

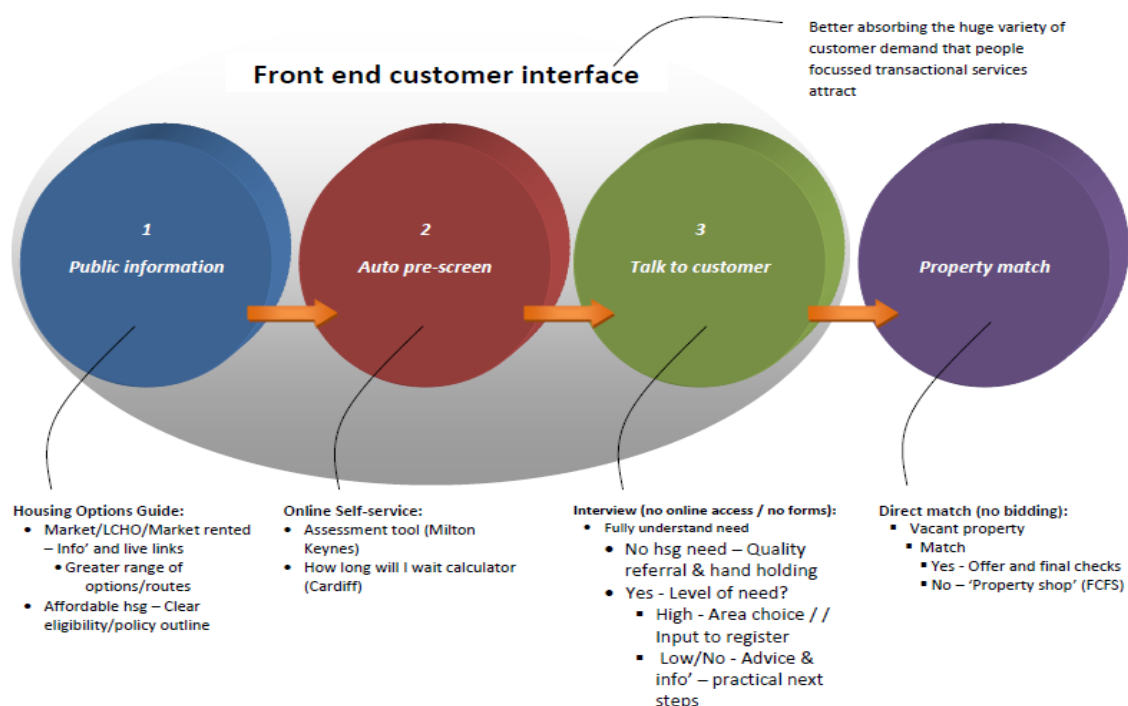
Proposals & Consideration for the Future

1. New Operating Principles

- Fully understand the customer's need and receive correct info at first point of contact.
- Resolve customer demand by
 - Building relationships rather than transacting
 - Taking responsibility rather than referring
 - Listening, interpreting and problem solving
- Have up to date and detailed information about our properties
- Make it clear to customers what we can and can't do

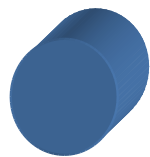
2. Proposed System Redesign

System picture - fundamentals:



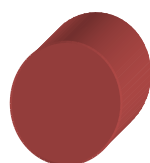
3. System Overview:

The front end customer interface to comprise three key steps:



i. Public Information

- Information setting out clear eligibility and qualification criteria and likelihood of getting a social rented or affordable home.
- Clear links through to housing options/advice service for those wanting to consider other routes i.e. private rented sector, mutual exchange, low cost home ownership / market housing etc.



ii. Self service Pre-Screen

- Online self-service assessment tool enabling customer to input basic household details and preferences to generate an assessment of their chances of being offered a home.



iii. Talk to Customer

- Mediated access to the register
- Compulsory interview with a housing advisor
- Variety of customer demand understood rather than 'assessed'.
- No application form
- Fully trained and supported staff making decision based on policy about housing need.
- Expected waiting time discussed with customer at interview
- Online access for information on application to check details
- Make it clear to people what we can and can't do.



iv. Property match

- No bidding – Direct match against register as properties come available in real time. For properties where no match or repeat refusals – Property shop
- Property match undertaken at point notified property becoming void to reduce costs
- Take over 60s properties via different route/policy

4. **Option - An Ongoing Sub-Regional Approach**

Data for the calendar year 2015 shows York exported 98 applicants and imported 57, leaving a net export of 41. York currently allocates around 6% (between 33 and 42) of its available properties each year to Bronze Band applicants (though a proportion of these will be imports).

The only district York imported more households than it exported during 2015 was Ryedale (23 out/31 in).

Sixteen of the 98 households leaving York during 2015 were in Bronze Band, 52 within Silver and the remaining 30 in Gold Band. Analysis of property type suggests Bronze Band applicants from York are likely to be moving to 'harder to let' properties in other districts.

Moving from a sub-regional approach is unlikely to impact greatly on York's ability to prevent homelessness as the city imports more households (57) than priority homeless (19) exported.

5. **Fact finding visits to Portsmouth and Bradford**

Following design of the proposed model, staff visited Portsmouth and Bradford who it appeared had adopted similar processes to the proposal to gain greater insight into the potential ways of working, the pitfalls, and what Portsmouth and Bradford had learned whilst delivering their current models of service.

Summary of Key findings from site visits:

- No application form reduces waste
- No unmediated access gives fuller picture of customer circumstances and needs
- Removing on line application removes waste but can cause bottleneck further down the line, customers like to view their information on line even if not update.
- Allocation is preferred method of letting rather than Choice Based Lettings Bradford do have some Choice Based Lettings for hard to lets
- Compulsory registration on home swapper for exchange applicants
- Piloting any change is advocated by both Bradford and Portsmouth
- Staff buy in to changes is key
- Measures are key to ensure system and procedures are working, management constantly measuring all areas of register/lettings etc
- Full detailed property information is key with the Bradford scheme and gives customers informed realistic choice up front.

Following the visits to Portsmouth and Bradford a number of staff consultation events are in progress to discuss the proposed improvements and changes. Customers are also being consulted.

6. **Suggestions for York regarding future improvements**

- All applications via interview /phone interview - **no online registration.**
 - Staff feel this should continue.
- Consideration to self serve preliminary assessment tool.
- No actual physical waiting list application form that a customer completes but each has an interview in person or by phone prompt sheet for staff to complete to ensure all critical and appropriate questions are asked.
 - Staff feel it would be beneficial to only ask necessary questions, and prompt sheet would be essential to ensure nothing missed.
- Consider developing an in house / purchase an alternative IT system waiting list, with web based presence for customers to view. Basic information is needed on an IT system (*This links to Housing IT review / needs. Systems would benefit from talking to each other!*)
 - Staff do not wish to keep Abritas system it is cumbersome and labour intensive.
- Allocation not via Choice based lettings. The disadvantage to offering a property rather than advertising it, is that it appears less transparent, customers do not see there to be choice (though allocation would be based on good knowledge about what a person wants / need / is eligible for). System could be put in place to inform about who was allocated a property.
 - Staff predominantly believe this is the right way forward with some allowance for property shop approach as and when required/needed.
- Ensuring or making it mandatory that transfers also register on homeswapper.
- **Changes to policy** - In light of demand for housing, new guidance, Housing and Planning Act 2016, and appeals there are elements of the policy which need discussing and may require changing such as:
 - Removing those with no housing need from the register
 - Consider elderly who would not otherwise be able to resolve their won housing need who may not traditionally be classed as in housing need

- change criteria for 2 bed (age of sharing same sex suggested 16 not 21 in line with Housing Benefit criteria) as highest demand ,
- no Potentially Homeless Gold band for Family licence termination (living with family)
- no silver band for sharing with family with no other housing need, reduce number of offers to
- 2 (1 for accepted homeless) to reduce number of refusals and void times, removal of good tenant,
- Introduction of 2 year local connection.
- Other considerations are - Welfare Benefit reforms LHA. Look at diversification of tenancies, reconfiguration of stock – need for shared accommodation (CYC Houses in multiple occupation), bedsits for under 35.
- Implications of Housing and Planning Act 2016. To define criteria and introduce fixed term tenancies. Consultation / links with LL services

7. Internal Changes under Consideration

- Improved communications between Housing Registrations, Housing Options and Landlords services regarding individual support needs, risk management and informed decisions about suitability of accommodation /location.
- As part of the ongoing Housing Restructure, confirm who allocates a property.
- Process of allocation – Real time allocations
- Internal procedure improvement. Accurate information must be available re voids - bed size, floor plans floor level adaptations etc.
- Consider offer process 'reasonable offer' Estate Manager discretion based on discussion / update need
- Housing Registrations / Housing Options improved information and assistance to access alternative tenures shared ownership / Home Buy/ intermediate rents.
- Identify vulnerable at point of interview and what package is - FIT / fixed term tenancy / support / IHMS / affordability assessment prior to sign up
- Improve waiting list system / secondary lists for shared ownership, Sheltered, intermediate rents
- Rename sheltered
- Option to advertise hard to lets on homeswapper similar to property shop
- HMO's in CYC tenancies

- Looking at potential of managing other RSL customers/register who have stock in CYC LA area such as HOME, Joseph Rowntree, Yorkshire Housing
- As part of Housing restructure and financial savings look at design of Housing Options/ Housing Registrations and role of specialist workers
- Explore alternative housing provision via rent a room / supported lodgings for single homeless

8. Staff Consultation

- Staff are in favour of giving up front informed choice to customers
- The quick wins currently in place ensuring there is no unmediated access to the housing register staff have embraced and are really seeing the benefits. Giving customers clear concise advise, realistic information about their chances of being re housed in the York area.
- Housing Options and Housing Registrations are already working more closely together and all agree this is having benefits for both teams however they also believe that it is important to have the two distinct roles and teams.
- Allocating properties rather than advertising is the preferred method of allocation by the majority of staff, the choice with choice based letting is seen as perceived rather than real.
- There is a wish to ensure those in greatest need are allocated the short supply of properties we have staff firmly believe only those in assessed housing need should be registered for social housing in York, and that the policy should be reviewed to look at banding for those currently living at home or living in shared accommodation and children sharing ages.
- There is a wish to offer other options of housing to applicants and a real enthusiasm to work on this area look at tangible options in the York area
- Housing Registrations Staff have a desire to run short lists and allocate properties as the end of the registrations process (this is currently carried out by a team of Tenancy Housing Assistants for CYC properties with the Housing Registrations staff doing this for Nomination properties)
- All staff consulted would like to see the number of offers reduced to one or two
- There is little desire for staff within CYC to remain with the current North Yorkshire Home Choice partnership.
- Specialist workers for older persons, youth workers and mental health are considered essential by all staff

9. Customer Consultation

Unfortunately the customer consultation was disappointing in the number of customers taking part, only 5.6% responding with the results being fairly inconclusive. However there were some interesting comments made which are available with the report:

Housing Registration Focus Groups

The 389 applications registered between 01.01.16 and 30.04.16 were consulted regarding the recent changes to the process and further proposed improvements.

Two areas of registrations were identified:

- active or pending applications, current social housing tenants (i.e. those registered for a transfer) and waiting list registrations (not currently social housing tenants).
- those housed

The attached consultation document was used in the focus groups and sent to those being consulted through email or the post.

They were either sent a letter with a freepost envelope for their response, an email or they were invited to attend one of two focus group meetings at West Offices.

Of the 389 tenants who were consulted:

- 301 were asked to give their thoughts
- 61 were invited to a meeting on 31 May
- 27 were invited to a meeting on 2 June

Response:

16 tenants returned their feedback letter

4 tenants emailed

2 tenants attended the meeting on 31 May

0 tenants attended the meeting on 2 June

A total of 5.6 % response

All comments are included in the notes attached.

Summary

Q 1 Which of the following two systems would, in your opinion, be preferable (choose 1)?

- a. The current housing allocations system is Choice Based Lettings. Within this system it is your responsibility to look at the available properties and bid for appropriate ones.
- b. An alternative system is for us to have a team who would allocate properties. We would need to get more information when you apply about what properties/areas you would be interested in and an offer would be made based on this.

A total of 18 responses were received. Of those:

10 (55%) gave a) as their preference

8 (45%) gave b) as their preference

Q 2 Which of the following two systems would, in your opinion, be preferable (choose 1)?

- a. Applicant completing a paper form or on line form, submitting it then waiting for a member of staff to contact you requesting proofs and/or further information.
- b. No application form but all applications processed over the phone or by making an appointment for an interview, with proofs either being brought to the interview or emailed.

A total of 19 responses were received. Of those:

9 (47%) gave a) as their preference

10 (53%) gave b) as their preference

Q 3 Do you think applicants would benefit from (choose 1):

- a. Being able to view their application on line to make sure it is up to date? or
- b. Being able to view and update their application on line (which would then require further checks / proofs)? or
- c. Being able to view their application on line and message required changes to relevant team?

A total of 19 responses were received. Of those:

9 (47%) gave a) as their preference

2 (11%) gave b) as their preference

8 (42%) gave c) as their preference

Q 4 We currently have over 1,600 people on our housing register with about 500 empty properties each year. At the moment around 540 of those on the register do not have any housing need.

- Do you think the policy/register should be streamlined so that people with no housing need don't access City of York Council Housing?

A total of 16 responses were received, of those

9 (56%) said yes

7 (44%) said no

Q 5 At the moment people who are registered for housing can refuse up to 3 properties. Refusal of properties results in properties remaining empty for long periods and loss of rental income. If they refuse 3 they are taken off the register for 12 months.

- In your opinion is 3 properties too many?
- If so how many properties could they refuse?

A total of 19 responses were received, of those:

7 (37%) said 3 properties is too many

10 (53%) said 3 properties is the right number.

1 (5%) said no 3 properties is not enough

1 (5%) said 3 properties is not too many

The suggestions given as alternative number of properties to offer were:

1 respondent suggested 1 property

3 respondents suggested 2 properties

1 respondent suggested 5 properties

Q 6 We do not hold any registers for affordable housing (access to buy property at a certain % below market value); intermediate rents (80% of market rent) shared ownership properties (purchase a percentage of the property and pay rent on the rest), these can be an alternative to renting for some people.

- Do you think this would benefit people?

A total of 16 responses were received, of those:

13 (81%) said yes

1 (6%) said no

2 (13%) said not sure

Several comments were received as listed below..

Its fine as it is

A photo and very brief description is not enough to weed out those who would then turn it (the property) down. If the listings were more like a rental website you would surely cut down time wasters because they could make an informed decision before they bid and therefore you could reduce the offer of 3 properties. Currently you have to bid to see if the property suits.

I think that everyone expects everyone to have internet - not everyone can get to or afford this. Maybe sending a text about property that might be of interest would be a good idea. Its like I have been told I have cancer and have just got out of hospital I haven't been able to bid on any poperties and was told if I don't my name will be removed. The Council hasn't been very helpful at all even th eoverpayment of council tax £20 owed to me was sent (cheque) to my husband at his house in both our names we have bot told the council we are sperated and all the cheque were sent by me in my name but its still to difficult to have my refund cheque sent to me at my address.

I do not have a computer so have to rely on my son to access the site for me. I dont know how long he will be able to do this for me as he has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer.

I think at certain times a 2 bedroom accomodation could be offered to a couple

There is a lot of reference to on line and telephone communication both of which are a nightmare to me and many others, I use a lap top less and less because of being unable to keep up with modern jargon, and my hearing is very poor and mostly I guess what caller is saying especially if English is not callers first language, I prefer written communication. Lettings, I lived in previous property at Poppleton for about 50 years and in present property 6 years and the only property I was offered after my wife was hospitalised after a serious stroke was in Ascot Way Acomb. I turned it down decause someone had kicked back door in and I had found out my wife would not return home. turning that property down was one of my many regrets and wish that I could turn clock back, I would even now consider taking it. The point of all this is that the Council allocated me a dwelling on information they had on me and they got it right, my grief and confusion at the time clouded my judgement, in my opinion why change a system that works. Trust is a two way thing.

In answer to question 1 - The first option to look for your own house and bid has the drawback of only being suitable for those with internet access and a computer to do the searching. Fortunately at the moment I live in an area with good internet speeds and have my own computer, if I had to access your web site through an internet cafe or library it would take me far longer to search for a suitable proprty. Many older people looking to downsize (as am I) may not be able to understand how to use a search engine, let alone a computer, and would be disavantaged by this being the only way to search for a new home. The second option of having to allocate properties has a lot of plus points as it levels up the playing field for those without computers. I would suggest that a combination of the two would be more suitable, The properties could be listed online for those with internet access, but a team could be made responsible for allocation to those without, especially the elderly who may become confused with the process.

In answer to Qn 2 - Again, for those with internet access option 1 is preferable, but I am sure there are still many without access. Option 2 makes more sense as the interviewer will know which questions to ask to ensure that the properties are allocated to the right person so as to prevent the same person moving multiple times to find the right home.

In answer to Qn 3 - Applicants should be able to view their application online and then message required changes to a team, This would ensure that the changes are entered correctly and proofs requested in a timely manner.

Yes, I do believe that only those with a housing need should be registered with York Council housing. BUT I do not see why houses should remain empty for a prolonged period, if people are desperate for a house they should be able to see the property and make their minds up within 3 days to move into the property within 2 weeks. sometimes people have very specific needs - taking myself as an example I need to live near my daughter in Wiggington due to progressive health problems and my property 10 - 15 miles away would defeat the object of moving to York as she would not have the time to travel, see to my needs and then get home to her family to see to their needs (she works shifts as an emergency medical technician on York ambulances and has an 18 month old daughter).

I personally believe that council housing should only be for those with low incomes and that council houses are so few that no more should be sold unless others are built to replace them. But that seems very counterproductive if the houses are being sold at below market value as it would cost more to build a new one. The shared ownership is a good idea for young families on a low income but (again) these should be separated from standard council housing stock and built for this purpose only.

Alternative system - do you already do this when a direct offer is made in some cases? If so, you should keep this option when the team feels a direct offer would help to make best use of what properties are available.

Qn 4 - Most people on low incomes do have housing needs and can be in bad, expensive, insecure tenancies. Their hopes and aspirations for a home with security would be crushed by such a policy. (

Qn 5 - The present system of bidding for properties should work for most people and if they refuse what they have bid for then be removed from list

Qn 6 - Perhaps just provide information to point people in the right direction to the providers of such properties rather than the Council take on the cost of creating and staffing such a register.