

Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee 19.04.22

Transition from North Yorkshire Home Choice to Open Housing allocations system

1. City of York Council has been lead partner in the North Yorkshire Home Choice (NYHC) sub-regional choice based allocations system across North Yorkshire for over a decade. The partnership included all local authorities across North Yorkshire excluding Harrogate. It also includes large scale voluntary stock transfer organisations as full partners. Many Housing Associations use this system to advertise homes across the sub-region.
2. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders in 2018 an executive member decision was taken for York to leave NYHC. This decision was in part linked to the implementation of our new IT system Open Housing and we have been in the formal transition from NYHC to Open over the last few months. Open housing has had a phased go live across Housing and Building Services with the ability to apply for housing available from 07.02.22.
3. The York allocations policy is a choice based letting approach which people can apply to online via Open Housing. It's similar to the NYHC policy in many respects but with some crucial differences. A summary and copy of the full policy can be found in the links below.
4. York formally leaves the NYHC partnership at the end of May when all York data will be deleted from the Civica system used for NYHC. The NYHC partnership will continue without York.
5. Housing Partners in York have agreed to use the York allocations system to let their homes in the City of York Council area excluding Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. CYC has nomination rights to some of JRHT property. CYC will administer all application for partners for their homes in York. We've had This partners are:

Those with a formal Service Level Agreement (SLA):

- Yorkshire Housing
- Home Housing
- Broadacres HA
- York HA

Verbal agreement with SLA to follow if needed* :

- Anchor Housing
- Habinteg HA
- Railway HA
- Hanover HA
- Accent HA

*This group have very small numbers of homes in York.

6. All applicants with a local connection (as defined in the two allocation policies) have been communicated with and advised on how to apply for housing in the 2 respective areas. This has been backed up by reporting across the partnership to ensure everyone in this position is identified and advised.

7. Regular communications have gone out since the end of last year to staff, partner organisations, applicants and the general public via direct mailings, newsletters, social media, and information on relevant websites.
8. There was a backlog of just over 600 housing applications to NYHC in August '21. As the focus was on transition to the York only process the backlog was managed to ensure that only those applications that were urgent went on to NYHC and all others were encouraged to apply via Open Housing once live as it was extremely unlikely that they would successfully bid for a new home on NYHC. All those in the backlog were advised in writing to explain this and applications backdated to when they first applied. Any potentially or actual Homeless applicants went on to NYHC as a matter of course.
9. The Housing Registration team haven been processing applications on Open Housing since 07.02.22. A combination of go live system issues, the impact of covid and staff vacancies have meant that we have not processed as many applications as we expected since this date.
10. On 24.03.22 applicant to NYHC could no longer select York as their desired landlord or administrator of their application.
11. The original intention was for bidding on advertised homes to begin on 07.04.22 but this has been delayed until 28.04.22 to allow for the processing of more application to make it fair to all those who have applied.
12. We continue to advertise homes on NYHC system up to 12.04.22 and applicants will be able to bid on Open Housing from 28.04.22. We will be able to focus the team's full attention on processing applications between these dates and will let homes that become available on a direct let basis. Direct lets mainly apply to accepted homeless families who have not bid successfully over a period and those in need of an urgent move.
13. For those previously registered with NYHC and now registered with York only we have backdated their application to the date they applied to York or the priority banding date where applicable. This means that applicants don't lose any time in band.
14. As of 08.04.22 we have 677 applications waiting full assessment but these are being managed to prioritise those in most urgent need until the backlog is reduced. Of those applications assessed we have found 357 to be non-qualifying. The numbers on the register are:

Band	Number
Emergency	5
Gold	74
Silver	178
Bronze	86
Total	343

Information / websites

Open Housing portal

<https://www.york.gov.uk/OpenHousing#portal>

North Yorkshire Home Choice Website

<https://www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk/>

CYC applying for a council property page including the policy

<https://www.york.gov.uk/ApplyForCouncilProperty>

CYC policy summary page – Who can apply for a council house

<https://www.york.gov.uk/EligibilityForCouncilHome>

Executive Member Decision session 19.07.18

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=932&MId=10869&Ver=4>