



Common Housing Registers (CHRs)

What's a common housing register?

A common housing register (CHR) aims to create a simpler more straightforward way for people wishing to apply for social rented housing. Right now, if you want to apply for a house with the Council and with local Housing Associations you would have to find out about, and apply separately to all the different landlords offering housing in the area. This can be difficult, time consuming and confusing for a lot of people and often puts them off.

Jargon Buster

When we talk about social landlords or social rented housing we mean the Council and Housing Associations and Housing Co-operatives. It does not include private landlords and has nothing to do with people who own their homes.

A common housing register involves the **creation of a single, shared application form** that is used by a number of landlords. For example, if a common housing register was set up in South Lanarkshire, the Council and local Housing Associations would sit down together to develop and agree to use one application form. A person applying for a house would complete this one form to be considered for housing by everyone.

All of the landlords can then pull out suitable applicants. However, using the same application form and sharing the same pot of applicants does not mean that all the landlords taking part need to have the same allocations policy. **Each landlord can still decide how they are going to prioritise and select applicants.**

Do we need a common housing register?

Social rented housing is provided by a larger number and range of housing organisations than ever before. In the past, anyone seeking a house would apply to the Council, but now people are faced with many different social landlords including housing associations and housing co-operatives.

What does the law say?

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 does not make CHRs compulsory, but sets out powers which require Councils to submit proposals for establishing and maintaining a CHR. Within this power there is also a duty on housing associations / co-operatives to participate in CHRs. The Scottish Executive set aside £3 million to support the development of CHRs in Scotland between 2004 and 2006.

What's happening in South Lanarkshire?

South Lanarkshire Council has already started work with other social landlords in the area to develop a CHR. The Council was successful in bidding for a share of the money set aside by the Scottish Executive and has used this to employ a Common Housing Register Development Officer and to explore and develop information and communication technology which would be required to deliver a CHR. There are 24 social landlords operating in South Lanarkshire who are involved in discussions as members of a Common Housing Register Working Group. The Council's proposed timescale for establishing a CHR in South Lanarkshire is Autumn 2007. They have also started discussing their proposals with tenants.

Possible Benefits

FOR APPLICANTS it provides a simpler and fairer access to housing. Just now people need to apply separately to a large number of landlords.

FOR EXISTING TENANTS it can help promote choice within the housing available, allowing landlords to meet the needs and wants of existing tenants who want to move

FOR BOTH APPLICANTS AND TENANTS it can deliver a greater choice of landlords, housing areas and house types which will contribute to stronger more sustainable neighbourhoods

FOR COUNCILS AND OTHER SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS the creation of a single list of people actively looking for housing within a given area – both as first time applicants – and tenants seeking to transfer – provides a more accurate estimate of who needs housing than a system of many waiting lists with unknown levels of duplication

It can improve the use of the housing available because there is a greater scope for making successful 'matches' between applicants and available properties

It contributes to improved efficiency in the allocation of housing and reduces duplication of work by staff in different organisations

Some issues for tenants

Applicants need to understand the system.

Applicants need to know who manages the Common Housing Register and how to notify any change in their circumstances.

The system relies on computers. The efficiency of the system is essential if flaws are to be avoided.

Applicants should have information on all participating landlords, for example information about rent levels, the repairs service, housing management and allocations policies.

Applicants need to know where to go for an update on their application?

Applicants need to know how transfer applicants will be considered?

Elderly applicants or applicants with disabilities may require additional support to understand the system

Landlords may still have their own allocations policies. This may cause confusion.

Tenant involvement in the development of Common Housing Registers

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a legal duty on landlords to consult with tenants on any changes or proposed changes to housing management, policies or conditions. Therefore tenant participation is crucial in the development of common housing registers. If you wish more information contact the Project on 01698 527108.

The SLTDSP has produced five Fact sheets on housing allocations; An Introduction to Housing Allocations, The Legal Framework for Allocations Policies, SLC Allocations' Policy, Common Housing Registers and Choice Based Lettings. These are all available free by contacting the Project on 01698 527108.