

Appendix 1 - Summary of Questionnaires/Surveys undertaken as part of the CBL consultation exercise

Public Questionnaire 1 – March 06

We undertook a numerically random survey of Oxford City Council tenants, major RSL tenants and people on the waiting list. We surveyed 1:20 (5%). We had 135 replies (from a base of 730) giving a percentage return of 18.4%. We received a disproportionate number of replies from people over 60. We undertook an additional small sample of targeted questionnaires amongst people who are younger and who fell into different ethnic categories. There were a further 7 respondents and their responses are included below. The majority of respondents were existing Oxford City Council tenants (42.3%). At this stage, people were not asked detailed questions on the operation of Choice Based Lettings. The survey sought general answers in relation to their satisfaction (or not) with the current allocations system.

Demographic mix of respondents

Ethnicity

	Survey replies	Oxford (2001 census)
White UK	79.6%	87.1%
Other ethnic groups	20.4%	12.9%

Sex

	Survey replies	Oxford (2001 census)
Male	38.7%	49.4%
Female	60.6%	50.6%

Age

	Survey replies	Oxford (2001 census)
Under 18	1.4%	Not available
18 - 24	6.3%	Not available
25 - 44	32.4%	30%
45 – 60	19.7%	14.3%
Over 60	38.7%	16.6%

Special needs

Self defined special needs in terms of housing	26.1%
Self defined as having a disability	38%

Family composition

Children under 16 living at home	32%
No children under 16 living at home	62%
No response	6%

Tenure type

OCC tenants in permanent accommodation	42.3%
RSL tenants in permanent accommodation	23.9%
Homeless applicants in stage I temporary	2.1%

accommodation	
Homeless applicants in stage II temporary accommodation	4.2%
Housing applicants on Oxford City Council's general register	24.6%

Levels of satisfaction with the current housing allocations scheme

Categories given for answers were: Very satisfied; Quite satisfied; Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; Dissatisfied; Does not apply to me.

Significant findings from the survey include:

Content of written information provided by the Council about housing options:

An even spread between the five categories with 39% being either quite or very satisfied

Consideration given to specific needs:

20.5% were quite or very satisfied (31% said it was not applicable)

Satisfied with the user friendliness of the system

30% were quite or very satisfied. 16% were dissatisfied

Helpfulness of council housing staff

52% were quite or very satisfied. 7% were dissatisfied

Helpfulness and friendliness of RSL staff

34% were quite or very satisfied. 7.7% were dissatisfied

Waiting time to be housed

Only 26% of respondents were quite or very satisfied. 37% were dissatisfied or neither.

satisfied with the suitability of offers

16% were quite or very satisfied. 20% were dissatisfied (40% said it did not apply)

getting support from other organisations

12% had used an organisation other than Oxford City Council or a Housing Association to help with their housing application

Dissatisfaction with the current system was not as high as might be expected, but it clearly shows that more work should be done in order to:

- Provide clearer and more easily understood literature (and schemes!)
 - Give greater consideration to individual needs (and choices!)
 - Improve the user friendliness of the system
 - Identify partner organisations who are supporting applicants to ensure that their front line staff are trained to continue to offer appropriate support to their clients under CBL
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Staff Questionnaire – March 06

We undertook a survey of 192 Oxford City Council staff, from the following teams: -

Team	Number surveyed	Number responded	% responded
Housing services (all)	123	26	21
Systems	4		
Customer services (all)	40	15	37.5
OBS	3	3	100
Environmental health	9	4	44.4
Strategic director – housing, health and community	1		
Corporate secretariat manager	1		
Financial and asset manager (group accountant housing)	1	1	100
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Democratic Services (Housing Legal Solicitor, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Procurement and Contracts Lawyer) 	3		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood Renewal – (Special Projects Co-ordinator, Business Manager, Street Homeless Co-ordinator, Housing Development Co-ordinator) 	4	3	75
Strategy & Review – (Business Manager, Performance Management Officer, Consultation Officer)	3	3	100
total	192	55	

Significant findings from the survey include: -

Contact with the public/housing applicants/homeless

Direct contact with the public most or some of the time	81.8%
Contact with homeless applicants most or some of the time	58.1%
Contact with other housing applicants most or some of the time	61.8%

How easy is the current scheme to understand?

Understand Oxford City Council's allocations scheme very or fairly well	78%
Think the public understand the scheme fairly or very well	61%
Think the public do not understand the scheme at all	36%

Awareness of and impression of CBL

Have not heard of or am vaguely aware of	64%
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CBL	
Am well informed about CBL	36%
Believe CBL would be a better way to allocate social housing	51%
Believe CBL would be a worse way to allocate social housing	7%

Impact on staff jobs

Believe CBL will change their job	40%
Believe CBL will not change their job	25%
Not sure if CBL will change their job	27%
Believe it will make their job easier	16%
Believe it will make their job more difficult	9%
Unsure whether it will make their job easier or more difficult, or think there will be no change	75%

The ways in which they thought their jobs may change were as follows:

'The team will be restructured & roles will change to facilitate the new procedures & ensure all applicants can access the service.'

'I am hoping that CBL will cut down on the amount of refusals we get on offers of accommodation. If people are 'bidding' for a property then it's fair to say they won't turn it down afterwards'

'As clients are given freedom of choice it may cause a backlog of clients in 1st and 2nd stage who are waiting to go to 'desirable areas' rather than estates. Will there still be 'unreasonable refusals' if a client specifies an unrealistic choice of area which won't be available due to low offer rate for that area IE: Jericho?'

'May reduce Appeals/Complaints as Applicants are more involved in the process. May reduce M.P. enquiries for points/position requests. Enquiries will depend on clarity/simplicity/transparency of the system'

'Customers have a perception that we can just house them, and we spend a fair amount of time issuing points on list.... sometimes weekly for customers. Here the customer can actively partake in the process. I do think some will become frustrated with the situation but fingers crossed that their expectations are not raised too much. I think it needs to be made clear that whilst things have changed there is no increased housing stock available.'

'I wonder whether customers might feel competitive with other tenants in the 'bidding' process, and whether this may cause difficulties. I think we will receive more queries relating to how properties have been allocated, and whether this has been done fairly. Currently we provide/advise where customers are on HR with brief info on points and how to interpret POL- new system appears to indicate we will have to give advice on whether they should bid/how they should/where they now stand (if there is a POL of sorts still running) seems to imply we will need to be giving more info'

'It sounds like the new allocation will mean more involvement from the public and this undoubtedly will lead to confusion.'

'Will print off new scheme equivalent to 'POL' and assist vulnerable customers with 'bids'. Also receiving 'bid' documents. Will field more initial questions and educate Public for the new scheme. Will explain why 'bids' refused and any appeal processes etc'

'It seems to me that any revised scheme for allocating the same number of properties will have limited success. I would suggest that this will raise customer expectation, increase housing register contact with the council each time people "bid" yet still only deliver the same number of outcomes which will be allocated to those in most need (i.e. those with the most points?) That said, if the new scheme makes a small number of tenants happier with their property then that's a good thing.'

'No secrets. Puts onus back on applicant and they play a more active role in the property they want.'

'It might make it easier on the long term but I think that at first a lot of customers are going to require a lot of help understanding the scheme. Some will probably need help to bid as they can't read or write.'

'Easier for people to see where housing is being allocated for themselves and therefore there won't be so many questions about why people are not being housed etc'

'Not sure as to whether it will change my job but would envisage that CBL will ensure that traditionally hard to let properties are not as hard to let as at present. This will then have a knock on effect for overall void turnaround (fingers crossed)'

'In the long run it might cut down the amount of mutual exchanges between tenants who have an FT, also there might be fewer new tenants taking FTs as if more people from the GR get housed they might be in less need.'

POL = points on list

FT = furnished tenancy

GR = general register

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) questionnaire – March 06

Organisations surveyed

All housing associations operating in the area were sent questionnaires in line with our statutory duty to consult them

Of the 13 consulted, we received 7 replies. These were from:

Housing association	Rented stock in Oxford	Total stock
Cherwell	750	1300
Housing 21	63	150
Thames valley	16	4500
warden	96	1903
hastoe	64	2000

jephson	75	96
soha	30	4700

The “statutory question”: should Oxford move to a CBL scheme?

	Yes	no	No response
Should Oxford City Council move to CBL	6	0	1

Understanding of CBL and the current allocations scheme

Number whose staff have some understanding of CBL	7 (all)
Number who thought their staff find the current allocations system easy to use and understand	4
Number who had no opinion on what their tenants might think	5

Points vs banding

	Yes	No	No preference
prefer a banding scheme	6	0	1

Vulnerable people

CBL would be less inclusive for vulnerable people	3
CBL would have the same level of inclusivity as the present scheme	3
CBL would be more inclusive for vulnerable people	1

Potential impact on tenants

CBL would raise tenants’ expectations	3
CBL will make tenants more realistic	3
CBL will make no difference	1

Sustainable communities

CBL will have a positive effect on sustainable communities	4
CBL will have a negative effect on sustainable communities	
CBL will make no change	3

Choice of area

CBL will encourage tenants to consider areas of traditionally low demand	3
CBL will discourage tenants from considering areas of traditionally low demand	1
CBL will make no change	3

Partner Agencies - Statutory and Voluntary Groups, (eg Social Services and Advice Centres) questionnaire. March 06

Organisations questionned/responding

32 organisations were sent questionnaires.

We had 7 responses

These were from

- Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters
- CfBT Advice and Guidance and Connexions
- Barton Advice Centre
- Oxford City Primary Care Trust
- Oxfordshire Mind
- Oxfordshire Welfare Rights
- Julian Housing

Contact with relevant customer groups and OCC's allocations dept

All 7 had contact with social housing tenants and/or homeless people.

All 7 had contact with: families; elderly people; young people, BME people, people with physical and/ or learning disabilities; people with literacy difficulties; people for whom English is a 2nd language; people with mental health difficulties; DV sufferers; people leaving institutional care or prison; people who are isolated and/ or unable to use or access ICT; people with dependency issues and/ or chaotic lifestyles.

All agencies have had contact in the last 2 years with OCC's allocations department, with 5 having frequent or regular contact

How easy is the current scheme to understand?

Staff find the current allocations scheme easy to understand	2
Staff find the current allocations scheme difficult to understand	4
Users find the scheme easy to understand	3
Users find the scheme difficult to understand	3

Opinions about current literature on the allocations scheme

6 agencies gave negative responses to the literature and 3 gave positive responses. 1 said that the literature was positive about Oxford social housing

Awareness of CBL

All respondents replied that their staff have very little understanding or awareness of CBL

Community Groups questionnaire – March 06

Organisations surveyed/responding

27 groups were surveyed and 5 groups responded

Headington Community Association
Northway Community Association
Donnington Community Association
The Church of The Holy Family
Asylum Welcome

Details of the groups

Activities of groups

Headington Community Association manages Headington Community Centre. We then hire the building out to various groups

Northway Community Association Lunch Club, Bingo, Social Evenings, Sky TV, Ladies Darts

Donnington Community Association To try to bring the community together with various functions within the centre

The Church of The Holy Family Church Church rooms hired by groups and individuals

Asylum Welcome we support and advise asylum seekers and refugees on the health, immigration, family issues

All group included tenants of OCC and local RSLs

The local area

4 respondents (Headington Community Association, Northway Community Association, the Church of the Holy Family and Asylum welcome) thought that there was a strong sense of community where they lived, with 1 saying there was little sense of community (Donnington Community Association).

We asked what were the best or worst thing about living in the area served by the group.

Name of association	Best thing	Worst thing
Headington community association	Good sense of community, good open spaces, good transport	Low level crime, poor local government investment compared to BBL, traffic
Northway community association		Not enough to do
Donnington community association		Too much student accommodation. Too many houses being turned into flats. Drugs and antisocial behaviour
Church of the Holy Family	Many residents have lived on the estate for a long time	
Asylum welcome		poverty

3 groups thought that giving tenants choice were they lived would improve the local community. None thought that it would get worse.

'Hopefully this would allow people who want to remain within Headington to do so. This allows families to stay close to their support systems'

'Give the children more to do and this will keep them off the streets'

Survey of people in housing need, May 2006

This survey was undertaken to give insight into two topics:

1. Do applicants understand the current scheme? Including: how their points were assessed and their place on the list
2. Did applicants want an allocations scheme which reflected detailed circumstances? (This would lend itself to a points scheme) Or would they prefer a scheme which gave more weight to waiting time (This would be more accurately reflected in a bands scheme).

Methodology

For this survey we targeted people who we knew to be homeless, or in housing need, rather than existing tenants. Surveys were filled in by staff asking applicants questions, rather than by applicants filling in response sheets themselves.

Respondents comprised: people in first and second stage temporary accommodation; people in hostel accommodation (Lucy Faithful House and the Night Shelter); and people visiting Options officers in St Aldate's Chambers.

We surveyed 100 people. Respondents were not sampled in any way.

Demography of the respondents

Housing status

- 16% were on the general register
- 76% were homeless
- 8% were in other housing need

Ethnic origin

- 18% of respondents self-defined as black or Asian
- 0% of respondents self-defined as Chinese
- 65% of respondents self-defined as white British¹
- 12% of respondents self-defined as white Irish or other
- 6% of respondents self-defined as other.

Households

- 48% of respondents had children under 16 living with them
- 52% of respondents had only adults living in their household

¹ (cf Oxford population 87.1% per 2001 census)

Age

- 8% of respondents were under 18
- 37% of respondents were 18-24
- 45% of respondent were 25-44
- 7% of respondents were 45-60
- 3% of respondents were over 60

Question 1: Do applicants understand the current scheme?

- Only 20% of respondents claimed to understand the current allocations scheme, with 25% saying that they did not understand the scheme and 55% saying that they were unsure.

Of the 75% of respondents who are on Oxford City Council's housing register,

- 65% do not understand how their points were assessed

of the same group

- 76% do not understand their place on the list

and

- 44% feel that the current system accurately assesses their specific housing needs

Question 2. What are the most important factors to be considered when the Council introduces a new allocations scheme.

Respondents were asked to rate factors from 1 - 4, with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least. (Where respondents gave less than 4 answers, all non-ranked factors were awarded a 4.) *The factor with the lowest score was therefore the most popular.*

1. Gives choice about where they lived:	220
2. Takes account of complicated circumstances:	234
3. Takes account of waiting time:	267
4. Easy to understand:	285

The answers could also be based on first preferences as a number of respondents felt most strongly about their first preference

1. Gives choice about where they lived:	45
2. Takes account of complicated circumstances:	27
3. Easy to understand:	23
4. Takes account of waiting time:	18

The analysis from this would suggest that choice and control over where they live is the most important to respondents.

Taking account of complicated circumstances seems slightly more important than waiting time, based on first preferences, but only by 4%