a home as partners
- Relatives wishing to live together where there is a long term commitment to a shared home
- Friends wishing to live together where there is a long term commitment to a shared home
- One of the parties is a carer for another

### **Applicants no longer wishing to apply jointly**

If one or both applicants in a joint application no longer wish to apply jointly, separate applications can be made from the original joint application. When a request to split the joint application is received, each party's circumstances will be re-assessed separately and an appropriate band awarded.

### **Single applications**

Single applicants can include single people living on their own, single parents with dependant children living with them or people wanting to apply for a tenancy in their own right who may have other people included in their household on their application. If a single applicant is offered and accepts a tenancy, the tenancy will be granted only in their name.

### **Homeowners**

Homeseekers who own a home (including holiday or second homes, land or other property in the UK or abroad) are allowed to register with Homesearch but **MUST** declare any interest in land or property they have.

In determining their eligibility on the Housing Register or to qualify for an offer through Homesearch, an assessment of whether the applicant has sufficient funds to secure housing for themselves will be made. Those homeowners who are assessed as having sufficient funds to secure housing for themselves will be placed in Band 4 only.

Older people and disabled owner-occupiers living in conditions of disrepair or in unsuitable accommodation will be considered for rehousing, although resources available to them would be taken into account (including grants available for repair etc and the capital value of the property).

### **Pregnant Applicants**

Applicants who are pregnant will be accepted as a family applicant requiring appropriately sized accommodation as soon as their pregnancy has been confirmed.

### **16 and 17 year olds**

Although people aged 16 and 17 can apply to the list, they will usually only be considered for housing after they have reached 18.

The exceptions to this are:



Young people accepted under homelessness legislation  
Care leavers (with a recommendation from Children's services)

### **Members of HM Forces**

Serving members of HM Forces are entitled to apply to join the scheme. However, their application will be placed in a low band until within 8 weeks of discharge.

Civilian spouses/partners of serving HM Forces personnel who are under notice to leave married quarters due to relationship breakdown will be assessed in the same way as other applicants.

### **Prisoners**

Prisoners serving a sentence will not be actively considered until within 6 weeks of release date. This must be verified by probation or prison staff.

For the purposes of local connection, the prisoner's address immediately prior to sentence is used.

### **Applicants with rent arrears**

Applicants with rent arrears owed to a local authority or RSL are eligible to join the scheme but should note that most landlords will not accept bids from people with arrears until there is an agreed repayment plan in place and records show that the plan is being adhered to and that the arrears have been reduced.

Most RSLs will also want to make sure that adequate support is in place to ensure that an applicant with former tenant arrears can manage an independent tenancy.

### **Homeless Applicants**

Homeseekers who have made a homeless application to Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Councils and who have been found to be homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless will be placed in Band TWO.

Homeless Applicants in temporary accommodation may be placed in Band ONE if the accommodation they occupy is urgently needed for another homeless family or if they have been in temporary accommodation for more than 12 weeks after receiving their decision.

In this case, a homeseeker would only be given limited time of 8 weeks to bid for available properties. If no successful bids are made during these 8 weeks, the Council will allocate a suitably sized property to the household. The Council will only offer one property and this offer will discharge in full the Council's duties to the homeless household. Refusals of such an offer will result in the homeseeker being removed from Band ONE.

### **Applicants with No Fixed Abode (NFA)**

Homeseekers with no fixed abode MUST provide a care of address where post can be sent. This could be a friend, relative or support agency's address. Homeseekers stating they do not have a fixed address will be invited to see a Housing Advisor for urgent advice and help to find somewhere to live.

## **Exclusions from the Scheme**

Some people's behaviour means that they are unsuitable to become tenants. People who have behaved anti socially will not be permitted to join the scheme. People who have behaved in the following ways are likely to be excluded from joining the scheme:

- Current or former tenants who have been in serious breach of their tenancy conditions due to anti social behaviour:
  - Individuals who have been served with an injunction
  - Individuals who have been served with a Court Order (such as a Suspended Possession Order) on the grounds of anti social behaviour
  - Individuals whose landlord has commenced Court proceedings because of anti social behaviour
  - Individuals who have been evicted by their landlord because of anti social behaviour
- Anyone who has caused wilful damage to a council or RSL property. This includes the tenant, a member of the tenant's household or visitors to the property.
- Anyone with a history of serious anti social behaviour and/or criminal behaviour. Behaviour likely to be considered as serious includes:
  - Physical assaults (including domestic, racial and homophobic violence)
  - Severe damage to property (including schools, dwellings and cars) – for example, arson attacks
  - Threats to of violence and/or damage, including threats to kill
  - Persistent and offensive verbal abuse, due to a person's religion, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or other reason
  - The use of dwellings for the cultivation, supply and use of drugs
  - Persistent/widespread criminal activity such as domestic burglaries or vehicle crime
  - Very serious and persistent noise nuisance continuing for long periods of time
- Anyone who has been violent to or threatened staff or agents of Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Council, an RSL, other previous landlord or the police.

**All cases will be considered on their individual circumstances before a decision to exclude them is made.**

## Information You Need to Provide

To go with your application form, you will need to provide some information about you and your household. Your application cannot be registered without this information, so please make sure you have provided the following:

**Identification** – Identification for all members of your household is required.

**Children** – You will need to provide proof for all children who live permanently at your address. This must be a letter from HM Revenue and Customs confirming child benefit or tax credits for each child living with you permanently. Please make sure that the letter shows your child/children's name and date of birth.

**Access arrangements** – If you have access to your children you will need to provide proof such as a copy of the access agreement, court order, custody or residence order.

**Immigration status** – If you are not a UK citizen you will need to provide proof that you are eligible for social housing in the UK. Proof would be your home office documentation.

**Residency Checking** – The Council has to confirm that you are living at the address you state on your application form. The Council often uses a credit reference agency to do this. If you are not registered for Council Tax or are not on the electoral roll, you may need to provide some other proof that you live at the address on your application form (such as a utility bill in your

name, an NHS medical card, letters from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) or other benefits etc).

## **False Statements and Withholding Information**

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the homelessness Act 2002 states:

- (1) A person commits an offence if, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under the Part –
  - a) he/she knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular, or
  - b) He/she knowingly withholds information which the authority has reasonably required him/her to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.

This means that it is an offence to give false information or knowingly withhold information you have been asked for regarding your application to Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Homesearch.

Where false information is found to have been given, a homeseeker may be excluded from registering with Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Homesearch. Where false information has resulted in a homeseeker obtaining accommodation, Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Council or a partner Registered Social Landlord (RSL) may bring possession proceedings for the recovery of the property.

## **Assessing Applications**

### **Medical Need**

If you are applying to move because you have a medical condition, a mobility problem or a permanent physical disability you will need to provide information about your condition and how your condition is affected by your current housing (e.g. you need to move following a stroke which has affected your mobility to such an extent that you can no longer manage stairs and require ground floor accommodation). We may need further information regarding your need to move. This could be a letter from your GP, social worker, occupational therapist or other health or social care professional that is aware of your condition.

The information you provide with your application will be assessed by a panel who will decide, based on the information you have provided, which band, if any your application qualifies for.

### **Welfare Need**

You should provide as much information as possible about your need to move (examples of a need to move on welfare grounds could include: because you need to provide essential care to a relative or because you need to be near essential services that you could not access without moving). You will need to provide proof of your need from your GP, social worker or other health/social care professional that is aware of your problems.

The information you provide with your application will be assessed by a panel who will decide, based on the information you have provided, which band, if any your application qualifies for.

### **Threatened with loss of accommodation**

If you have been asked to leave your accommodation, you will need to provide proof such as a copy of your notice to quit; possession order or letter from your employer (if you live in tied accommodation).

## Reviews and Appeals

### Appeals against Banding

If you disagree with the Band you have been awarded, you have the right to ask for your application to be looked at again. You should submit any relevant information that you did not include in your original application. A senior officer will review your application and write to you to tell you the outcome of the appeal.

### Appeals against exclusion

Anyone who has been notified that they have been excluded from the scheme has the right to appeal against the decision. All appeals should be in writing to the head of the housing department at whichever partnership council you applied to.

Exclusions from the scheme are reviewed each year. If the homeseeker can provide evidence that their behaviour has improved and that they are now suitable to become a tenant (perhaps following a successful private tenancy or stay in supported accommodation) they will be allowed to reapply to join the scheme.

### Annual review

Your application will be reviewed each year at which time you will be asked to tell us if your circumstances have changed in any way.

It is important to complete and return your review form so that we have up to date information about your need for housing. Failure to complete your review could result in you being removed from the housing register.

### Changes in circumstances

You should let us know about any changes in your circumstances. For example, someone leaves or joins your household or there is a change to your income.

Changes may mean that we have to review your application and your priority banding may change.

## CHOOSING A HOME

The scheme advertises properties available for social rent, private rent and low cost home ownership

### Property Adverts

All available properties are advertised every **fortnight**. The adverts are available on the website at [www.....](http://www.....) The website can be viewed from any computer that has internet access (such as at the local library or through friends and relatives) and from the computer kiosks provided at Council offices. Applicants who are not sure how to access the website or don't have access to the internet, can contact their local housing office for advice.

The Council also provides free property advert sheets. Free property sheets are available at:

- Council Offices and Rushcliffe Contact Points
- Local libraries
- Community centres
- Advice centres
- Support services (such as MST, HLG, Catch 22, Framework)

- Hostels and temporary accommodation

Applicants who have no access to the internet and cannot leave their home or access the adverts in any other way can have the free property sheet sent directly to them every fortnight.

## Choosing a Property

The adverts contain details of the property type, who the landlord is, where the property is and how much the rent is. The adverts contain a range of symbols which tell you more details about the property:

	How many bedrooms the property has		Wheelchair accessible or adapted for disabled use
	Minimum age for bidders		Maximum age for bidders
	Property has a garden		No pets allowed
	Sheltered accommodation		Off road parking

These symbols help you choose a property that is the right size and type for your household. They also give useful information like whether the property has a garden, whether pets are allowed and whether there are any age restrictions for the property.

The online property adverts can even give information on local facilities in the area: Schools, health services, leisure centres, shops etc.

### Property Types

The property advert will tell you which homeseekers are able to bid for each property. The table below shows who is eligible for what type and size of property. Here are some general guidelines:

**Houses** - houses with two or more bedrooms will only be available to households with dependent children under the age of 16.

**1 bed flats/maisonettes** - Only let to singles or couples without dependent children. Homeseekers with a specific need for ground floor accommodation (due to medical or welfare need) will usually be given first consideration.

**2+ bed ground floor flats/maisonettes with private garden** – Usually let to families with older children or to homeseekers who have a specific need for ground floor accommodation

**2+ bed ground floor flats/maisonettes, no garden** – Usually let to homeseekers who have dependent children over 16, who have access to children or who are adult sharer.

**Parlour houses** – These are houses with 2 living rooms and are usually let to larger families or those families who have a medical recommendation for a ground floor bedroom.

**Bungalows** – Only applicants who have a medical priority or a recommendation by Occupational Therapy/Health or those applicants over 60 will usually be considered for bungalows.

**Supported accommodation (warden aided or sheltered accommodation)**

This type of accommodation is usually only let to homeseekers who are over 60. Homeseekers who are aged under 60 and who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance may also be eligible.

**Group/Alarm linked** – Generally let to homeseekers who are over 50 who live independently but need low level support. Homeseekers who are aged under 50 and who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance may also be eligible.

**Property Size**

You should only choose a property that is the right size and type for your household. Most landlords don't allow households to under-occupy a property so make sure it has the right number of bedrooms.

The chart on the next page gives general guidelines as to which households are eligible for which sort of property.

Household type		Property size											
		0	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	5	60+
Minimum beds		0	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	1	1
Maximum beds		2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	5	5	2	2
Bedsit/Studio		✓											
1 bedroom	Flat/maisonette	✓	✓									✓	✓
	Bungalow	✓	✓									✓	✓
	House	✓	✓										
2 bedroom	Garden flat/maisonette	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓
	Other flat/maisonette	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓
	Bungalow	✓	✓		✓							✓	✓
	House				✓	✓	✓						
3 bedroom	Flat/Maisonette			✓				✓	✓				
	Bungalow							✓	✓				
	House							✓	✓	✓			
4 bed	House							✓	✓				
5 bed	House								✓	✓			
Sheltered	Sheltered Accommodation											✓	✓
	Group/Alarm linked											✓	✓

**Restrictions**

Local Connection

Most properties are restricted to people who have a local connection to the borough (see above for definition of local connection). The property advert will tell you if the property is only available to homeseekers from a particular area.

### **Rural Exception Sites**

These are properties that have been built to meet the local need in rural communities. These properties are restricted to homeseekers who have a connection to the parish or village only and cannot be let to people who do not have a connection. See above for definition of local connection)

### **Age**

Some properties are only suitable for people over a particular age. The property advert will tell you if there is any age restriction.

### **Local Lettings Policies**

These are policies that have been agreed with the landlord to help create sustainable communities. They are restricted to particular areas or estates and each have different criteria to meet the objectives of each scheme. The property advert will tell you if there is a local lettings policy in place and what the criteria are.

Once you have found a property that is the right size and type for your household, in an area you would like to live in, you are ready to bid.

### **Direct Lets**

A direct let is where a property is let to a registered homeseeker without it being advertised. All members of the Homesearch Partnership have the ability to undertake direct lets under certain circumstances. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Lets to homeless applicants who have not secured a property within a reasonable timescale (any such let will be a “final offer” of accommodation and will be in discharge of all duties to that household). See section on Band One for further information.
- Emergency re-housing requested by the police or other statutory body (only by the agreement of a senior housing manager)
- In other exceptional circumstances (by agreement of a senior housing manager)
- Direct lets are rare and it is the intention of the Homesearch Partnership to let the vast majority of available vacancies via the property adverts.

## **EXPRESSING YOUR INTEREST**

Expressing your interest (also known as bidding) in a property lets the council know which properties you would like to be considered for. Expressing your interest doesn't involve any money (except the cost of postage, a text message or telephone call). If you express your interest on-line it's completely free.

You can express your interest in up to **THREE** properties each per advertising cycle.



## How to Express your Interest

Expressing your interest in a property is simple. Make a note of the **Property Reference Number** (at the top of each advert) for the properties you are interested in.

By **Online** - Log onto the website at [www.....](#) and follow the “How to Express Your Interest” instructions

By **Telephone** on 0300 ..... [Insert tariff details here](#). The automated telephone service will ask you for your name and registration number and the property reference numbers of the property you want to express your interest in.

By **Text** - You can text your interest to .....

By **Post** – You can use the coupons we have sent you. Just fill in the squares which correspond to the number of the property you are interested in. For example: If you are interested in a property with the Property Reference Number 1234, fill in the squares on the first line under the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4

In **Person** – You can also bid in person at the Council offices. You will need to have your registration number handy and some identification.

By **Proxy** – You can have someone to bid on your behalf if you wish. This could be a family member, support worker, social worker or someone else. Please let your housing office know if you want someone to bid on your behalf.

### Assisted Bidding

This is where the Local Authority makes bids on a homeseeker’s behalf when they fail to express an interest in advertised accommodation deemed to be suitable for their needs. Assisted bids will be placed on accommodation that best suit a homeseeker’s situation based on available properties and the general housing circumstances of the area.

Assisted bidding will be used in circumstances such as:

- Accepted homeless applicants (after a total of 12 weeks after being notified of the decision)
- Band One homeseekers deemed in urgent need of accommodation
- Where vulnerable homeseekers ask Homesearch to make bids on their behalf

## What Happens Next?

### Short listing

A shortlist of homeseekers who have expressed an interest for a property is automatically created once the advertising period has ended.

The shortlist will sort all expressions of interest by:

- Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Choice Based Lettings scheme band
- The date you were placed in the band

This means that an offer will normally be made to the homeseeker from the highest band that has been registered the longest.

The shortlist will be passed to the landlord of the property advertised who will be responsible for allocating the property.

### **Offers**

If you have been successful with your expression of interest, you will be contacted by the landlord that owns the property with details of the potential offer.

Each landlord may have a different process that they follow when offering a property.

All landlords participating in the Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Choice Based Letting scheme reserve the right to:

- Give preference to homeseekers who specifically need the services or facilities that are part of the property
- Carry out checks on the information you provided as part of your application
- Withdraw an offer if checks reveal issues that are not included in your application
- Withdraw an offer if the property becomes unavailable for letting
- Carry out a property inspection (if you are a current Council or RSL tenant)

### **Viewing**

Each landlord may have a different process for arranging for you to view the property. You should have the opportunity to view the property if you have been made an offer before deciding whether you wish to accept the offer.

### **Refusing Offers**

Homeseekers are generally under no obligation to accept an offer of accommodation and refusing an offer will not affect their position on the list. However, there are some exceptions to this.

Exceptions to this include:

Homeless Households - Where the offer of a property is made to a homeless household as a "Final Offer" in discharge of a duty under homelessness legislation. If a "Final Offer" is refused, and the property was suitable for the homeseeker, it is possible that no further offers will be made and the application may be reassessed and placed in a lower band.

## **ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND BANDING SCHEME**

### **BAND ONE – URGENT PRIORITY**

Applicants are prioritised in each Band according to the date of registration, irrespective of their priority reason.

#### **Urgent Social Priority**

Applicants who have a permanent (life-long or terminal) or chronic medical condition, illness or disability and as a result are unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation. An applicant's current home MUST be assessed as no longer being accessible or suitable and only where urgent rehousing is assessed as being vital will applicants be awarded Urgent Social Priority

Examples include:

Hospital discharge where the applicant cannot return home

Applicant is unable to access essential parts of their home e.g. bathroom, kitchen  
Accommodation is assessed as being life threatening to the applicant

### Urgent Property Factors

- Tenants of Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Councils or a partner RSL who live in the Borough and who are required to leave their home as a result of a regeneration scheme, major repair (permanent decant) or demolition/clearance
- Applicants whose home is subject to a demolition order
- Applicants whose home is subject to Environmental Health Action such as statutory overcrowding or an HHSRS Category 1 hazard which cannot be resolved and is likely to lead to homelessness
- Emergency fire or flood - tenants of Rushcliffe, Gedling, Broxtowe Borough Councils or a partner RSL who live in the Borough and who are unable to return to their tenancy due to extensive works required following a fire or flood

### Severe Overcrowding

Applicants whose current accommodation is overcrowded by **two** bedrooms or more. The following table shows which household members are entitled to a bedroom:

Household Member	Bedroom Eligibility
Couple/Single parent	1 bedroom
Single adult (age 18+)	1 bedroom
Person with confirmed medical need for own bedroom	1 bedroom
2 children of the same sex	1 bedroom
2 children of different sexes, until the eldest is 10	1 bedroom
2 children of different sexes where one is aged 10+	2 bedrooms

A claim of overcrowding is usually only considered where it arises as the product of natural growth (i.e. it occurs when a new child is born, adopted/fostered). Overcrowding caused by people of any age coming (back) to live in the property would not usually be awarded this priority unless there is proof that the person causing the overcrowding had no other option but to move into the property. In this circumstance, the application will only be placed in this Band once the situation has existed for either 6 months or 6 months after receipt of the application.

If the applicant's current property has two reception rooms, providing there are no safety reasons why it cannot be used as a bedroom (such as the presence of a fire with back boiler), then one reception room will be counted as a bedroom when assessing the application.

### Severe Violence/threats of violence

This applies to applicants who are at significant risk in their current home because they are experiencing severe harassment (including racial and homophobic harassment), domestic violence or other threats of violence and there is an immediate risk of very serious harm or death to a member of the household if they were to stay in their current accommodation. This category will only be awarded by a senior officer following referral or advice from the relevant statutory agency including the Police

### Under Occupation

This applies to tenants of Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Borough Councils and partner RSLs who live in the Borough and whose current home is too big for the assessed needs of their household by **two** or more bedrooms.

Only those tenants willing to move to a one-bedroom home or give up **two** bedrooms will be considered in this category. Participation by tenants in this scheme is on a voluntary basis.

### Urgent Temporary Accommodation Move

- Applicants who have to move from temporary accommodation provided by the Council because another applicant needs the accommodation.
- Applicants who have been accepted as Homeless by Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Council **and** who have been in temporary accommodation for more than 6 weeks after receiving their decision (applicants will be given 6 weeks in this band before a property is allocated to them in discharge of the Council's duties).

## **BAND TWO – HIGH PRIORITY**

### Homelessness

Where the Council has accepted a duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (i.e. homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless)

### Homelessness Prevention

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness within 8 weeks of the date of application. This category can only be awarded following a Housing Options Interview with a Homelessness Prevention officer.

This can include:

- Private tenants who have been served valid notice to quit through no fault of their own and who do not have available resources to secure alternative accommodation
- Owner occupiers faced with repossession through no fault of their own and where mortgage rescue or other options are not viable and who do not have available resources to secure other accommodation
- Tied tenants retiring through age or ill health or who are being made redundant who do not have available resources to secure alternative accommodation

### Urgent Management Cases

Tenants of Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Council or a partner RSL who currently live in the Borough and where there is a firm recommendation to move for the following reasons:

- **Personal Protection/harassment**

This applies to applicants who are at some risk in their current home because they are experiencing harassment (including racial and homophobic harassment), domestic violence or other threats of violence. You will need to provide evidence from the police, anti-social behaviour

unit or other relevant agency. For cases of severe/extreme harassments or threats of violence see Band One above.

- **Succession**

- Where a statutory succession has taken place but the property is unsuitable for the successor because it is too big or has special adaptations and suitable alternative accommodation is being sought
- Where a non-statutory succession has been agreed

## **Young People Leaving Care**

This category includes young people in the care of the Local Authority who are nearing their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday and who will have to leave care after they reach 18. Awarding of this band will be made in accordance with the procedures set out in the County 16 and 17 year old's protocol.

## **Move-on from Specialist and Supported Accommodation**

Applicants who are ready to move on to independent living from supported accommodation. Applicants will be awarded this category following referral from the accommodation or support provider with confirmation that the applicant is ready to move on and has the life skills to maintain an independent tenancy. The referral should also detail any move-on support package in place.

## **Gender/Sexual Overcrowding**

Applicants whose household is subject to gender overcrowding. This is defined as:

- A child aged 10 or over who has to share a bedroom with a child/adult of the opposite sex
- A child aged 10 or over who has to share a bedroom with their parent/parents

## **Social Housing Tenants Under Occupying**

Tenants of Rushcliffe, Gedling or Broxtowe Borough Council or partner RSLs, currently living in the Borough and whose present home is too big for the assessed need of their household by **one** bedroom and who wish to move to smaller accommodation.

## BAND THREE – MODERATE PRIORITY

### Lodgers with dependant children

Applicants with dependent children who share facilities with a family, friends, an ex-partner or a landlord who lives in the same property (but not people who are tenants, joint tenants or owners of the property they occupy).

### Moderate Social/Medical Need

- Applicants whose household includes a person(s) whose illness or disability is made worse by their present home and who need a move to improve their condition but a move is not essential.
- Applicants who experience hardship in their current accommodation and who need a move to improve their situation but a move is not essential and who do not meet the criteria for other Bands.

This could include:

People who need to be close to specialist educational facilities

People who need to be close to special employment/training

Foster parents who require larger accommodation

### Homeless but not in Priority Need

Applicants who have been assessed by the Council's Housing Options team as being homeless but not in priority need.

### Intentionally Homeless

Applicants who have been assessed by the Council's Housing Options team as being homeless but who have done/failed to do something as a consequence of which they have lost accommodation that would otherwise be available to them.

### General Overcrowding

Applicants whose household is overcrowded by **one** bedroom (although households experiencing gender overcrowding are awarded additional priority in BAND TWO)

The following table shows which household members are entitled to a bedroom:

Household Member	Bedroom Eligibility
Couple/Single parent	1 bedroom
Single adult (age 18+)	1 bedroom
Person with confirmed medical need for own bedroom	1 bedroom

2 children of the same sex	1 bedroom
2 children of different sexes, until the eldest is 10	1 bedroom
2 children of opposite sex where one is aged 10+	2 bedrooms

### Families in flats

Applicants with dependent children who live in first floor (or above) flats/maisonettes and who do not have access to a private garden.

## BAND FOUR – LOW PRIORITY

### Lodgers without dependant children

Applicants who share facilities with family, friends, a landlord or an ex-partner (but not people who are tenants, joint tenants or owners of the property).

### Social housing tenants with a desire to move

Tenants of Registered Social Landlords who have no other housing need but wish to move to alternative accommodation.

### Private tenants with a desire to move

Tenants who live in private rented accommodation who have no other housing need but wish to move to alternative accommodation

### Owner occupiers

People who own their own home and have been assessed by Housing Options as having sufficient resources to assist themselves.

### Holding band for serving HM Forces personnel

Applications from serving HM Forces personnel will be placed in Band 4 until within 8 weeks of discharge date.

Once notified of discharge date, the application will be re-assessed and placed into a higher band if the criteria for that band are met.

**Adapted Properties**

Property that has been adapted for an applicant with disabilities.

**Allocation Policy**

This explains the rules that determine how the Council and Landlords allocate social housing properties.

**Bid**

The way to let us know an applicant is interested in an advertised property which can be done via the website, by telephone, text message, post or in person.

**Band**

The category of need an applicant will be placed on which is based on their current housing situation

**Choice Based Lettings**

A way of allocating housing through the use of an advertising scheme

**Direct Let**

When a property is offered to a household without it having been advertised

**Effective Date**

The date an application is placed in a housing needs band, used as the applicable date when short listing

**Eligibility**

The term used to describe factors that match an applicant to a property. For example, the size of your household and the number of bed spaces in a property.

**Exclusion**

The term used for applicants who will not be allowed to bid for a property.

**Expressing an interest**

Your way of telling the landlord that you would like to live in a property

**Extra Care Properties**

Housing that is designed with the needs of frailer older people in mind and with varying levels of care and support available on site

**Homeseeker**

A person who has completed an application form and is registered on the housing system.

**Mutual Exchange**

A swap of accommodation between two social housing tenants that relies on each tenant moving permanently into the other persons/tenants property.

**Nomination**



The term is used when a local housing authority provides, from its housing register, the name and details of an applicant to a landlord for an offer of housing.

**Registered Social Landlord (RSL)**

A housing association or a not-for-profit company registered by the Housing Corporation to provide social housing