

# **Allocations: Practitioner's Perspective**

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# “The times they are a-changing”

- Local versus national politics
- Affordability versus commercialisation
- Welfare reform and austerity
- Housing need versus community contribution
- Maintaining partnerships
- Where are the opportunities to change –
  - *without dismantling local prospects for low income and vulnerable households*

**“...you better start swimming or you’ll sink like a stone...”**

How can we engage elected members?

How might we change assessments to reflect a brave new world?

How can we balance the needs of the waiting list with targeted nominations to landlords?

# Who Are We Trying to House?

- Target groups on the basis of financial capability
- Help people get on to the property ladder
- Help people get a rented solution they can afford
- Reduce pressure on families in overcrowded living conditions
- Enable victims of domestic abuse to live in a safe and secure environment
- Support low income households to access good quality housing they can afford
- Reward good tenants and help hard working families
- Prevent and tackle homelessness effectively

# The Media

**Revealed: How 500,000 immigrants have been given social housing in last decade as number of families on waiting list hits record high**

- 1.8million families are now on the waiting list on social housing
- Nearly 470,000 of the 4million migrants who arrived in the last ten years were given council homes
- David Cameron launched plans to give local people priority on waiting lists
- Clampdown will see migrants only become eligible for social housing after two years in the UK

**'Stop criticising me or I'll have another baby': Father-of-13 who lives in new supersize council house while collecting £53k-a-year benefits threatens to INCREASE his family to spite his critics**

**Stop the scandal of foreigners in council houses**

SOME facts are so staggering they just take your breath away so you'd better read this one while you're sitting down: Britain, already the most crowded country in Europe, has to build a new home every seven minutes to cope with the 250,000 immigrants who arrive each year.

**“MORAL DEGENERATES” ON COUNCIL ESTATES**

**Revealed: How HALF of all social housing in parts of England goes to people born abroad**

**Landlord's fury as shameless benefits family behave like 'pack of wild animals' trashing home during party to celebrate move to new council house**

**Mother-of-five on benefits demands a bigger home because it's 'unfair' that her 11-year-old daughter has to share a box room with her four little brothers**

**Time for action on benefit scroungers**

THE welfare state was meant to be a pillar of our civilisation, the protector of the genuinely poor and vulnerable.

**Somali asylum seeker family given £2m house... after complaining 5-bed London home was 'in poor area'**

**Buy-to-let tycoon evicts tenants on benefits in favour of Eastern Europeans - because 'they are better at paying rent'**

- Fergus Wilson has sent eviction notices to 200 tenants on housing benefit
- He said Eastern Europeans less likely to default on rent than Britons
- Mr Wilson said many other private landlords had taken the same decision

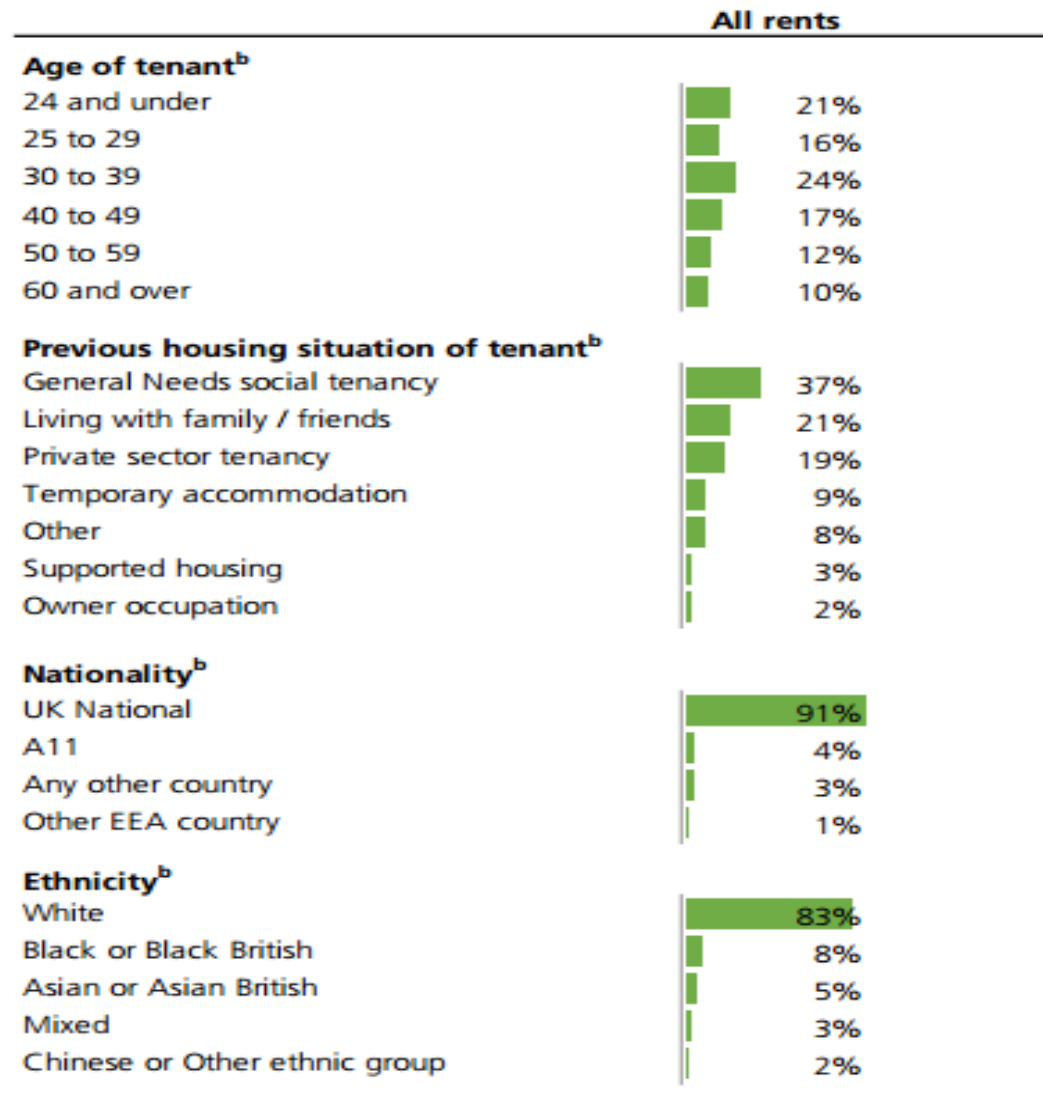
# Presenting Data

- In that context, we could tell members that:
  - We're busy!
  - Approx. 1,200 households are registered and in “reasonable preference”
  - 15% of the waiting list comprises existing housing association tenants seeking to transfer
  - 47% require 1-bedroom accommodation
  - 25-44 year old applicants comprise approx. half the waiting list
- Is that the whole story?

# Myth-Busting: Hart Housing Register Data

- Or we could try and expand on that?
  - The Housing Register reflects local demography in terms of ethnicity and nationality of the people registered
  - 65% of applicants are employed, with 28% of those receiving no benefits
  - The majority of applicants receiving benefits are in work
  - 29% of those in receipt of benefits are not currently working - but - this includes those in receipt of a pension/pension credit (and 15% of all applicants are over 65 years old)
  - Only seven applicants haven't qualified on financial grounds
  - Main reason for applying – “no permanent home”
  - 47% require a 1-bed – but only 263 (21%) are under 50 years old

# Myth-Busting: National CORE Data



Source: DCLG, [CORE summary tables: 2014 to 2015](#), 6 October 2015



# Debating Policy Recommendations

- What *do* members understand about the local context?
- Officers & members working together to understand local priorities properly can take charge of the local message
- Really understand the demography of "need"
- What does "statutory guidance" really mean?
- Embed structural opportunities
  - *Overview and Scrutiny*
  - *Service Boards*
  - *Members' Seminars*
  - *Member shadowing opportunities*
- Help members to be informed and help them to get to the know the service
- Make sure members understand the role of housing providers locally

# Changing the Emphasis of “Assessment”

- How can we empower people to achieve their goals?
- Are we too obsessive about the concept of “need”?
- Deficit versus asset-based assessments?
- Opportunities in the Homelessness Reduction Bill
- New agreements between the Council and the customer
- Can we reform the wider system?
- Are we constrained by the person or by the system?
- How can we best establish what people’s needs are?
- What do we really need to know about our customers?

# Developing Relationships

- Difficult conversations: negotiating an ever-changing policy context
- Pressure on Councils to balance the books, to enable development, to meet housing duties, to target affordable homes at those who need them most, and create sustainable solutions for local residents
- Pressure on landlords to make their businesses work, to compete in a challenging market, to interpret the wishes of the Board into something that works in practice, to create sustainable solutions for tenants
- Shifting sands – moving from targeting a cohort that doesn't exist to something more nuanced
- Coming together and recognising shared aims and ambitions locally

# Using Tools Correctly

- Information:
  - Inform and educate communities/decision makers
  - Target early intervention and across services
  - Understand “need” and inform new development
- SI06 Agreements...or CIL?
- Viability assessments – site by site
- The Allocations Policy and administrative approach
- Nominations Agreements
- Local Lettings Plans

# Fit for Purpose

- Choice Based Lettings
- Software solutions
- Registered Provider lettings policies
- “Private Rented Sector inclusive” approaches
- Officers and Members
- Customers & co-design

# Opportunities

- Develop partnership working, including through broader system reform
- Engage with members, help them to understand, enable them to contribute informed ideas
- Recognise where strategic aims are shared across partners and work on them together, in the spirit of partnership
- Identify what you are prepared to negotiate, and what you're not
- Understand reality and recommend policies grounded in it
- Promote economic activity & engage customers about their aspirations
- Harness customer feedback and allow them to shape services
- Develop commercial ambitions –
  - Can we meet housing need in different ways?



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