

Consultation Results

The Home-Link [Lettings Policy consultation](#) closed on 18 December 2020. In total 623 responses were received from across the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk sub region. 48% of these were from existing applicants on the Housing Register, although a range of people replied, including Home-Link partners and representatives from interested organisations such as the Probation Service and Domestic Abuse support services.

A full list of respondents by category is shown below:

Tenant (council or Registered Social Landlord)	192
Tenant (private landlord)	71
Private Resident	26
Existing Home-Link Applicant	305
Representative of a Registered Provider	3
Home-Link partner organisation	4
Other	22 (includes feedback from Probation Service, domestic abuse advice services and hostels)

Overall, there were high levels of agreement for the proposed amendments and it is therefore likely that the draft of the policy consulted on will remain largely unchanged with the exception of some further, minor wording changes.

Feedback on the overall policy objectives

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with each of the stated policy objectives. In all instances, at least 79.9% of respondents agreed with each stated objective, suggesting that there should be no change to those objectives already in place. A breakdown of these percentages is shown below:

	Policy Objective	% of respondents in agreement
a)	To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended);	80.7
b)	To assist applicants in the highest assessed need;	82.7

c)	To let properties in a fair and transparent way and provide a consistent lettings process;	87.5
d)	To make best use of housing stock;	85.7
e)	To ensure that applicants are not unlawfully discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly;	89.1
f)	To support vulnerable applicants	88.9
g)	To provide increased choice and information to applicants;	88.3
h)	To provide information and feedback on homes that are let through the Home-Link scheme;	89.4
i)	To improve mobility across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk; and	81.5
j)	To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities.	79.9

The general responses to each aspect of the consultation are summarised below:

Proposal to allow a person to be listed on one application only as the main applicant

In the new policy we are suggesting changing the wording so that an applicant is only allowed to be registered as an applicant or joint applicant on one application. (Although they can still appear on another application, but not as the main applicant). The aim is to prevent the same person registering a number of times and having more than one 'live' application.

84.1% of respondents either agreed, or strongly agreed with this proposal.

In terms of additional feedback, one area of concern was ensuring that a person experiencing Domestic Abuse was not coerced into being a joint applicant and therefore unable to make an application in their own name. This concern has been addressed by adding additional wording to explain that, in exceptional cases, such as those involving violence or abuse, a council can decide to permit a second application.

Local connection and working hours

One of the ways a person can acquire a local connection to an area is if they work in that area/district for a minimum of 16 hours a week. The new policy changes the definition of what qualifies towards the 16 hours. For example, having a Head Office in the area but working elsewhere would not count. A person who has a zero-hour contract must have held the contract

for over six months and be able to demonstrate that they work for 16 hours a week in the district. A person who is self-employed must undertake most of their work in the district. These changes will help us to make sure that people who have a genuine need to live in the area because of their work are prioritised.

74.8% of respondents indicated that they either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the policy changes relating to local connection and working hours suggesting that these amendments should remain. The comments provided indicate strong opinions both for and against the changes and so it is recommended that the majority view is accepted.

Financial resources and the clarification that those with sufficient financial resources will be awarded a lower banding

60.5% of respondents either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that those with sufficient financial resources should be awarded a lower banding (and therefore not be as highly prioritised for housing). 20.5% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting that these amendments should remain. There was specific feedback in relation to financial resources and people experiencing domestic abuse. These recommendations have resulted in slight wording clarifications to the policy.

Banding clarification in relation to people placed in Temporary Accommodation

When a person is placed in temporary accommodation, they are sometimes put in Band B to reflect their likely homelessness. In the new policy we have made it clearer that, in these circumstances, a person will not be given further priority because, for example, they are sharing facilities or missing a bedroom, which might push them into Band A. This is because, once their application is fully assessed, they may not be owed the main homeless duty or qualify for a Band A. Applicants who have already been assessed as having a Band A will not have their priority band reduced unless their circumstances change.

65.25% of respondents either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the banding procedures relating to temporary accommodation. A further 22.8% neither agreed nor disagreed. It is recommended that the majority view is accepted and that no further changes will be made to this aspect of the policy other than those identified already as part of the consultation.

Summary

Overall, there were high levels of agreement indicated with the proposed changes and it is recommended that no further substantial amendments are made to the policy. However, several pertinent suggestions have been raised via the consultation comments and slight wording changes have been made as a result.

The [Local Authorities](#) which form Home-Link are now taking the [draft Policy](#) through their formal approval process and therefore, all changes are still subject to approval. If approved, it's anticipated that the revised Policy will take effect from 1st July 2021.
