

Housing Registrations Scrutiny Review

Update on Recommendation (ii) - Personal interviews for new applicants to be introduced

The Housing Registrations Team introduced no unmediated access to the City of York Council's Housing Register in January 2016, giving all applications a personal interview. Due to the current IT and continued participation in the North Yorkshire Home Choice partnership we can not prevent applicants applying on line, however we do advise at all opportunities that customers will be required to discuss their application with a Housing Registrations Advisor before it can be progressed and assessed. The aim of Advisors speaking to customers is to fully understand their current housing circumstances and their housing needs and wants in the future, enabling Advisors to give individual housing advice based on the customer circumstances. Whilst we can advise customers who have no assessed housing need (Bronze Band) that they are not likely to be re housed in the York area, we can not under the current North Yorkshire Home Choice Allocations Policy, prevent anyone who is eligible for social housing and qualifies from joining the housing register (i.e. has a local connection to the partnership area, is not a homeowner, has income and savings of less than £60k etc).

Since the implementation of personal interviews in January 2016 the number of applicants on the register has remained fairly static, 1618 in January 2016 and 1596 in April 2017. There has been a slight reduction in those registered in Bronze Band, 538 in January 2016 reducing to 552 currently.

Applications received have also decreased slightly from 2809 in 2015 to 2427 in 2016. Applicants can still register on line however, following their registration on line we do still insist on a personal interview for all applicants whether this is face to face or over the phone. As a result of this we have seen an increase in applicants who have no assessed housing need choosing not to progress their application fully, in 2015 30% of applicants who applied and had no assessed housing need (Bronze Band) did not progress their application fully, in 2016 this figure rose to 50%, this is as a direct result of these customers being given clear, concise information about the housing situation in York being advised that they are unlikely to be re housed into social housing and advised about other options or where appropriate to remain where they are.

The reduction in Bronze Band applications progressing has facilitated staff being able to divert resources to those applicants who do have an assessed

housing need and enable them to fully assess and process their applications more quickly. In 2015 the average time to process an application fully was 8 – 10 weeks; in 2016 this has reduced to an average of 4 weeks with many applications being processed to active within a week of them seeing a Housing Registrations Advisor.

We are continuing to review working practices and procedures taking into account customer and staff comments, experiences and feedback, we have recently introduced telephone appointments in addition to the face to face appointments where appropriate and requested by customers as an option.