



Whiteinch & Scotstoun Housing Association – Review of Allocation Policy

Report of Tenant Consultation

April 2019

“The Tenants Information Service is the leading organisation in Scotland promoting and inspiring innovative tenant participation practice. We achieve this by providing independent advice, support and training for tenants and landlords”.



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Tenants Information Service (TIS) was commissioned in November 2018 to undertake consultation to support Whiteinch & Scotstoun Housing Association (WSHA) to review their allocation policy in accordance with the provisions laid out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 1.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 set out a series of provisions affecting the way in which social housing providers allocate their properties. A number of these provisions are statutory, and as such WSHA have to incorporate these into their allocations policy. However, there are also a number of discretionary powers laid out in the Act that landlords can choose to make use if they feel it would help them achieve their strategic housing objectives.
- 1.3.1 WSHA have reviewed their allocations policy in accordance with these provisions, and have developed a series of proposals for changes they would look to make to the current allocation policy to reflect these.
- 1.3.2 This report outlines the findings of a consultation exercise that was conducted to establish the views of tenants, applicants and other stakeholders on those proposals.

2.0 The Consultation Programme

The consultation process was structured to provide a range of ways for people to get involved:

2.1 Preparation of a Briefing Document

A briefing document, setting out a summary of the proposals, was developed. The document was designed to be easy to understand and included the key changes to the allocation policy that were planned by WSHA.

This summary document was made available via the WSHA website, and tenants and applicants were signposted to it via the group texting service and the circulation of posters displayed in public spaces across the local area.

2.2 Survey of residents and other stakeholders

A survey was developed using SurveyMonkey and was made available via the WSHA website along with the Briefing Document. As above, tenants and applicants were signposted to it via the group texting service and the circulation of posters displayed in public spaces across the area.

Copies were also available on request from the reception desk at the WSHA housing office at Northinch Court.

2.3 Postal survey

A sample group was drawn from existing tenants and current waiting list applicants – the sample extended to approximately 50% of these groups, with efforts made to achieve a spread across household types.

All 971 individuals in the sample group (659 tenants and 312 applicants) received a copy of the Briefing Document and the survey in the post, along with a FREEPOST envelope to return their completed responses.

2.2 Focus group session

Using a database of 'interested tenants', participants were invited to take part in a focus group to explore the proposals in more detail.

2.4 Freephone Service

The TIS Freephone number was included in the Briefing Document, the website and group text, encouraging residents to get in touch if they wanted to discuss the proposals in more detail, or if they would like to complete the survey over the telephone.

3.0 Feedback from the Tenant Consultation Events

3.1 Rate of Responses:

3.1.1 There were 89 surveys completed in total:

- 75 postal responses
- 2 telephone responses
- 12 on-line responses

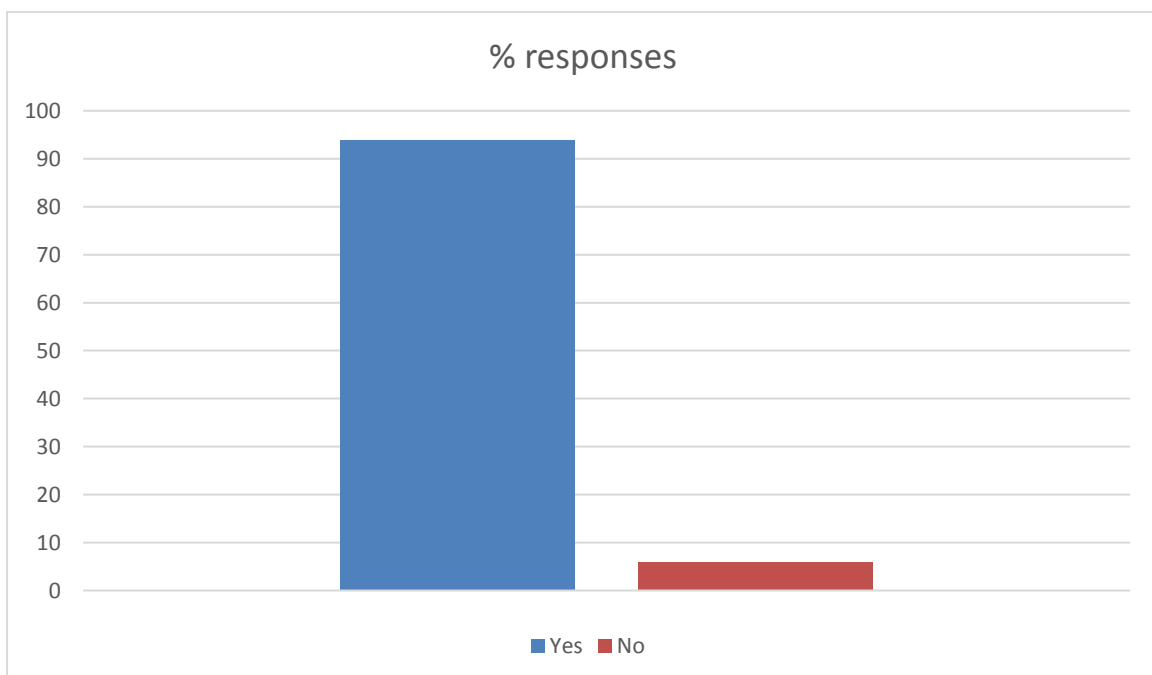
3.1.2 A total of 5 respondents took the opportunity to contact TIS via telephone.

3.1.3 None of the invited participants attended the focus group.

3.1.4 Of the total responses, 72% were made by current WSHA tenants. The remaining 28% of responses came from applicants on the WSHA waiting list.

3.2 Summary of Responses :

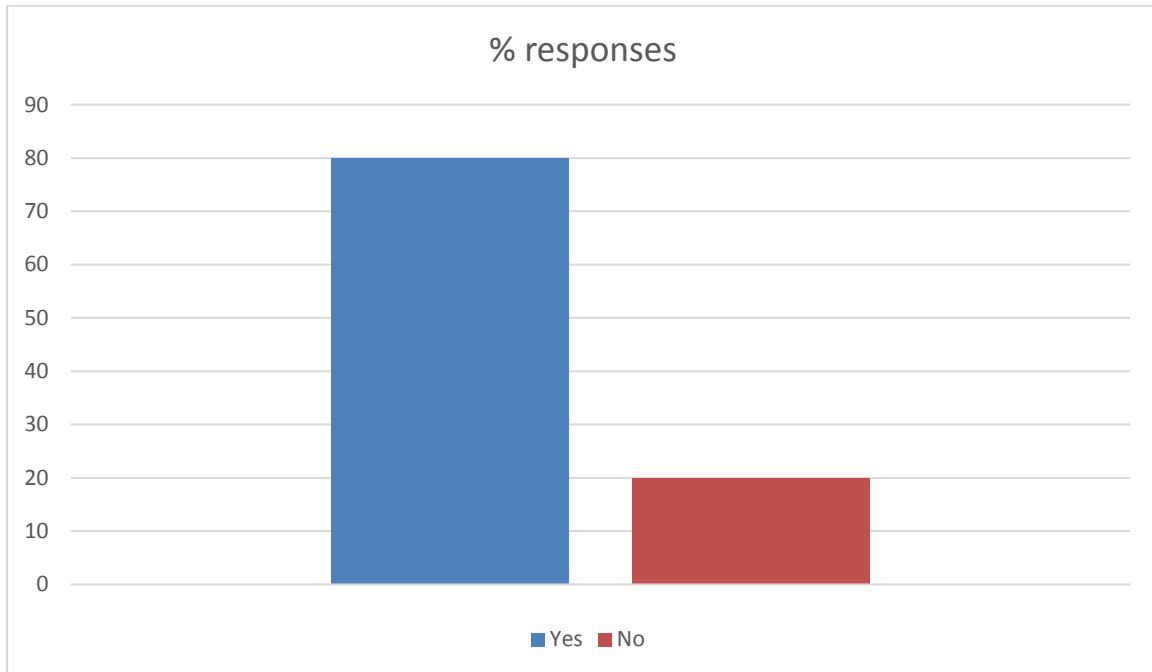
Q1: Do you agree that a housing options interview should be offered to all applicants to discuss their housing needs?



There were 21 respondents who provided a comment in further explanation of their answer to this question. The majority of these comments indicate that respondents feel that an interview would allow applicants to provide more detail and explain their circumstances in a way that can't be done on an application form. Further, the comments suggested agreement that such an approach is useful in explaining the

likelihood and/or timescale of receiving an offer to applicants, and is a useful way of signposting applicants to alternative housing options.

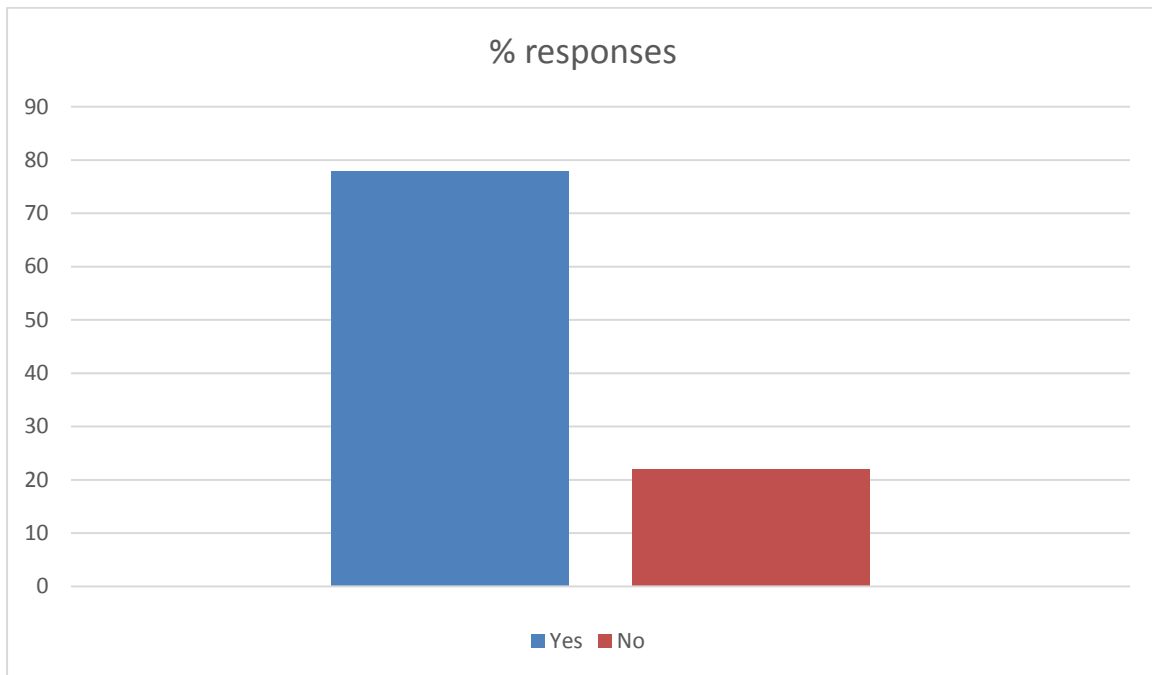
Q2: Do you agree that applications should be suspended for the circumstances set out in the consultation document?



There were 20 respondents who provided further comment to this question. These comments can be grouped into:

- A need for flexibility – stressing that individual circumstances should be taken into account before suspending. Specific reference to mental health or people falling into arrears because of the impact of welfare reform were included of examples of situations where a flexible approach might be required.
- Particular support for measures to tackle Anti-social behaviour.
- Careful assessment needed to determine if an applicant has deliberately worsened their housing conditions

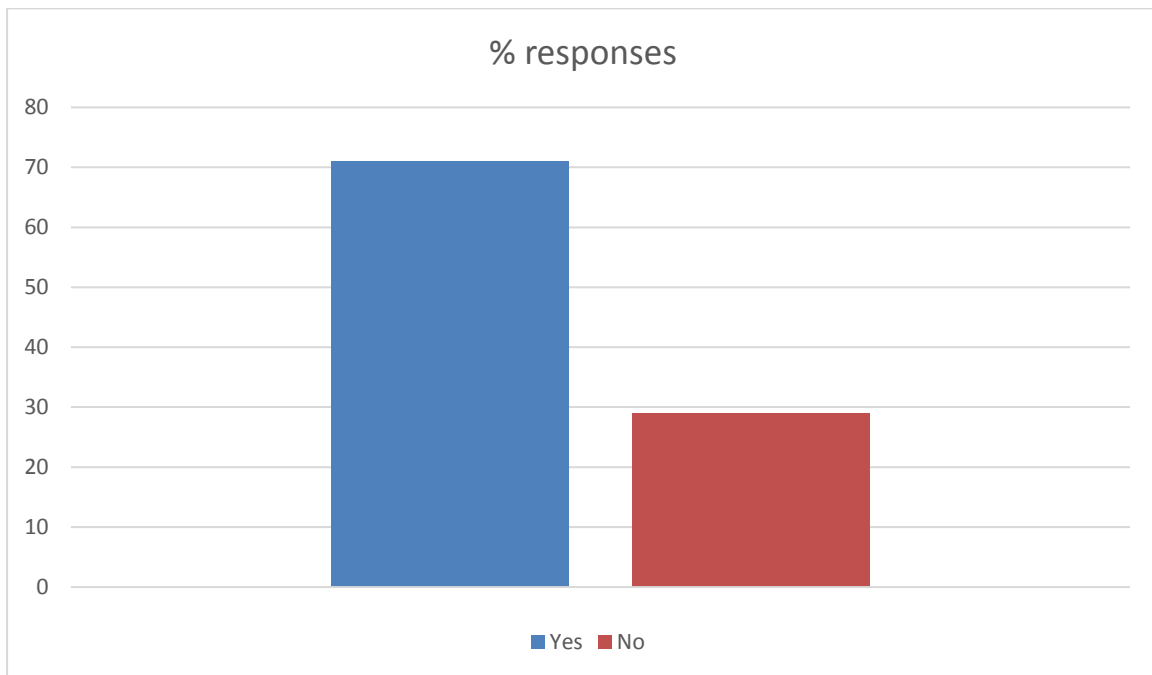
Q3: Do you agree that homeowners who do not have an unmet housing need should be supported to improve their housing circumstances without being allocated a Scottish Secure Tenancy?



There were 16 respondents who commented on their response. Those who responded **no** were evenly split between:

- Those that felt homeowners should be allocated the same as any applicant or where they are in circumstances of ill-health or financial pressure that mean they can't remain in their home.
- Those who felt homeowners should not be given any support by WSHA to improve their housing circumstances as this would place a strain on finances/resources.

Q4: Do you agree that homeowners should be offered a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy while they resolve their housing circumstances?

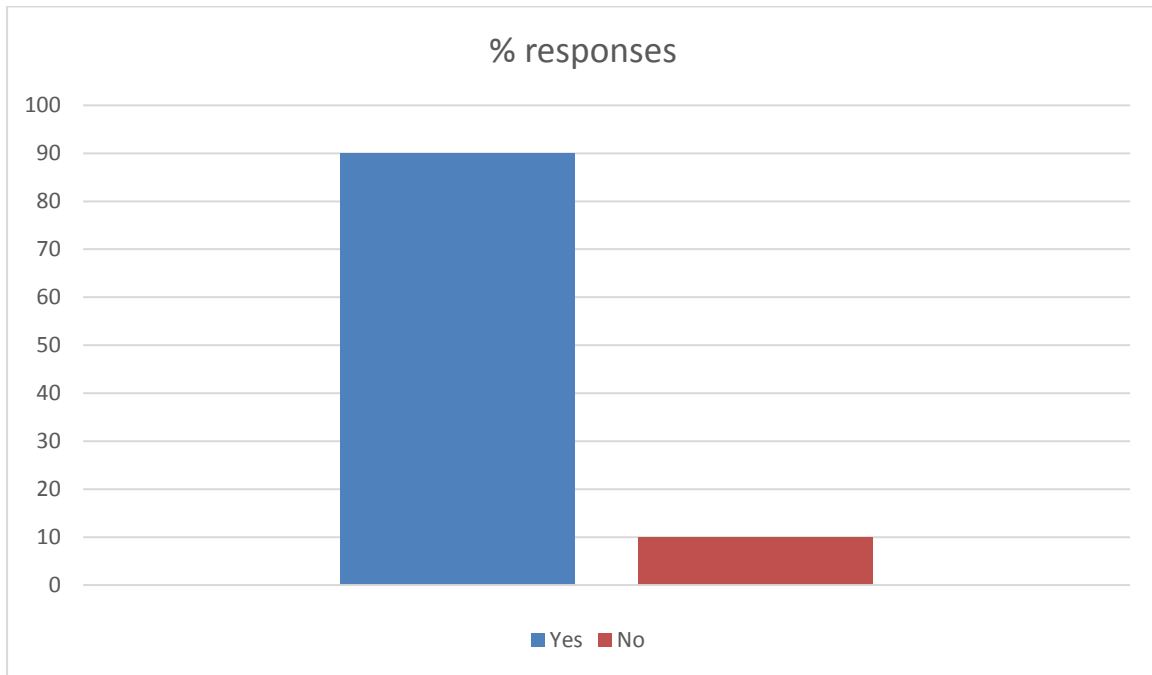


There were 14 respondents who provided further comment. Those who responded yes largely suggested that they felt this was appropriate to help people in times of financial burden. Others were keen to stress that it must be made clear that it was a temporary solution.

Those who responded no were evenly split between:

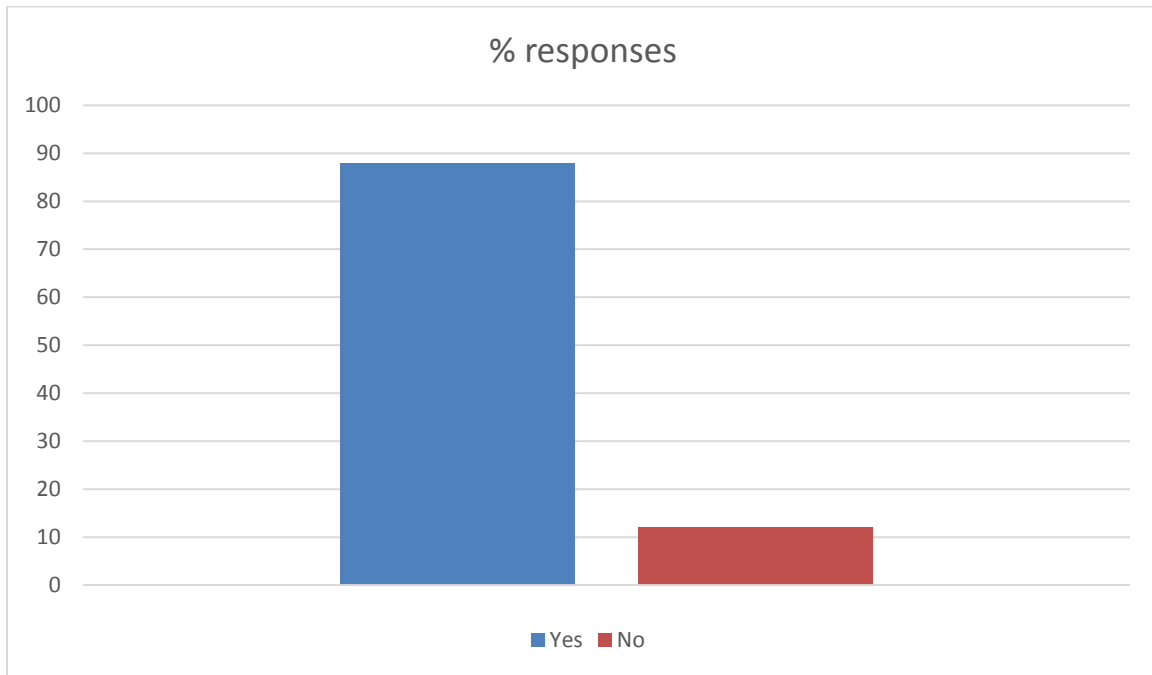
- Those who felt only permanent tenancies should be offered to homeowners (i.e. they answered no to Q.3).
- Those who felt homeowners should be offered no support at all.

Q5: Do you agree that ground floor properties should be reserved for applicants with a medical need for such a property?



There were 12 comments received in response to this question. Those in favour suggested the ageing population and those with mobility issues would particularly benefit from this change. 2 of those who said no felt that this would discriminate against those with no medical need and lead to longer waiting times for such groups, while others suggested that it in order to reduce void levels, ground floor properties shouldn't be held back where there is no immediate need from someone with an illness or mobility issue.

Q6: Do you agree that members of the armed forces should be awarded points following confirmation of their date of discharge?



There were 16 comments recorded. Those who had responded yes largely commented that their service earned them the right to priority while 3 people who did not support the change suggested the armed forces was a career choice and special treatment was unfair.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 This report provides details of feedback collected during the consultation of WSHA's proposals for amending their allocation policy in accordance with the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 4.2 A total of 89 participants responded to the consultation survey. 72% of respondents were existing tenants of WSHA and 28% were applicants on the WSHA waiting list.
- 4.3 Overall there is clear support for each of the proposals consulted on as part of this process and, accordingly, Committee is asked to approve implementation of the proposed amendments.
- 4.4 WSHA should publish the outcome of this consultation including a timeline for the recommended changes to come into effect.
- 4.5 WSHA should identify any training needs for staff and other resource requirements to implement these changes and ensure they are allocating their properties in accordance with all relevant legislation and best practice guidance, including the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and its associated Practice Guide.