

Appendix 1

Leicestershire Tenancy Strategy Workshop 16th November 2011

To assist in formulating our tenancy strategy policies a scenario planning workshop was held in November 2011 in conjunction with Blaby, North West Leicestershire, Oadby and Wigston, Charnwood, Hinckley and Bosworth and Harborough councils.

The workshop was attended by a variety of local registered providers of affordable rented housing, local authority representatives as well as other interested bodies such as the voluntary services, adult social care and the probation service. The workshop looked at the potential effect of a variety of different length fixed term tenancies as well as affordable rent for a variety of household types;

- Families with school age children
- Single and Couples under the age of 50
- Low income Households not in receipt of housing benefit
- Households with Disabled Members
- Older People over the age of 50

In determining our preferred tenancy option for each of the above household groups we considered the pros and cons from four different perspectives:

- **The customer.** The primary interests of this group are security of tenure, stability and affordability in the long term. The ability to move within and outside the social and affordable housing market may be of interest to some customers.
- **The Council in its strategic housing role.** The primary interests of the Council are to meet the need and demand for social and affordable housing and to achieve the vision for the district (this includes sustainable neighbourhoods and communities), making the best use of resources in the area.
- **The registered provider and local authority landlord.** The primary interests of providers are to meet the need for social and affordable housing, to enable sustainable neighbourhoods and communities, and to manage sustainable, not-for-profit, businesses.
- **Other interested parties** e.g., health and social care, advice agencies etc. Primary interests include improved health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and disadvantage as well as economic stability.

One page summaries for each of the key groups are shown overleaf (detailed worksheets are available on request.)

Key recommendations from the cross-authority event were;

- Consensus of a general minimum of 5 year fixed term tenancies for all household types, with use of lifetime tenancies for older people in specialist or supported accommodation.
- Shorter and longer tenancies may be appropriate in specific circumstances. For example, specific vulnerable and disabled households, although an identified need to make best use of adapted properties over the longer term.
- Emphasis on automatic renewal of tenancies unless circumstances have changed and this clearly communicated to potential tenants. Need for clear criteria within tenancy policies regarding circumstances when will not be renewed.
- A need for a consistent review process and good advice and support services to tenants whose tenancies are not renewed.
- Clear information and good communication with potential tenants, including Choice Based Letting adverts and website.
- Potential low demand for Affordable Rent which is less attractive to potential tenants than Social Rent. Satisfaction may depend on whether it is being viewed as an alternative to private sector rent.

Families with Children School Age or Younger

- Preferred position was 5 year fixed term minimum with default renewal provided certain trigger points had not been reached. Renewal criteria should not adversely impact on those trying to better themselves e.g. getting work.
- Need for consistent criteria for review and robust appeal process
- Tenancy support services will need to be reshaped; Financial inclusion from start
- Better information sharing. It was also felt essential that support workers involved with households should be consulted/party to any decisions around tenancy renewals
- Homeseekers need clear and easy to understand choice based lettings advertisements
- Lifestage tenancies initially considered e.g. until youngest child reaches 16 Yrs. However, discounted as might provide some with misplaced incentive to have more children
- Community cohesion concerns about neighbours living next door with different security of tenure and rent levels.
- Should enable tenants to move up the ladder within their existing property if they wanted to and their circumstances permit e.g. converting from rent to shared ownership

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| <p>2 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – not suitable for family security; potential health impacts through stress</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role - Bridges the gap between private and social sector. High demand and costs for support services and housing advice. Reduced pride in home & neighbourhood could lead to increased crime, ASB etc.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – reduced pride in home & neighbourhood. Intensive in terms of offering housing advice. Low demand combined with high admin and management cost threat to business plans.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders - social services, probation, VCS etc – potentially unsustainable given such a short period. Could impact on health, levels of ASB, lack of stability, people unlikely to put down roots.</p> |
| <p>5 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – More stability although would prefer longer, concerns about non-renewal and family upheaval e.g. children’s education/access to employment/service</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role - More stable but providing sufficient flexibility to make best use of available stock promotes turnover and enables options. More flexibility. Similar to those listed in 2 year scenario but to lesser extent</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – More flexibility, promotes turnover and enables options. Similar to those listed in 2 year scenario but to lesser extent.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders - social services, probation, VCS etc – increased stability and flexibility to make best use of stock. Concerns about non-renewal and family upheaval.</p> |
| <p>10 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker -- Much better stability/security. Uncertainty about what help will be available if the home seekers circumstances are changed at the end of the term.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role. Perhaps better for those with school age children or complex needs, still costs for support services and housing advice. Better for tenant but reduced flexibility for landlords to manage scarce resource and make best use of stock.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord - social services, probation, VCS etc - more sustainable /attractive but less flexible. Still have costs for support services and housing advice. Business plans more at risk</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders - social services, probation, VCS etc – no comments</p> |
| <p>Lifetime</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – seen as preferred option ; sustainable for those with complex needs</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – might be appropriate for some older home seekers but no flexibility around use of scarce resource and making best use of stock</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Threats to business plans</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders - social services, probation, VCS - better from tenants’ viewpoint</p> |

Households with Disabilities

- 5 to 10 year fixed term preferred. If 5 yrs then clear transparent review and tenant clear of scenarios of no review. 10 year fixed term may be most appropriate but 5 year review also supported - first review light touch. Only expect 2 year tenancy where injury is expected to be short term. Presumption against lifetime, because of need to make best use of stock
- Independent advice required
- Needs to have regard to availability of accommodation – bearing in mind networks
- Affordable rent – use may increase supply but affordability could be issue for applicant in all scenarios if not on full benefit. May impact on demand and charitable status of RSLs
- Suggestions of individual tenancy lengths to match to household/house type and lifecycles, children growing up etc, however could be confusing if lengths vary from client to client but could minimise the need for unnecessary tenancy audits
- Other stakeholders - those whose role is to access housing will want shorter tenancies and higher turnover such as YOT and Probation and affordable rent will increase supply. Those providing advice and advocacy will prefer longer terms in general and may have to deal with affordability issues

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| <p>2 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – Minimal appeal, little security</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Maximises turnover on housing register. May reduce need to spend on DFGs etc. Potentially increases burden on options services</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Best potential for minimising times where adaptations are not needed. Very bureaucratic in terms of reviews etc. Void costs.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - May have some benefits eg convalescence for crash victims – but only in specific scenarios. Likely to increase burden on advice services, will potentially mean housing is a continuing problem for clients that traditionally had been “dealt with”</p> |
| <p>5 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – Better than 2 year. Likely to feel too short depending on who has and nature of disability. Some certainty and reasonable turnover giving increased opportunity of accommodation being available</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Provides significantly better turnover than now. May reduce need to spend on DFGs etc but potential burden on options services.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Probably reaches the right balance between workload of reviews and likelihood of making best use of stock</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc Likely to have some impact in terms of improving turnover. Still potentially mean housing is a continuing problem for clients that traditionally had been “dealt with”</p> |
| <p>10 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – medium term certainty but Worse than what is available now</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Less call on housing advice but less turn over</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Less work in terms of reviews but potential for under utilised adaptations</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc – Clients are dealt with in the medium term. Probably strikes a balance between securing accommodation for existing clients but increasing turnover to assist future clients</p> |
| <p>Lifetime</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – We understand it, its the status quo. Maximum security</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – We understand it, it’s the status quo. Increases chance of underutilised adaptations etc and potential to increase need for DFGs etc</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – As Local Authority strategic role above</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc -Clients are sorted for good but limits turnover for new clients</p> |

Lower Income – Not on Benefits (all household types)

- Preference for a minimum of 5 year tenancy with 2 years used in exceptional circumstances
- Emphasis on renewal of tenancy as default position if circumstances unchanged.
- Diversity of stock offer should be celebrated
- Good advice and assistance services required. Need for strong partnership working between authorities and providers. Promoted provision of financial advice particularly for this group, including how to access home ownership
- Affordable Rent - could be issue for applicant in all scenarios if not on full benefit. Depends on whether seen as alternative to private or social rent. Opportunity for those who would not be priority for social rent. Affordability concerns, as in line with potentially rising private rents and rent realigned at renewal. Ability to raise money for more investment and provision, particularly in shorter fixed term tenancies where rents can be realigned more often.
- Lower income group encompassed wider variety of household types and householder impacts would be different depending upon group e.g. family housing or non-family housing. Younger working households may only be looking for a short term solution if they intended to access owner occupation in the future. Overall lower income group is probably one that is quite positive about the options on offer as they may be looking at alternatives to the private rented sector rather than the social rented sector. Group less likely to be in need for support services.

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| <p>2 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – cheaper than private rented, ability to save for deposit to buy. More reliable and longer tenancy than most private landlords but no long term security.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Alternative to private rent for homelessness discharge of duty. Increased churn. Advice and assistance administrative burden. Does not build sustainable communities. Satisfaction would increase if administrative burden taken up by providers or if council could charge to provide advice on their behalf. Issues with housing vulnerable households</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – increased revenues, allows affordable rents to be realigned with market rents more frequently. Allows short term occupation rather than empty properties e.g. regeneration. Increased housing management, void repair costs and administrative burden. Satisfaction may increase if councils agreed to take on some of the administrative burden.</p> |
| <p>5 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – As for two year tenancy with improved security of tenure, so able to plan for future. The opportunity to buy their property may increase satisfaction levels.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – As for two year tenancy with more sustainable communities. Not so burdensome administratively</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – As for two year tenancy. Ability for better financial planning . Not so burdensome administratively</p> |
| <p>10 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – As for five year tenancy with improved security of tenure. Certainty. E.g. able to take children through school system in one place.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – increased community cohesion. Less pressure on advice and support services. Not making best use of stock. More likely to meet needs of more vulnerable households.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord –Better long term financial and administrative burden. More stable communities.</p> |
| <p>Lifetime</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – Security as long as needed and able to plan long term</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Social stability, Community cohesion. Not making best use of stock. Maintains the status quo, no greater admin or management burden.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Social stability, Community cohesion, Maintains the status quo therefore no greater admin or management burden.</p> |

Older People

- Preference for use of Lifetime tenancies for older people in designated stock including supported and extra care housing with the use of 5 year fixed term tenancies for general needs housing. Security and certainty important for older people.
- Need for good quality and clear advice, especially for this group. Need to clearly explain what fixed term tenancies are and when will and will not be renewed.
- Perceived low demand for affordable rent by older people on fixed incomes, they would prefer more disposable income for retirement but may accept this is an alternative housing option over time given limited availability of accommodation.
- Care and support needs should be reviewed through support and care plans (not tenancy renewal and tenancy policies)

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| <p>2 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – An older person moving into the district would prefer lifetime, but likely to accept 2 year, however not likely to be in demand from others</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Not appropriate for older people. Responsibility to offer more security</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord - Not appropriate for older people. Too complicated to explain to older people and there are additional staffing costs to deal with more voids etc.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - Support is offered to individuals and not to property. No certainty for future of vulnerable individual.</p> |
| <p>5 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – So long as implications explained properly. In general needs accommodation only and as long as the fixed term conditions were understood</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Not appropriate, Still not enough security. Maybe some appeal of appropriate accommodation being available to those who need it. Would give the opportunity to accommodate more from the waiting list.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – There would be a cost undertaking for reviews (appeals, liaising with family etc. Concern over reduced demand as no financial incentive to move. Demand lower due to customer satisfaction levels – still comes with resource needs. Possibly offer better management of assets though still comes with resource needs</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - Some certainty over future of vulnerable and able to review the use of asset</p> |
| <p>10 year fixed term</p> | <p>1. Home seeker – as 5 years above.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – More security & still room for asset management</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Better asset management. Strong business case to review limited asset but a limited availability of suitable alternative accommodation.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - Increased certainty</p> |
| <p>Lifetime</p> | <p>1. Home seeker – Want bungs with gardens so can have pets, assurance of lifetime for OP in sheltered & extra care. Gives assurances, less confusion & uncertainty</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Most appropriate tenancy for older and vulnerable. Fulfilling duty to older more vulnerable.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Is there a business case for affordable rent for extra care. Approach to link to individual core needs – need to manage assets properly</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - Effects of welfare reform means unknown change in demand. So long as there was an increase in stock that enables all those in need to be accommodated.</p> |

Single/Couple under 50

- The 5 year tenancy was the preferred position however the option of a 2 year tenancy advantageous as well (on the understanding that it would not be used as form of management tool/introductory tenancy). 10 or more years not considered suitable as did not make the best use of stock and expected household composition change.
- Default position would always be to renew the tenancy unless circumstances changed.
- Affordable rent increases investment in more new homes; however concerns raised about additional income not being recycled locally. Length of tenancy seen as more important than rent levels. There is some stigma to social rent and affordable rent could be seen as an alternative to private rent. Offers the opportunity for lettings to be available to different groups and increased choice for the 35-55 year group.
- Needed for closer and more grown up relationship between authorities and providers. Need for policies and choice based letting system to be more flexible, particularly to allow mix of tenants in larger developments to foster sustainable communities.
- Need to have all housing options explained and high quality support offered during tenancy to enable applicants to negotiate through housing market. Promoted idea of partnership working and pooling expertise to provide housing advice services, with providers staff working out of local authority offices.
- Fixed term tenancies mean there is a need for more communication between housing and support providers. Need to engage with support providers in relation to tenancy renewal as support provider could bring something to their clients tenancy review meetings.
- Need for flexibility to support individuals towards gaining independent living skills. Concerns about tenancies ending at same time as support packages and need for stability for some tenants. Care and support needs that are carried out through a review of a care plan should have priority over any tenancy review.
- Request from support providers that 3 -5 lettings per year go to a care leaver within each local authority areas as they can often be overlooked.
- Need to develop more suitable properties for this group. If the householder wants to remain but they are under 35 their only option is shared accommodation.

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| <p>2 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker – Offers a certain degree of flexibility like the private sector, with less rental costs. Probably attractive to younger earners. No real commitment to property. Homeseekers may believe that they have a right to a secure tenancy. Initially OK with getting a tenancy but realisation they could lose it. Need to support tenants.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – More and quicker turnaround if significant supply. Difficulties for housing advice services particularly as currently stretched. Lack of community cohesion, high turnover may lead to risk of increased homeless presentations.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord – Potential use for employed applicants/students. Significant extra administrative workload. Concerns about LA’s allocation policies.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - Care packages generally for 2 years, concerns about loss of care package corresponding with loss of tenancy (timing or because their situation has changed). Most client groups would need longer to settle and satisfactorily manage a tenancy.</p> |
| <p>5 year fixed term</p> | <p>1.Home seeker –More security, more time to become part of local community.</p> <p>2.Local Authority strategic role – Need for excellent housing advice services. Provides sufficient movement while offering some tenancy stability. More properties available but there would be issues with benefit dependencies. Less pressure on households presenting as homeless. Choices and options need to be explained and available.</p> <p>3.Registered providers/HRA landlord –Less administration than 2 year tenancies but more than currently with lifetime tenancies.</p> <p>4.Other stakeholders – social services, probation, VCS etc - Relatively happy with 5 year tenancies provided support was offered where necessary and continued if still required.</p> |

Housing Register – Public Consultation

A 6 week public consultation ran from the 6th March to the 13th April 2012. The target for this consultation was people who are registered on the housing registers of Blaby, Melton and Charnwood Councils housing registers. The survey was also publicised on each of the local authorities' websites to target others with an interest in affordable rented housing. The survey was also advertised through 'In Touch' the tenants' newsletter for Melton Borough Council.

There were a total of 61 valid responses to the survey, 5 from Blaby's housing register, 13 from Melton's housing register, 34 from Charnwood's housing register, with a further 9 responses from respondents who were either on the housing registered of another authority within Leicestershire, not on the any register within Leicestershire or did not answer the question. 17 of the respondents indicated that they were existing tenants of affordable rented housing.

Fixed Term Tenancy

Over three quarters of respondents stated that they would consider a fixed term tenancy.

| Would you consider a fixed term tenancy? | No | % |
|--|----|-----|
| Yes | 47 | 77% |
| No | 11 | 18% |
| Did not respond | 3 | 5% |

Specific comments were made in relation to;

- Overcrowding and need to access family housing as well as known local underoccupation, for example; *'Tenants shouldn't have the right to life term tenancies when we have single people in 2 or 3 bed houses and then a family of 3 in 1 bed.. basically if your over 50 and single you should down size to 1 bed it makes sense'*
- Difficulties of older and disabled households to move home for example, *'Haven't got the physical ability to keep moving as disabled.'*
- Desire for security of tenure, particularly for older people, for example, *'At my time of life I would like the security of having a home for life. I am 52', 'both me and my wife are over 70 so I would expect the tenancy to last our lives' and 'I need long term security for children's schooling.'*
- Existing tenants wishing to remain in their homes and have security of tenure, for example, *'Because my wife and I have lived in our current home for over 30 years. If we had been in a position to buy during that time we would have done so. Now that we are within a few years of retiring, we do not want to be faced with the prospect of having to uproot to another location, away from our friends and the community of which we are a long established part.'*
- The needs of prospective tenants to access affordable housing, for example; *'I am in desperate need for housing' and 'Any tenancy is better than none at all'*

Tenancy Length

Respondents were asked how long a tenancy would need to last for them to consider moving to another property as well as how long they thought was reasonable for most people. The findings are shown in the table below.

How long would a tenancy need to last for **you** to consider moving to another property?

| | | |
|--------------------|----|-----|
| 2 years | 14 | 23% |
| 5 years | 18 | 30% |
| 10 years | 6 | 10% |
| More than 10 years | 8 | 13% |
| Lifetime | 12 | 20% |
| Did not Respond | 3 | 5% |

What do you think is a reasonable length of tenancy **for most people**?

| | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| 2 years | 9 | 15% |
| 5 years | 24 | 39% |
| 10 years | 8 | 13% |
| 10+ years | 13 | 21% |
| Lifetime | 4 | 7% |
| Did not Respond | 3 | 5% |

Respondents were asked if they thought that any specific types of households should be offered longer or shorter tenancies. The findings are shown in the following two tables.

Do you think there are some groups who should be entitled to longer tenancies (e.g. lifetime tenancies) because of their circumstances?

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| older people | 44 | 72% |
| people with a learning disability | 33 | 54% |
| people with a physical disability in adapted homes | 45 | 74% |
| Offenders | 1 | 2% |
| people fleeing domestic abuse | 15 | 25% |
| young people | 8 | 13% |
| households at risk of homelessness | 18 | 30% |
| Other | 5 | 8% |

Other reasons given were as follows;

- Families with school age children
- People with children under 3 years
- People with children who attend a near by school and have local village connections
- Families where the children will be living at home from birth, until they are adult

Do you think there are some groups who should be given shorter tenancies (e.g. the minimum 2 years) because of their circumstances

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| older people | 3 | 5% |
| people with a learning disability | 4 | 7% |
| people with a physical disability in adapted homes | 2 | 3% |
| Offenders | 42 | 69% |
| people fleeing domestic abuse | 16 | 26% |
| young people | 33 | 54% |
| households at risk of homelessness | 10 | 16% |
| Other | 1 | 2% |

Other reasons given were as follows;

- I think that everyone should be treated the same.
- economic immigrants

Community Cohesion

Do you think shorter tenancies for affordable housing tenants could affect your community (for example because people will be less interested in getting involved)

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Yes | 28 |
| No | 30 |
| Did not respond | 3 |

When asked for comments on the impact of fixed term tenancies on communities, respondents were split in their opinions, with approximately half thinking shorter tenancies could affect local communities and half not, a selection of specific comments are shown below to illustrate these views expressed.

- *... people should get involved in there community wherever they live*
- *Reduced community cohesion, area may not be looked after, no ownership of area and not feel part of a community and therefore not sustainable in the long run.*
- *Fragmented communities which become slums because there's no pride in the area. Perhaps because people who know their tenancy is going to end soon will not become involved in making their surroundings clean and pretty.*
- *A great many of the houses in my area have been bought by their former tenants and of those that are still rented; many are occupied by long-standing tenants. I don't think having short term tenants in the area would make much difference to the established community. People sometimes move on, or pass away, new ones come in. That's just how it is.*
- *People wont care about their homes or the area around it. people who live in the same home for along time will spent time and money in keep their homes nice. and this make the community a nice place to live.*
- *I don't think there is much integration or much interest in communities anyway, there needs to be more community based schemes set up with communal places to go to, set up by the council.*

- *Just because tenancies may be fixed, surely it does not mean once each case is re-examined, that someone's tenancy may not be renewed if the tenants circumstances have not changed?*

The questionnaire also asked whether different lengths of tenancies should be offered in different areas, for example rural areas where the supply of affordable housing is often more limited.

Q09 Do you think that the length of tenancy should be different in different locations (e.g. giving longer tenancies in small rural villages where there are not alternative properties to move in to if the tenancy was ended)?

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Yes | 28 |
| No | 30 |
| Did not respond | 3 |

Specific Comments on this question varied however there were a high number of comments to support treating all tenants equally and fairly. The comments also suggested the need to review tenancies on an individual basis and a number recognised specific housing issues in rural areas, such as community cohesion and access to support, education and employment. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below;

- *consistency helps as its transparent but also should be based on individual needs*
- *If circumstances improve then the property should be made available to those more in need.*
- *I think everyone should be treated the same.*
- *Certainly in rural areas. People should not be forced to move from communities they are a long-standing part of, simply because they cannot afford to buy or rent another home in that area. If people choose to move - fine. But if they wish to stay in the same village as their family and friends, they should be allowed to do so.*
- *sympathetic consideration should be given to extending but should not be automatic as circa may change*
- *There should be a consistency in policy rather than different rules for different areas*
- *because rural communities would have less property available*
- *I think it should be the same for all tenants to make it fair on everyone.*
- *A roof over your head is exactly that, regardless of location unless particular circumstances dictate i.e. if someone lives close to a relative who may be a carer, then they need to remain living close by - each case to be reviewed individually.*

Information for homeseekers to decide whether a home let on a fixed term tenancy meets their needs

Comments were made in regard to general information required to make an informed choice about a property, particularly local services and amenities (such as access to transport, community facilities, bin collections, school details, details about the area e.g. crime statistics) and specific property details (number of rooms and their size, energy

efficiency details, rent and council tax charges). A number of respondents stated that the information currently provided was sufficient.

Comments were also made in relation to tenants having their terms and conditions clearly set out to them, particularly in relation to antisocial behaviour and eviction action if tenants caused problems. Several respondents' also highlighted need to provide individual information based on needs of individual.

A number of comments were made that directly related to fixed term tenancies, these related to the need for information being set for the length of the tenancy and the terms of the tenancy agreement. The following specific comments were also made;

- *'the information would have to be explained in their tenancy agreement and also beforehand they should be made aware that if they are under occupying the house when the tenancy ends they will have to move'*
- *'appointments with an advisor to discuss options, a phone line for the same thing as not everyone can attend appointments & immediate housing when their tenancy ends.'*
- *'Just be honest & upfront and if they don't like the terms then they can always go to a private landlord with no rights as such.'*
- *'Obviously the need to know the length of the fixed term. The type of property they might be moved to in the future. What will happen if there is no available home in the area at the end of the tenancy.'*
- *'how easy it would be to change property if their circumstances changed.'*
- *'Period of rent pricing if fixed or increased throughout the tenancy.'*
- *'Could it be renewed, if so for how long.'*
- *'What would alternatives be and would there be help available to obtain alternative accommodation to coincide with end of tenancy'*
- *'Just put it in plain English in a letter, explaining what is on offer. Council letters generally don't communicate very well and tend to use over complicated language I find.'*

Tenancy Renewal

Q11 - What factors do you think should be considered when deciding whether to renew a tenancy?

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| Household income | 24 | 39% |
| Age of tenants | 33 | 54% |
| the need for adaptations | 27 | 44% |
| Whether the home has more bedrooms than the household now needs | 43 | 70% |
| How easy it is to find more suitable housing in the area | 33 | 54% |
| Other (Please State): | 4 | 7% |

Other reasons given were as follows;

- family links should be considered

- To what degree a tenant 'belongs' in the area i.e. family history, family ties, workplace location, social circle, community involvement.
- I don't know, because everyone is different reason for living in council home.
- Connections and availability of daily living amenities.
- general welfare of tenant
- are they able to get a mortgage

Respondents were asked what should happen if a landlord was not going to renew the tenancy. The majority of respondents stated that either a guarantee of suitable alternative accommodation should be offered (by the landlord or local council) or that full housing option advice should be given to help people find a suitable alternative property. Other comments included a need for a good period of notice, assistance with moving home, promotion of mutual exchange, help from partners such as social services and mortgage including shared ownership advice. A selection of these comments are shown below;

- *I think that the organisation who provides the tenancy should have a responsibility to offer advice & support. Perhaps before mid-tenancy agreement.*
- *if the tenant has been a good tenant then every possible help should be given*
- *I think tenants need ample time to find another suitable property, they need help to find a property in an area that is suitable for them not just what is available, that would be counterproductive as they would be moving again if not suited.... We need to have the view that house needs to be a home, this in turn would produce a happier society.*
- *Help to find a new suitable home. Time to do this and perhaps help with the removal costs. If elderly/disabled physical help with the removal.*
- *I think the council or housing association should find a suitable accommodation if it's not going to renew the tenancy*
- *Vulnerability of clients personal circumstances should be considered. Sufficient time to find an alternative home that needs their need*
- *Tenant should be informed as soon as possible with reasons. Every assistance should be afforded to tenant in order for appropriate accommodation to be found.*
- *They should let us know 6 months in advance to enable time to consider options. To provide a list of homes to let within the area...*
- *Plenty of notice, help to fill out forms and the likes for other council property, a neighbourhood officer could be allocated?*

Affordable Rent

Respondents wanted easy to understand information on the costs of a property, a clear breakdown of the costs including any deposit or service charges. They also wanted to be able to understand the impacts of future rent increases.

Many of the comments were around financial advice and housing benefit entitlements; respondents expressed a need for better information on how they could get help with their rent and a number also wanted financial advice to understand how affordable rent

would be affordable to them; several suggested individual income and expenditure assessments. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below;

- *The information that is available for social housing rent is self explanatory and should be mirrored for other housing*
- *Knowing what the new affordable rent level is and making housing benefit easier to understand.*
- *I personally would not need information, the rent I struggle to pay in my current house with a private landlord is a lot more than I would be paying the council*
- *Clearer explanations of what a claimant would be entitled to in terms of housing benefit, council tax benefit etc.*
- *An advisor to talk you through it & a fair & simple way to sort it out*
- *A clear breakdown of what the rent costs, what it does or does not cover, if it goes up or down & how often.*
- *you should be able to tell if you can afford the rent*
- *Income & expense calculation based on the individual*
- *just the amount, and a breakdown of possible increases*
- *I would say housing staff need to be trained in order to provide an interview with the perspective tenant to find an affordable level for the tenant as per income.*
- *Whether the rent could go up in price after a few months, and also if it could still be covered by housing benefit for those needed.*
- *Breakdown of actual rent covering term of lease together with information relating to services (e.g. Council Tax, Water Rates etc) and any other ad hoc costs*

Choice Based Lettings Advert Information

The main comments were for clear information on the terms of the tenancy and information on its length and rent costs. Consistent comments about the use of plain English in advertisements. Some respondents stated that the information currently provided is sufficient, where as other would like to see more information about the area the property is located in, suggestions included links to Goggle maps, crime figures, describing local services and amenities, including naming local schools. Specific comments to illustrate the views expressed are shown below;

- *Length of tenancy and cost of rent is all that is basically needed*
- *Type of tenancy, conditions and terms of tenancy any restrictions.*
- *Information should be displayed clearly about each tenancy and the pros and cons etc*
- *I think that there is a lot of information on the Choice based lettings site.*
- *Clearly state if the tenancy is fixed term; how long for; likelihood of getting tenancy renewed;*
- *Simple and straightforward terms and conditions - a fair system too.*

- *The length of term. Procedure towards the end of tenancy. A guide to help find a new home.*
- *i am not sure but i think the more info that you can give someone that better it is.*
- *What the area is like and what amenities and what crime level in that area is.*
- *Simple one line details of the tenancy agreement and it's cost including council tax, water etc.*
- *Opportunity for discussions/further information.*