

# LEICESTERSHIRE

— Choice based lettings —



Newsletter 1: September 2010

## Choice Based Lettings is coming to Leicestershire

The seven district councils of Leicestershire are combining to develop a 'Choice Based Lettings' service to operate across all of Leicestershire. Harborough District council was one of the original pioneers for this type of service and Leicester City recently introduced a similar scheme.

### What is it?

'Choice based lettings' means giving people on the local council housing list the chance to select the homes they are interested in from those that are coming available, rather than sitting waiting for an offer and then having to decide quickly if they want to accept it. People registered on the council housing lists will be known as 'home seekers'.

The scheme will offer existing tenants, and new home seekers from all over Leicestershire, more choice and flexibility when looking at their housing options. It will also help those who want to move across different local authority areas if, for example, they are looking to move nearer to a job.

Of course there will still be more people looking for help with housing than there are homes available and many will still be disappointed. The hope is that by using the service home seekers will be able to decide themselves how likely it is that they will get an offer.

It is hoped that as well as council housing, all the local housing associations will use the service to advertise their vacant properties, giving registered home seekers the biggest choice of affordable housing in Leicestershire all in one place.

### When will all this change?

Work has already started on preparing for the change-over and the aim is to start the new service by the end of 2010.

### How will it work?

Each council will still have their own housing register but will use similar rules for banding home seekers according to their housing need. This will make it possible for home seekers to be considered for housing in more than one council area. The bands will be based on the successful scheme already being used by Harborough District Council.

### Four Priority Bands

The scheme will divide home seekers into four broad priority bands. Within each band home seekers will be placed in date order, according to the date they originally applied or the date they moved into a higher band.

### How will properties be advertised?

Properties will be advertised every fortnight on the internet. Printed copies will also be available in libraries, council offices, advice centres and some local shops. Registered home seekers will use a password to select up to three homes at a time. They can only choose properties which match their needs.

### Knowing who was successful helps get the choices right

At the end of each advertising period the top applicant from those that applied successfully will be offered the property, once checks have been made. So that home seekers can see what's happening and make the best choices for themselves, the results of each advert will be printed with the next set of adverts.

### Helping those who want to move to another area

Preference will be given to local people for most vacancies. However, a minimum of 10% of all vacant homes will be put into a 'pool' of properties which will be open to any registered home seeker regardless of where they live now. This will help people who need to move to another area for employment or family reasons.

### Transferring onto the new system

Because the new service will be very different from the way that six of the seven councils are working at the moment, it is going to be necessary to ask most of those already on the housing list to fill out a new form, so that they can be put into the right priority band. This will not be needed for those on Harborough and Charnwood council's lists as they will be able to write to their applicants telling them what band they are in.

The other five councils will ask their home seekers to fill in a form in Autumn 2010. Anyone who is on more than one council list will only have to fill out one form. Any home seekers who are only registered with a housing association will also need to fill out a form to join the scheme.

### How will people make their choices?

There are three ways of selecting a property:

- By internet
- By automated telephone
- By text message

Help will be available for anyone who will find it difficult to use the service because they are housebound or need help making their bids.

### Up to three choices each fortnight

People will be able to make up to three bids on advertised properties in each two week period.

Some adverts may be limited to older applicants or families with a certain number of children. Some will only be available to existing tenants wanting to transfer. Once someone has made a choice, they will be told what position they are in on the short-list. If they want to, they will be able to change to another property, if that will put them higher in the list.

If a home seeker decides not to accept an offer of accommodation they must give a reason, then they can simply start bidding again in the next cycle.

### More information to come

Look out for more information over the next few months.

Full details of the scheme will be sent to all registered home seekers before the new scheme starts. They do not need to do anything now.



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