

Appendix 1

Trust Customer Panel Report on Allocations - Recommendations

		Customer Panel recommendation	Staff response
1.	Policy		
1.1	Policy	The Allocations Policy should be reviewed to ensure compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, as it is implemented.	This is underway and will be progressed as the Act is implemented.
2.	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants		
2.1	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	<p>The Panel understands that Councils currently control some of the budgets that determine the support that people get, and this can change over time. Trust should work with applicants and tenants as soon as they know that there is the potential for change.</p> <p>The Assessor should make it clear that some services are provided through funding that is provided by the local authority, and that there is potential for this to change in the future – but use some sort of statement like “none of us have a crystal ball” so that applicants realise that change is always possible, but without creating</p>	<p>Trust staff will work with tenants to explore the options available in relation to service changes, but it is important that all tenants recognise that sometimes the change itself is outwith Trust’s control.</p> <p>Changes to individual support needs are picked up through six-monthly Personal Plan Reviews, or where an incident occurs requiring a Personal Plan Review.</p> <p>Trust staff already inform applicants at the</p>

		unnecessary anxiety.	Assessment for a Vacancy, and Offer, Stages, if there is any known potential for change in service provision at a particular development.
2.2	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	<p>The Allocations Team (at Assessment and Offer stage) should make it very clear what is in “the contract” ie, what is the applicant “signing up for” as being interested in at this time?</p> <p>Which services exactly will be delivered in each development?</p> <p>What specifically do the different terminologies or classifications of housing “general needs / amenity / retirement / sheltered / very sheltered / supported / housing with care” mean? Brochures should be created that provide this information in an easy to understand format. Brochures should be available in developments to provide information to people who are interested.</p> <p>If any potential of change is known to Trust, this must be made very clear at the Assessment and Offer stages, including all implications of the potential changes. Trust should also share this information with existing tenants as</p>	<p>This should be clearly explained by staff at the Offer Stage and also at the viewing of the property.</p> <p>Work will be done on the Property Brochures to make the level of service at each development easily understandable to applicants.</p> <p>The service delivered is specific to each development and this detail could be captured in each development’s Property Brochure. This could include reference to the different funding streams that support the staffing levels. The resource implications of maintaining detailed information will be explored further. Brochures are available in developments.</p> <p>Trust staff agree with this. Knowledge will be shared at the earliest possible stage, and tenants will be involved in exploring the options for change. Tenants may also wish</p>

		soon as possible.	to undertake political lobbying in such circumstances, or contact the relevant Commissioning Officer at the Local Authority.
2.3	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	There should be clearer information on the Application Form and as part of the Assessment process that no points are awarded for “Waiting Time” and that there is no benefit at all in people applying before they actually need a new home and are willing and ready to move. Their “readiness to move” should be tested at Assessment stage.	This will be reinforced to all applicants who contact Trust and “readiness to move” is tested as part of the Assessment process via their Housing Options discussion. This will be reinforced going forward under TRUSTed Systems. Applicants who are not “ready to move” will be asked to defer their application for an agreed period and will be held on a Deferred Waiting List and, therefore, not contacted regarding current vacancies.
2.4	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Publicity should be generated that challenges the image of Trust developments as “old folks’ / care homes” and instead shows lots of images of the vibrant people and communities in the developments. This should be in most of the marketing materials, including where properties are being marketed, as people are gaining much more than just “bricks and mortar” – the focus should be on “your home and more”. There needs to be marketing and local signage that clarifies <i>what Trust are doing</i> . This could include, for example, signage at local developments and things like roundabout sponsorship could be explored.	This is agreed, and this principle will underpin the new Property Brochure for each development. Work is in progress to change the focus of our marketing materials to include more images of people. All new marketing materials are now in a more aspirational brand, with older items being replaced as they require reprinting. This will be explored.
2.5	Marketing /	The Allocations Team should visit (over a period of years)	Each member of staff is responsible for

	information to applicants or potential applicants	all the properties that they are responsible for, so that they have a better understanding and can provide more specific information to customers.	approx. 15-18 developments over a wide geographical spread, and many have already been visited. Further consideration to be given to productivity and required time for this to be implemented effectively, with an intention that this could be rolled out to visit the majority of our developments over a three-year period.
2.6	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Applicants would benefit from a simple “pathway” diagram showing the Allocations process – both for Edinburgh properties (through EdIndex) and other properties, including Trust’s role in whether a package of care / support is put in place.	This is being progressed as part of TRUSTEd Systems.
2.7	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Signage at all Trust properties should be redesigned to promote a more positive image of Trust and the development, to promote the “& more” included in the Trust offer.	This will be explored further, with local consultation, and as part of the remodelling project in Livingston.
2.8	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Banners and posters etc should be used locally to promote developments to local passers-by, who are the most likely future applicants / tenants.	This will be explored further, and will be progressed, subject to important considerations about the security of residents. Costs associated with additional banners will be gathered. “To Let” signage will also be used where appropriate.
2.9	Marketing / information to applicants or	Applicants should be provided (if appropriate) with a simple “pathway” diagram that shows the adaptations process to ensure they understand the processes / likely	This will be progressed.

	potential applicants	timescales / responsibilities and roles (for example between Trust and the local authority) - to help manage expectations for new tenants who will need their new home to be adapted.	
2.10	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Developments should be expected to generate regular local positive press reports to show local people that the Trust development is a “great place to live”, which will encourage more local applicants, especially in hard-to-let areas.	This will be given a greater focus across the organisation, promoted and managed through the Marketing and Communications Officer.
2.11	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	It should be explained at the beginning of the process that the time to decide on a vacancy is short. If this was better explained earlier, people would be more careful about applying for the “right” development at the “right” time in their lives. This should be explored quite thoroughly as part of the Assessment process.	This will be explored as part of the Housing Options discussion with applicants at the Assessment Stage to ensure applicants joining our waiting list are aware that they may be contacted quickly after joining the list, with a rapid turnaround for decision making and the timescales for moving. Applicants are advised over the telephone prior to the offer stage of the timeframes required.
2.12	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Open Days should be held so that applicants can view the developments they have chosen on their Application Forms, so that they are reasonably confident that they <i>do</i> want to live in that development ahead of any vacancy becoming available. Existing tenants should be very involved in these Open Days, with training and support provided (like for the “Meet and Greet” element of staff	Work is underway to create more targeted Open Day campaigns, which will involve tenants and their local knowledge. These may include events at weekends and in the evenings where appropriate.

		recruitment). Hard-to-let developments should have regular events that invite the community in, so that people can really appreciate the opportunity that is available to live in the development.	Trust staff agree that a more “outward” looking focus is to be welcomed in all developments.
2.13	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	The practice of contacting applicants to advise that they “may” be considered for a vacant property raises expectations and results in only one pleased applicant, with several disappointed applicants, which reflects poorly on Trust. This practice should be reconsidered.	<p>This practice is to ensure that the property is allocated as efficiently and effectively as possible, and to ensure that an accurate up-to-date Assessment of points is made at the time of the allocation so that the shortlist is as accurate as possible at the time of allocation.</p> <p>We will investigate how best to engage with our Waiting List applicants to get a better understanding of their perspective.</p>
2.14	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	The “Housing Ladder” Comparison Chart does not really help explain what services are available in any individual development – especially around “Staff Presence”.	<p>The Housing Ladder should be used by an individual to gain a basic understanding of what kind of services can be expected at our various service types.</p> <p>Property Brochures will provide a more detailed breakdown of staff presence and other local services. Trust staff will also look at re-configuring the website to provide this information differently.</p>

2.15	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Developments with Hard-to-Let properties should have a specific localised Marketing Plan, developed locally to maximise opportunities to generate new applicants.	<p>This is done at present by a team which normally includes the Allocations Officer, Service Manager, the Marketing and Communications Officer and the local Development Coordinator.</p> <p>It is agreed that tenants' local knowledge is important and we will investigate how this can be tapped into and will explore this area further through our work on Difficult-to-Let properties, which is to be progressed. Tenants have already been involved in Callendar.</p>
2.16	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	The information available per development, (the "Development Information Sheet") does not give specific enough information on exactly what is offered at any particular development. Tenants should be involved in revising these to provide information that is important from a customer's perspective (and then should be involved in keeping them up-to-date on an ongoing basis).	This should be progressed. Tenants' comments should be included in the local Property Brochure design/information, with information gathered on an ongoing basis so that it is readily available should there be a demand issue at any development.
2.17	Marketing / information to applicants or potential applicants	Tenants should be more involved in all marketing and promotion relating to their development, as they know what is important locally, key marketing locations / contacts etc. They should be involved in manning stalls etc at local events.	This will be progressed; Trust will investigate further how tenants can be involved in marketing their developments.
2.18	Marketing / information to	Local Trust staff should encourage greater linkages between developments and the local community, as this	This is agreed and will be progressed locally.

	applicants or potential applicants	<p>will mean Trust’s reputation is grown locally. Developments should be encouraged to see themselves as “community facilities”, welcoming the community in, so that local people know that living in the development is a positive experience.</p> <p>This should include linkage with other local groups – for example churches, guilds and other groups. This could help with skills development in both the community participants and the residents in the development.</p>	Trust is also working up a Volunteering Strategy to support this.
3.	Welcome / information to new tenants		
3.1	Welcome / information to new tenants	<p>Tenants should be involved in developing a New Tenant Welcome Pack that should be hand delivered by a tenant within the development shortly after a new tenant moves in. These tenants could be known as “Trust Friends” (or equivalent) and could provide the initial (and ongoing) personal welcome into a development’s community, as well as providing very practical guidance on heating systems, refuse collection , doctors’ surgeries etc.</p>	<p>This is agreed and will be explored further. This will need to be developed locally at development level to allow for local variations.</p>
3.2	Welcome / information to new tenants	<p>Trust should look at what happens when people move in to their new home – what more can be done to welcome and support people to settle into their new home and the development through this period of adjustment? What should be the role of the Co-ordinator in this?</p>	<p>This is agreed and will be explored further.</p> <p>Service Managers and Coordinators have a defined role in welcoming new tenants and helping them settle into the development that</p>

		<p>What should be the role of the Service Manager? What should be the role of the Local Rep (in Amenity Housing). What should be the role of the other residents in the development? This is seen as very important.</p>	<p>includes contacting new tenants, and more regular initial contact with the Coordinator if appropriate.</p> <p>Staff role could be reviewed along with identifying the role of other tenants. This will need to be developed locally again, as each development may wish to implement to meet local circumstances.</p>
3.3	Welcome / information to new tenants	<p>Trust should consider alternative methods to encourage a better response rate to the New Tenant Survey – for example, it could be completed face-to-face with the Coordinator, Service Manager or Welcoming Tenant, or when the Service Manager contacts the new tenant.</p>	<p>This will be developed.</p>
4.	Process		
4.1	Process	<p>The Panel recommends that phone assessments are phased out, for the following reasons:</p> <p>We do not believe that all the relevant information can be gathered over the phone. We do not believe that it is as possible to properly test the answers that are given. We believe that older people prefer face to face contact. We think home visits would mean that fewer family members / friends speak “on behalf of” the applicant – we</p>	<p>This recommendation will need further investigation to establish the cost/benefit of reverting back to home assessments. Further detail will be required on the pros and cons of the assessment methods as well as the resource implications.</p> <p>A new assessment procedure is currently being drafted following the change to phone assessments recommended in 4.2 below, to</p>

		<p>think it is very important to speak to the person who is applying and who will become a Trust tenant so that they have a very good understanding of what they are “signing up for” when moving into a development.</p> <p>We believe that a robust housing assessment would mean that people are more likely to get the housing type that they need now, and into the future, which would result in more sustainable tenancies.</p> <p>We understand that there would be significant costs associated with this change, and we would want to see this costed up, exploring where the money could come from across all budgets. Trust should consider whether the phone assessment process gives “overall” good value for money – could any significant information which would affect the allocation (especially the most appropriate type of property) be gained by doing a home visit, which could mean that a longer and more sustainable tenancy would be created, which would save on void turnover costs. Consideration should also be given to undertaking assessments within developments, as this would encourage people to view the development before there is a vacancy there.</p>	<p>ensure that the process for an applicant is clear. While phone assessments are completed for the majority of applicants we have set criteria that would trigger a home assessment visit, and a home assessment is undertaken in these circumstances.</p> <p>Potential review period could be 6-12 months time to review tenancy sustainment figures compared to historical data.</p> <p>Over the past 12 months we have seen significant performance improvements and this recommendation would need to be considered carefully to ensure the improvements are not reversed significantly.</p> <p>We will undertake detailed review work and will report back to the Panel in September, when the changes recommended below will have bedded in.</p>
4.2	Process	In the meantime, we would recommend the following changes to the phone assessment process:	
4.2a	Process	The assessor should begin the conversation by saying	The assessment process is currently going

		<p>something like “Please be as open and honest with me as you can and tell me the whole story so that I get as full an assessment as possible. Please try not to overstate or understate your [relative’s / friend’s / the person you care for’s] abilities.”</p>	<p>through a review period that has seen a number of changes implemented as we complete the process.</p> <p>This recommendation should be considered with some caution around the wording used as this may cause upset to applicants, inferring they wouldn’t be open and honest?</p>
4.2b	Process	<p>The assessor should try to explore the psychological well-being of the person applying – for example through asking questions like “How do you [your relative / your friend / the person you care for] get on with people? Do you [your relative / your friend / the person you care for] ever feel depressed? Do you [your relative / your friend / the person you care for] ever feel lonely?</p>	<p>Assessments already seek to gain a holistic comprehensive picture of each applicant in order to make an appropriate allocation, with the points awarded in accordance with our Allocations Policy.</p>
4.3	Process	<p>The process for Transfer Applicants should be streamlined so that they are not required to submit information which is already held by Trust.</p>	<p>Recommendation should be considered. Transfer applicants will be required to complete a SHOP application form to allow them to be pointed as per the Allocations Policy.</p>
5	Next steps		
5.1	Next steps	<p>The Panel should look at the Lettable Standard to understand what standard properties should be brought up to prior to allocation, and how consistently this is applied across Trust housing. This should cover</p>	<p>Our work with Difficult-to-Let properties is under review through the TRUSTed systems process, and this scrutiny would inform this.</p>

		decoration / carpeting / cleanliness / general appeal etc and how a property is made as appealing as possible to an applicant, at a reasonable cost. The Panel should also consider whether this should be different for Difficult-to-Let properties. The Panel should consider looking at the whole process of managing empty properties.	
6	General		
6.1	General	The Panel would welcome tenant involvement in ongoing staff training – promote understanding of the importance of the customer perspective and customer-focussed working by all staff.	This will be explored further.
6.2	General	The Panel welcomes continued customer involvement in staff recruitment. Its extension into new staff induction would be very much welcomed by the Panel.	This will be explored further.
6.3	General	The importance of ongoing communication cannot be over-emphasised to staff as most applicants and tenants are always keen to know whenever staff know of the potential for changes in service delivery.	This will be explored further, with Panel member input, to capture their specific ideas of what or how information should be communicated.
6.4	General	Trust should continue to develop a range of multi media promotional tools to market the organisation generally, and most especially where there are voids and low demand issues.	Trust is now increasing the use of social media to promote the Trust brand and has previously also produced a 40 th anniversary CD video that is used widely at conference/exhibition events.
6.5	General	Managers and staff should continually test that the policy / procedure / paperwork is consistently carried through in practice, as failure to do this, even very occasionally,	TRUSTed Systems ensures regular weekly audits of working practice in Allocations. This will be rolled out across further processes in

		undermines customer trust. The “literature” and the “reality” must match.	the organisation.
6.6	General	Staff should continue to analyse Refusal Reasons and Sustainability / Termination Reasons to identify trends and then work both locally and nationally to look at how to change things to minimise the impact of refusal and termination.	Refusal information and Tenancy Sustainment are Key Performance Indicators for the Allocations Team. Both of these are recorded and discussed on a fortnightly basis. Further work on reducing refusal reasons is very much part of the next stages of TRUSTed Systems.
6.7	General	The Panel should be allocated a budget that is sufficient to support them to develop their understanding and knowledge – for example through visiting developments, attending conferences etc.	The budget allocation process for 2015-16 is complete. The budget requirements for 2016-17 will be worked up with input from Panel members.
6.8	General	The recommendations should be translated into an Action Plan which can be tracked and monitored.	This will be available for the Panel meeting in May.