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Town Hall
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To all members of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Date: 17 January 2020
Our Ref:
Your Ref:

Contact: Paul Fraser
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Dear Councillor

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 21ST JANUARY, 2020

I refer to the agenda for the above meeting and now enclose the following report that were unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda No.	Item
7	Review of Social Housing Allocations (Pages 87 - 120) Report of the Head of Economic Growth and Housing
9	Cabinet Member Reports - November 2019 to January 2020 (Pages 121 - 146) Cabinet Member reports for Communities and Housing and Regeneration and Skills

Yours faithfully,

DAVID MCCULLOUGH

Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

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Agenda Item 7

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) **Date of Meeting:** Tuesday 21 January 2020

Subject: Review of Social Housing Allocations

Report of: Head of Economic Growth and Housing **Wards Affected:** (All Wards);

Portfolio: Communities & Housing

Is this a Key Decision: No **Included in Forward Plan:** No
Exempt / Confidential Report: No

Summary:

To provide Members with the results of an exercise to Review the Social Housing Allocations policy and procedure; providing the findings, recommendations and next steps arising from this review. Members comments are sought.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) That Members of the Committee note the exercise to review the social housing allocations policy and procedures
- (2) That members provide comments on the review findings, recommendations and suggested way forward.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the and comment on the social housing allocations review exercise findings.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Not applicable

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct revenue costs arising from the recommendations of this report. The Review exercise is being funded by the LCR Combined Authority.

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(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs arising from the recommendations of this report

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

There are no resource implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The Review report provides some findings and recommendations which have potential resource implications, but these will be subject to future decisions to be taken in connection with a new allocations policy and procedure, yet to be agreed.

Legal Implications:

Local Authorities have legal duties as set out in Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, (Allocation of housing accommodation), which require that; (S166A (1)); *“every local housing authority in England must have a scheme (their “allocation scheme”) for determining priorities and as to the procedure to be followed, in allocating housing accommodation. For this purpose “procedure” includes all aspects of the allocation process, including the persons or descriptions of persons by whom decisions are taken.”*

Equality Implications:

There are no equality implications arising from the contents of the report.

In advance of a new Allocations Policy being agreed a new Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

Many vulnerable households rely on accessing suitable social housing to meet their housing needs.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

Provision of suitable stable tenancies with social landlords supports community stability.

Commission, broker and provide core services:

The Council has a legal duty to provide a social housing allocations policy and scheme

Place – leadership and influencer:

NA

Drivers of change and reform:

A wish to ensure that the future allocations policy is fit for purpose

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:

NA

Greater income for social investment:

NA

Cleaner Greener

NA

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5920/20) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4104/20) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Neil Morland & Co (NM&Co) maintained regular contact throughout the review exercise with all relevant stakeholders; principally the local authorities and local housing associations.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer: Neil Davies
Telephone Number: Tel: 0151 934 4837
Email Address: neil.davies@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:
Review of Housing Allocations Findings – Neil Morland & Co.

Background Papers:

The existing Housing Allocations Policy can be found at the PropertyPoolPlus website.

<https://www.propertypoolplus.org.uk/content/About/OurPolicies>

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, on behalf of the 5 Local Authorities who participate in Property Pool Plus (PPP) and St Helens Council (who operate Under One Roof -U1R), have commissioned Neil Morland & Co (NM&Co) to carry out a review of how social rented housing is allocated across the city region. NM&Co are housing consultants formed in 2011, who work throughout England, Scotland and Wales with local authorities, housing associations, voluntary organisations and others.

1.2 Property Pool Plus (PPP) is a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings social housing allocation scheme covering the local authority areas of Halton, Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton and Wirral. The PPP service went 'live' in July 2012, following the introduction of a suitable IT system (provided by Abritas, now Civica).

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PPP provides a single point of access for customers/applicants to apply for social housing, complete a single application process, and join a single housing register. It also provides local authorities with a single means to provide nominations, including for homeless applicants. This requires the participation of all, or the vast majority, of housing associations, and their willingness to let their available properties via PPP.

1.3 The local authorities and participating housing associations wish to ensure that the future allocations policy is fit for purpose and supports strategic City Region wide aspirations around access to housing. Some of the principal drivers for undertaking a policy review include ensuring that the policy:

- Is legally compliant with relevant Government legislation, in particular the recent introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, Codes of Guidance, statutory obligations and also has regard to best practice and current case law;
- Incorporates aims and principles which remain appropriate and relevant;
- Helps support and deliver good customer service and outcomes and ensures any proposed changes improve the customer journey;
- Supports wider system change for homeless people, maximising the number of people in housing need who are successfully housed;
- Is informed by housing association partner organisation's operational and business needs, in order to promote current and future co-operation and participation in the allocation scheme.

1.4 NM&Co have completed stage 1 of the review exercise they have been commissioned to undertake, and provided a report on the findings of the Review. This is provided in the Appendix below.

Review of Housing Allocations Findings

December 2019

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Introduction

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on behalf of Property Pool Plus (PPP) and Under One Roof (U1R) have commissioned Neil Morland & Co (NM&Co) to carry out a review of how social rented housing is allocated across the city region

NM&Co are housing consultants. Formed in 2011, NM&Co work throughout England, Scotland and Wales with local authorities, housing associations, voluntary organisations and others. NM&Co's ambition is to reduce housing inequalities by improving social policies. NM&Co uses authoritative evidence and their unique expertise, to create better outcomes for people in housing need. NM&Co's team consists of:

- Neil Morland – Senior Responsible Officer
- Amber Christou – Project Manager
- Liz Griffiths – Project Support Officer
- Kathryn Barber LLB LPC – Lawyer

Phone 07816 935620, email neil@neilmorland.co.uk or visit www.neilmorland.co.uk

Review methodology

Neil Morland & Co (NM&Co) maintained regular contact throughout the review with all stakeholders.

NM&Co carried out the following activities to complete this review:

1. Reviewed housing applications and allocation/lettings trends,
2. Reviewed the current policies, procedures and practices,
3. Formulated this report, recommending changes to policies, procedures and practices
4. Formulated revised draft procedures for allocating social rented housing

In due course NM&Co will carry out the following activities:

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5. Afford private registered providers (PRP), members of the public and others opportunities to comment on the revised draft policy and procedures
6. Make alterations to draft housing allocation procedures, in accordance with consultation feedback
7. Carry out an equality impact assessment on the final draft housing allocation procedures

NM&Co commenced the review in July 2019 and completed it in December 2019. Following this, we will assist PPP and U1R to carry out consultation with PRPs, public authorities, voluntary organisations and the general public. We will present all findings to elected councillors, to aid their decision-making processes.

NM&Co carried out the review primarily off-site, however certain aspects of the review was done onsite, such as:

- attendance at monthly project update meetings
- observational visits to all stock transfer PRPs
- attendance at individual meetings with all six LAs
- attendance at elected councillor committee meetings
- facilitation of workshops with all registered providers that are members of PPP and/or U1R.

NM&Co have had regard to all relevant law, statutory guidance, regulations, orders, specified strategies plus other relevant documents. This has included:

- Statute
- Statutory guidance
- Regulations and orders
- Directions issued by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH)
- Case law
- Rulings made by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- Legal text books
- Homelessness strategies
- Tenancy strategies

NM&Co reviewed housing application and allocation/lettings trends to identify whether PPP and U1R is:

- Prioritising social rented housing (SRH) for people whose needs cannot be met by the commercial housing market (especially the most vulnerable people, such as those who are homeless), and
- Making best use of SRH available to-let.

NM&Co reviewed current policies, procedures and practices to identify whether these documents and activity:

- Satisfy the law, statutory guidance, and regulations and orders pertaining to the allocation of social rented housing (including how PRPs co-operate with the allocation of SRH), and
- Reflect nationally recognised standards of practice, being researched and promoted by authoritative bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), the National Housing Federation (NHF) and the RSH, and

- Enable an efficient and high standard of customer experience.

NM&Co reported to the PPP and U1R to ensure all parties understood:

- The findings from the review of the policies, procedures and practices, and also housing applicant and allocation/lettings trends,
- Our advice on the alterations that need to be made, to ensure PPP/U1R procedures are legal, effective, and equally satisfy the needs of LAs, PRPs and the public.
- Our advice on future priorities for allocating social rented housing, to ensure those with the most need, get the best opportunity to be offered it.

In accordance with the advice in our report, NM&Co will formulate a draft policy and procedures documents so that the LAs can have a Housing Allocation Scheme (HAS) that all parties approve of.

NM&Co have already and will continue to afford opportunities to comment on the amended procedures, so that opinions of PRP's, and others likely to be affected by any changes about how social rented housing should be allocated is considered, prior to formulating final versions of the policies and procedures. NM&Co will frame a public consultation exercise, to aid local authorities in a proper approach to carrying out this task.

NM&Co will formulate final procedures, to provide the LA members of PPP and U1R, lawful documentation to take forward through democratic processes for consideration and endorsement. NM&Co will formulate an equality impact assessment, to provide the LA members of PPP and U1R, evidence that when social rented housing is allocated using the altered policies and procedures, persons with a protected characteristic (as defined in law) are not prejudiced due to their characteristics.

Legal Context

The law¹ defines SRH as homes available to rent at below market rates to people whose housing needs cannot be met by commercial housing market.

LAs must adhere to the law² regarding the allocation of SRH. An allocation is when a person is selected or nominated to be a tenant of an LA or an PRP. LAs that have transferred their housing stock can agree nominations arrangements with PRPs. Tenants wishing to transfer which would be entitled to a fair advantage (see below for definition) for an allocation of SRH, are covered by the laws governing the allocation of SRH. Within the constraints of the law, LAs can allocate SRH as they see fit.

In specified circumstances, for example succession or assignment of a tenancy, housing allocation law doesn't apply³.

People from abroad are ineligible to be allocated SRH⁴, this includes asylum seekers and those not entitled to claim Universal Credit or Housing Benefit⁵. Tenants who wish to make a transfer and are entitled to a fair advantage when SRH is being allocated, are exempt from

¹ Housing & Regeneration Act 2008, Chapter 1, Part 2, section 69

² Housing Act 1996, Part 6 Allocation of Housing Accommodation

³ Housing Act 1985, Localism Act 2011, Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, Children Act 1989, Civil Partnership Act 2004, Land Compensation Act 1973

⁴ Asylum and Immigration Act 1996

⁵ The Universal Credit (Consequential, Supplementary Incidental and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2013

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eligibility rules. Right to rent checks do not apply when an allocation is made by a local authority⁶. Persons from Great Britain, Ireland, Isle of Mann and the Channel Islands are usually eligible for an allocation of SRH, as are refugees and EU citizens who have lived and worked in the UK for more than 6 months⁷. LAs can decide which persons qualify for SRH. Any person applying for an allocation of SRH must be notified of a decision made about their application and the reasons for the decision made. A person who has been declared ineligible or disqualified for an allocation of SRH, can reapply at any time.

LAs must provide free advice and information about social housing allocations, plus assistance to those who need it, to make an application for an allocation of SRH. LAs must inform people about their right to request (i) information about any decisions that are made about them, (ii) the facts of their case and (iii) a review of any decision about their application for an allocation of SRH. LAs must always follow the rules of their HAS.

All LAs must have a HAS. A HAS must provide detailed information about all procedures that will be followed, by which persons, to allocate SRH. LAs can decide how much choice applicants are entitled to when being allocated SRH. People in the following circumstance must be given a fair advantage when SRH is being allocated:

- Homeless;
- Owed a homeless duty;
- Living in insanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing;
- Need to move due to medical or welfare reasons;
- Need to move due to hardship.

Armed forces veterans must be given extra advantage⁸ for an allocation of SRH and LAs can choose to give extra advantage to other applicants. LAs can take account of a persons' income and savings, their behaviour or connection to a local authority district⁹ when allocating SRH. People should have a connection to a district of two years or more¹⁰, however armed forces veterans must be exempt from any local connection qualification criterion¹¹, as should victims of domestic abuse¹² and persons who have a right to move due to employment or educational factors¹³. Care leavers can attain a local connection due to being in a LA district prior to leaving care¹⁴. Special rules can be made when allocating specific types of properties or to particular persons. LAs must inform people how a decision about their application will be made and the likelihood of SRH becoming available for them, plus their right to request a review about their application for SRH, especially in regard to whether they are eligible or qualify. The way SRH is allocated must reflect the priorities of local homelessness strategies and tenancy strategies. LAs must consult with PRPs prior to making any changes to their HAS. LAs must adhere to rules of their HAS.

A summary and full version of a HAS must be available for members of the public. The public should be told of any changes a LA might intend to make to their HAS.

⁶ Immigration Act 2014, Schedule 3

⁷ Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002

⁸ Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012

⁹ Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 199 Local connection

¹⁰ Providing social housing for local people: Guidance for local housing authorities in England, 2013

¹¹ The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces Personnel) (England) Regulations 2012

¹² Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse: Guidance for local housing authorities in England, 2018

¹³ The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015

¹⁴ Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Section 8 Local connection of a care leaver

LAs must follow statutory guidance published by the UK Government.

PRPs must reasonably co-operate with LAs with the allocation of SRH.

People applying for an allocation of SRH can be convicted of fraud if they give false information or withhold information from a local authority.

LAs can contract out the administration of a HAS, however they remain responsible for all decisions made about the allocation of SRH¹⁵.

Elected councillors cannot get involved in the allocation of SRH where a property is located in their electoral ward, or a person lives in that ward or wishes to live in that ward¹⁶.

Local context

Previously, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) undertook a large scale voluntary transfer of its Social Rented Housing to One Vision Housing (OVH), which were specifically set-up to receive the stock.

To allow the LA to fulfil its legal obligations in regard to housing allocation, at the point of stock transfer, nomination agreements were adopted which stipulated how SMBC and OVH would co-operate in letting of SRH. SMBC complied with the prevailing guidance issued by the then regulator of social housing, the Housing Corporation, by requiring all housing associations to offer a minimum of 50% nominations of existing stock, and 100% on first letting of all subsequent new build stock, where this was provided on land sold by the Council.

SMBC operates a housing allocation scheme in common with other LAs and PRPs under the PPP banner. The scheme rules were last revised in 2018. Applicants are able to express a preference about a property available to let (known as bidding), on a weekly basis, this is capped at three properties per week. Applicants are limited to the number of allocations which they can refuse, with applicants being afforded the highest priority for an allocation being typically entitled to one refusal, whereas applicants with a lower priority for an allocation being typically entitled to three refusals.

SMBC has contracted out the administration of its housing allocation functions to OVH. This arrangement was last renewed in 2018. SMBC will take applications from persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness wishing to join PPP. For all other persons wishing to join PPP, application can only be made to OVH.

SMBC Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2023 includes the following actions:

- Review arrangements for administering public law duties to allocate housing accommodation.
- Commission an independent review of (i) cost, (ii) efficiency and (iii) legality of current arrangements for (a) the housing register, (b) housing allocation policy (c) offering choice.

¹⁵ Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996

¹⁶ Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997

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Obtaining social rented housing remains the common method to fulfil homelessness duties. Accordingly, homeless applicants are prioritised for an allocation of social rented housing via PPP. The Liverpool City Region Tenancy Strategy 2016 – 2019 requires updating. Notwithstanding this, the focus of the Tenancy Strategy is to encourage the securest form of tenure whenever possible. As a consequence, housing associations will usually offer their tenants an assured tenancy once an introductory period has come to an end.

One Vision Housing

Access to Service

There is no information on the SMBC home page with regards to housing, and the a-z of Sefton services makes no mention of PPP or social housing when the search criteria 'Housing' is entered. A 'residents' tab at the top of the home page leads to a variety of links including Housing, which provides a link to apply for housing leading to a further page which links to PPP website directly and direct email contact to the OVH team. There is also a link to a list of useful links on the home page which leads to a further link to OVH, but there is no mention of OVH being the Sefton Administering Scheme Partner.

The OVH website has a large button for PPP on its main page which connects directly to the PPP website which provides a telephone number, email address and two office addresses where applicants can visit for assistance, but also no explanation that OVH are the Administering Scheme Partner for SMBC.

Staff are located at the Coral Drive Customer Access Offices, in the middle of one of the former Sefton Council housing estates which are now owned and managed by OVH. This is near a main shopping area with good transport links and provides good access for applicants as well as being very close to a Sefton Housing Options Office.

Applicants are directed to the website for the policy if requested but will be provided with a print copy if they prefer. The offices have a public computer suite for applicants use, and counter staff will also help to apply and to bid for those who require assistance.

Service Structure

The OVH team is structured as follows, although the Senior Manager has other non-PPP responsibilities, and only 20% of her time is dedicated to managing PPP staff.



Charging

OVH charge £158 per property advertised to other PRPs.

Practice

The allocations team have, and continually refer to, copies of the policy and guidance. They will use the policy to ensure the appropriate wording is included in all correspondence, including appeals.

OVH have written a separate armed forces procedure which is used internally because they found the PPP scheme unclear in this area. The procedure complies with the scheme and legislation.

SMBC share caselaw updates with the OVH team and if additional guidance is needed they will contact the lead officer at SMBC to discuss a case, as well as discussing these at the project group of Contractors which meets monthly.

OVH provide a printed sheet of properties to let for some applicants because they have many digitally excluded households.

Staff are aware of the Sefton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and have received training on HRA17 from SMBC. Many applicants approach OVH as homeless rather than for making a PPP application, but applications are always taken, and the applicant then referred to the SMBC homelessness service to make a homeless application. SMBC use proxy bidding for homeless applicants.

OVH find eligibility to be a complicated area but will call the Home Office on occasion for eligibility clarification, after giving the applicant the opportunity to withdraw their application prior to this. If an applicant is ineligible OVH provide a letter with the reasons for ineligibility and appeal rights.

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Right to Rent checks are carried out in all cases according to the PPP policy, therefore inappropriately. Arrears checks on applications are carried out upfront, and affordability checks are carried out by the landlord in line with their own allocations policies. Applicants are informed of this on application.

Medical mobility issues are evidenced by Occupational Therapy and the applicants GP for other issues such as COPD. They find mental health more complicated to assess and the applicants find the form complicated to complete in such cases. There is no external resource for independent medical assessments and no internal expertise, only experience.

OVH have a number of applicants who are victim with life at risk of ASB and hate crime, and the police provide evidence for these in order to help prioritise applications for PPP. OVH have also developed a strong partnership with the Probation Service and a move on project enable probation clients to be placed directly in the OVH 25% of properties, which are not part of the PPP nominations agreement. This means that they do not have to assess using PPP criminal convictions criteria as lettings are based on the OVH lettings policy.

OVH find the template letters simple to use and are generally happy with the Civica IT system, particularly since the recent upgrade. They use the reporting function well to monitor bidding, and report to SMBC on a quarterly basis.

Findings

1. **Procedures** – The current PPP/U1R procedures require amendments, to bring the administration of PPP/U1R up-to-date with the latest legislation. In particular the following rules will require changing:
 - a. Qualification – revision to how decisions are made about applicants who
 - i. Incapable of holding a tenancy. Persons lacking mental capacity need to be included in this group.
 - ii. Are guilty of anti-social behaviour. Persons with spent convictions cannot be disqualified for any period time, only for reasons any other applicant can be disqualified. The definition of what constitutes anti-social behaviour needs to be more specific.
 - iii. Have outstanding property related arrears – the minimum threshold of arrears and the method set for repayment of arrears needs to reflect what the specific circumstances of an applicant are.
 - iv. Have breached tenancy conditions. The definition of what constitutes a breach tenancy conditions needs to be more specific.
 - v. Don't have a local connection. The minimum threshold needs to be two years, although exemptions must apply for armed forces veterans, victims of domestic abuse and persons needing to move due to employment or educational related reasons.
 - vi. Currently own a home. Social rented housing is for people who needs cannot be met by the commercial market, a homeowner can be said to have had their needs met by the commercial market. However, exemptions should apply to persons who are negative equity, the property has severe structural faults, the homeowner is at risk of domestic abuse, or where it is not possible to adapt a property due to

- the physical arrangements of a dwelling/or the cost of adaptations is prohibitive.
- vii. Have savings and assets. Adopting a definition consistent with the DWP's upper saving limits for claiming welfare benefits would be the fairest methodology.
- b. Prioritisation – a reduction in the number of bands is recommended, down from six (currently) to four, to reduce confusion and make it easier to shortlist applicants for offers. The four proposed are:
 - i. Band 1 – applicants entitled to a reasonable preference that are being afforded an additional preference for an allocation of SRH
 - ii. Band 2 – applicants entitled to a reasonable preference for an allocation of SRH
 - iii. Band 3 – applicants with a general need/want for an allocation of SRH
 - iv. Band 4 – applicants who have been given a reduced preference, due to refusing a specified number of offers
 - c. Other matters requiring minor adjustments include procedures relating to:
 - i. Eligibility
 - ii. Information, applications, decision-making and reviews
 - iii. Determining eligibility
 - iv. Notification of decisions
 - v. Renewed applications
 - vi. Determining priority for an allocation
 - vii. Local letting schemes
 - viii. Avoiding discrimination and enhancing equality of opportunity
 - ix. Best interests of children
 - x. Discretion
 - xi. Choice
 - xii. Direct lets
 - xiii. Arrangements with PRPs
2. **Nomination agreements** – A new nomination agreement is required between LAs and all PRPs, to make the administration of nominations fully compatible to current statutory guidance and regulations, as there has been changes subsequent to the publication of the current nomination agreement. There is no change being proposed to the rate (%age) of nominations agreed between LAs and PRPs. LAs should consider whether to adopt a common nomination agreement with all PRPs.
 3. **Qualification** – PPP could give consideration of disqualifying any applicant that isn't entitled to a reasonable preference or being afforded an addition preference, in the event that PPP LA specific scheme. This might reduce some administrative costs for LAs. All applicants without a reasonable preference or additional preference would still be entitled to make an application directly to an PRP. However, this would move away from having a single housing register and single application for customers.
 4. **Local connection** – PPP should consider extending the meaning of local connection to cover anywhere within the LCR, rather than just being LA specific as is the case presently. This might help to mitigate the requirement to increase local connection to a minimum of two-years (exceptions will apply to armed forces veterans and victims of domestic abuse).

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5. **Co-ordinator** – LAs should consider re-establishing a post to coordinate the activities of PPP. This will lead to improved accountability and deliverability of PPP activities. The post should be based at an LA and report to the PPP Contract Board. Especially important for this role would be:
 - a. Ensuring compliance with procedures at all times when allocations decisions are being made
 - b. Organising a training curriculum for PPP administrators, commissioning a training programme and evaluating learning outcomes and how these impact on the administration of PPP
 - c. Monitoring nominations activities between LAs and PRPs, including mediation between LAs and PRPs when a nomination fails.
 - d. Reconciliation of PPP data against that which is published by the UK Government on social housing waiting lists and lettings.
 - e. Harmonising the charging and invoicing of LAs and PRPs that use PPP

6. **Administration** – LAs should consider co-locating all PPP administrators ideally on to a single site (initially making no changes to employer or employment conditions, simply a change of work place). This will improve the consistency of decisions made about applications and allocations, plus the quality of information, advice and assistance provided to applicants. A further advantage would be a reduction in the costs associated with paying for administrators, as some posts could be deleted due to duplication of responsibilities. A local presence in each LA would need to be retained to provide the public with information, advice and assistance about the allocation of social rented and making an application to join PPP. In due course LAs should consider pursuing any of the following options (these options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, pursuing any of the options below would constitute a contracting out of housing allocation functions):
 - a. Seconding all PPP administrators to a single body (this could be an LA or a PRP)
 - b. Employing all PPP administrators via a single body (this could be an LA or a commissioned PRP).
 - c. Creating a limited company to administer PPP activities (this could be solely between the PPP LAs or jointly with any PRPs that wish to be a member of PPP).

7. **Training** – PPP should consider introducing a standard training programme for all housing allocation administrators and ensure adequate frequency of staff training. Such a curriculum could include:
 - a. Understanding housing allocation law and statutory guidance
 - b. Understanding PPP procedures
 - c. Nominating applicants to a PRP
 - d. PRP allocation law and regulations
 - e. Tenancy law
 - f. Transfer applicants
 - g. Determining eligibility for an allocation of SRH
 - h. Determining qualification for an allocation of SRH
 - i. Notifying applicants of decisions about eligibility, qualification and the allocation of SRH
 - j. A persons' rights when applying for and being allocated SRH

- k. providing information, advice and assistance about the allocation of SRH and making an application to join PPP/U1R
 - l. How to determine priority for an allocation (including reasonable preference and additional preference)
 - m. Offering choice when making allocations of SRH
 - n. Local lettings schemes
 - o. Reviews and appeals concerning the allocation of SRH
 - p. Cooperation between LAs and PRPs when allocating SRH
 - q. Dealing with fraud when making an allocation of SRH
 - r. The role of elected councillors in allocating SRH
8. **Choice-based lettings** – PPP should adopt a daily bidding cycle to speed-up the letting of properties. The current fixed one-week cycle isn't satisfactory for PRPs or applicants.
- Adopting a daily cycle, whereby properties are advertised on PPP on daily basis, with bidding closing up to a week afterwards (or potentially sooner if desired and feasible), would help PRPs to reduce void times and associated loss of rental income. These factors are the main reason why some PRPs seek to advertise some properties via other means.
9. **Common housing allocation scheme** – While LAs could consider whether they wish to remain a member of PPP all LAs have previously stated a preference for a single scheme as having a common database of applications and common procedures for determining whom should be allocated SRH, is as advantageous to the LA as it is to PRPs and applicants. It helps LAs and LCR to formulate strategic housing plans and PRPs to plan their development programmes. Applicants have only one application form to complete, a single point of contact regarding securing social rented housing and need only understand one set of rules for how allocations are made (especially beneficial in respect of how applicants are prioritised).
10. **IT** – PPP should consider investing in IT enhancements to both the system used in the back office by staff and also the customer facing website. Essential components of any system include:
- a. Application management
 - b. Decision review management
 - c. Workflow process task management
 - d. Online application form
 - e. Document uploads
 - f. SMS messaging
 - g. Bulk emails
 - h. Digital applicant case files
 - i. Advertising or offering/nomination system
 - j. Shortlisting
 - k. Bidding channels (if CBL is retained)
 - l. Daily bidding
 - m. Proxy bidding
 - n. Auto bidding
 - o. Customised reporting
 - p. Digital signatures

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- q. Improved customer website featuring the content:
 - i. Online application
 - a) new application linked to a document upload facility
 - b) change of circumstances form linked to a document upload facility
 - c) guidance on how to complete the form
 - ii. Advice and information
 - a) pdf documents to download on the availability of social rented housing by location, types, number of bedrooms, costs, re-let frequency
 - b) rights when making an application
 - a. how decisions are made
 - b. requesting facts about a case
 - c. rights to review
 - c) online form to request assistance from PPP/U1R, via an online assistance, or via an administrative assistant on the phone or in person (either immediately or by booking an appointment)
 - d) information on how applicants can exercise choice about the SRH they are allocated
 - e) illustrated examples of persons who are and are not eligible and do and do not qualify
 - f) examples of proofs required when making an application
 - g) how to exercise choice about SRH allocated
 - h) how applicants are prioritised
 - i) Specific information and advice for applications who are
 - a. homeless
 - b. victims of domestic abuse
 - c. armed forces veterans
 - d. care leavers
 - j) examples of what constitutes a local connection
 - k) A tool that can forecast how long an applicant might have to wait for an allocation
 - l) PDF full and summary versions of PPP/U1R procedures
 - m) links to LCR PRPs allocation rules and policies and other LCR HAS

11. Co-operation with PRPs – LAs should consider the following options for future co-operation with PRPs:

- a. LAs have a common database of applicants with PRPs, but have separate procedures, rules and policies – this is the current model, with most PRPs across the LCR, PRPs have the options putting as many or as little lettings through PPP.
 - i. LAs pay some costs and charge PRPs for other costs
 - ii. Additional income from PRPs could help to pay for enhanced IT software
 - iii. Governance arrangements would need to incorporate some voting rights for PRPs, but fall short of PRPs having majority rights
 - iv. Reduces the number of HAS applicants have to contend with
- b. LAs have a common database of applicants, plus also have common procedures, rules and policies with PRPs – PRPs would have an option of

either putting all allocations through PPP, alternatively they could choose to handle all allocations via other channels (with only their LA nominations being handled via PPP)

- i. LAs and those PRPs that choose to opt in would equally (proportionally) share costs associated with administering PPP
 - ii. Additional income from PRPs could help to pay for enhanced IT software
 - iii. Governance arrangements would have to change to incorporate PRPs that choose to opt in, with them having equal (proportional) voting rights with LA members
 - iv. Applicants would have only one HAS to contend with
- c. LAs have separate a database of applicants, plus also separate procedures, rules and policies than PRPs –
- i. LAs would incur all costs
 - ii. LAs would retain existing governance arrangements and have exclusive voting rights.
 - iii. Applicants would have multiple HAS to contend with
 - iv. If this became the standard model, PPP should disqualify any applicant that isn't entitled to a reasonable preference or been afforded an additional preference (see finding 3), plus abandon the use of CBL (see finding 7). This would reduce the administrative burden and therefore reduce costs.

12. Financials – PPP should consider adopting a common approach to charging and invoicing PRPs that use PPP (rather than different approaches in each LA currently). This should be based on up-to-date information about all the costs of administering PPP. Charges paid by PRPs should only relate to properties they let via PPP outside of nomination agreements.

13. Contracting out – PPP should consider the following options in regards to contracting out the administration of PPP:

- a. LAs each make their own decision about whether to contract out or not – the current model, with most LAs having contracted out to stock transfer PRPs
- b. LAs make a collective decision about whether to contract out or not and either:
 - i. If it was agreed to contract out, appoint a single organisation to undertake the administration on behalf of all LAs (this could be one LA or PRP on behalf of all parties)
 - ii. If it was agreed not to contract out, the administration would be done in-house:
 - a) By one LA on behalf of all parties
 - b) or separately by each LA, ideally alongside the administration of homelessness functions.

Next Steps

Consultation on the review findings will be carried out with elected councillors of all LAs, PRPs, public bodies, voluntary organisations and the general public.

A full report setting out the review findings will be published.

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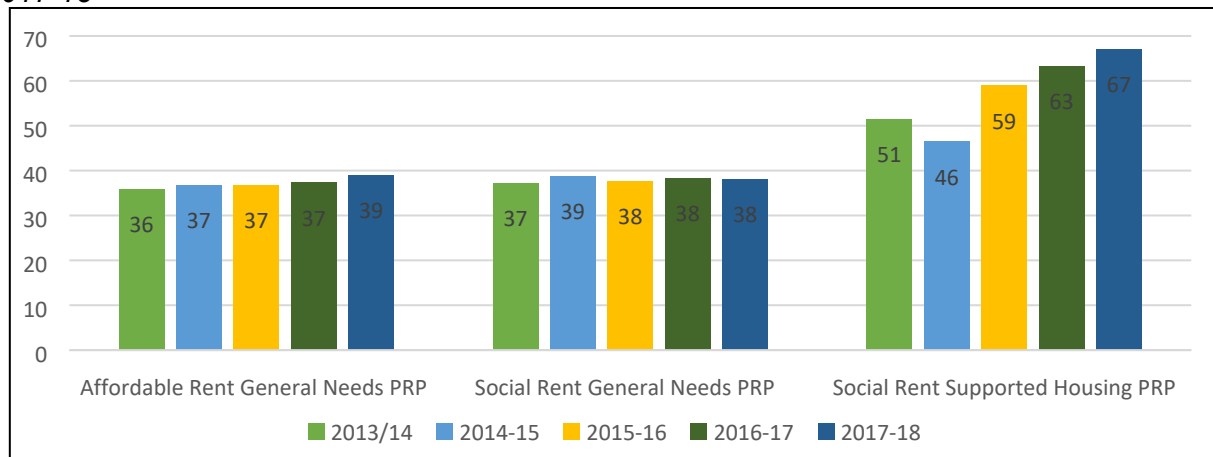
Amended policy and procedures will be agreed then published, and subject to formal consultations before being finalized.

Statistical Context

Age

The median age of the main applicant to general needs social housing and supported housing in Sefton over the 5 year period is 38 and 59 respectively the median age of all 6 LCR Council area is 37 to general needs and 45 to supported housing.

Chart S1: Private Registered Provider Lettings – Mean age of main applicant. Sefton 2013-14 to 2017-18

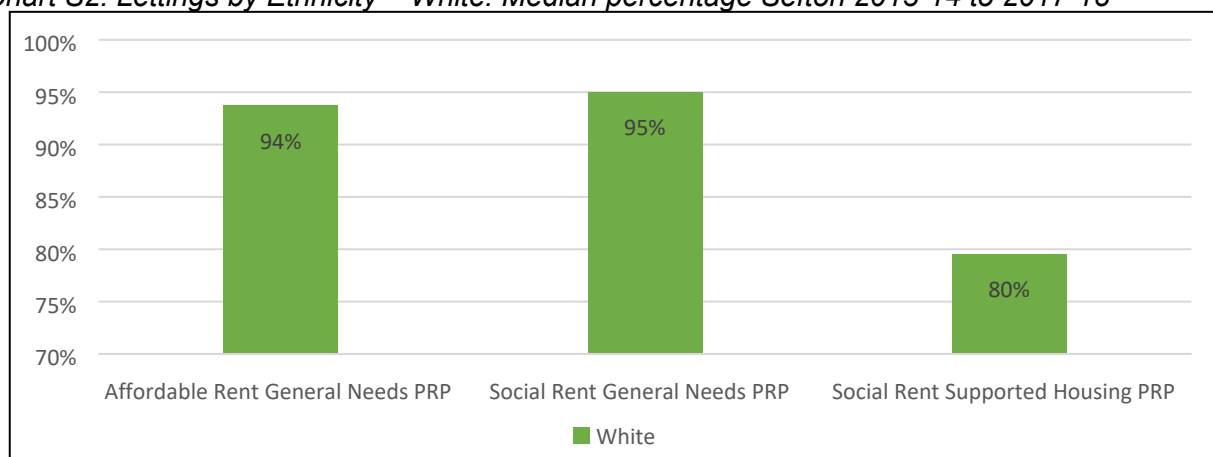


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Ethnicity

Between 94% and 95% of all new lettings made to general needs during the 5 year period were to white lead tenants. Sefton recorded a higher percentage of white lead tenants compared to both Liverpool at 83% and England¹⁷.

Chart S2: Lettings by Ethnicity – White. Median percentage Sefton 2013-14 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18 Sefton recorded a 5 year median of less than 2% of black and other minority ethnicity (BME) households in new social housing lettings.

Gender

¹⁷ MHCLG Social Housing Lettings April 2017 to March 2018, England. The majority of lead tenants in 2017/18 were in the White ethnic group, comprising 83% of new lettings.

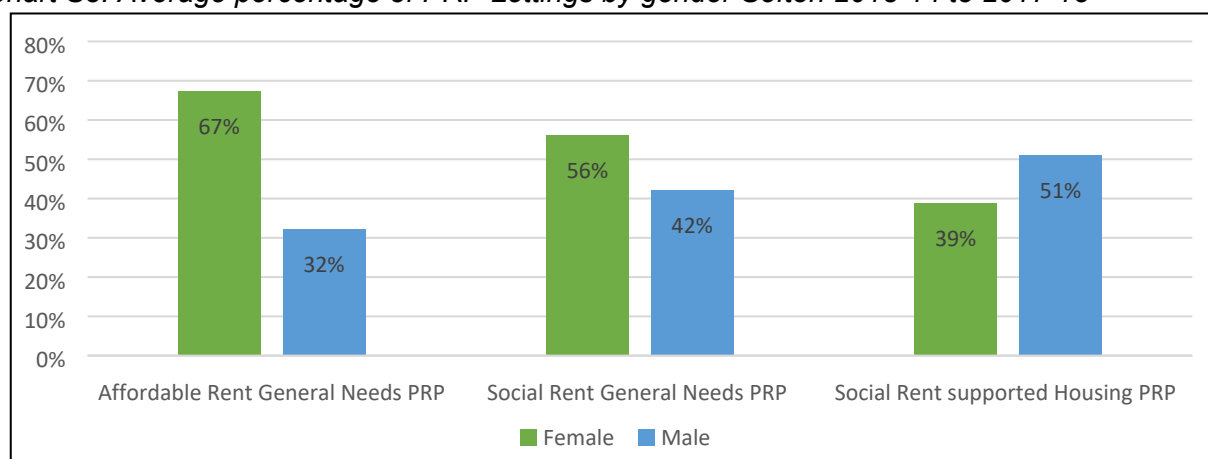
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Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 53% of all¹⁸ private registered provider lettings in Sefton were allocated to female lead tenants and 43% to male lead tenants.

There was an imbalance of genders among affordable rent lettings, with 67% of lettings made to women, the gender imbalance reduced with 56% of social rent letting made to women, in line with England¹⁹.

New supported housing lettings contained more male tenants averaging 51% of all supported housing, in line with England, recording 52% of new supported housing lettings to male households in 2017-18²⁰.

Chart S3: Average percentage of PRP Lettings by gender Sefton 2013-14 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Household formation

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, one person households²¹ made up 50% of all general needs and 84% of supported housing lettings in Sefton.

Over the five-year period 50% of general lettings at social rent levels were made to single households, the second largest percentage of social rent lettings (34%) were made to one or two parent households.

The majority²² (42%) of general needs lettings at affordable rent were allocated to single and two parent households.

¹⁸ All lettings including: Affordable Rent General Needs PRP, Social Rent General Needs PRP, Social Rent Supported Housing PRP.

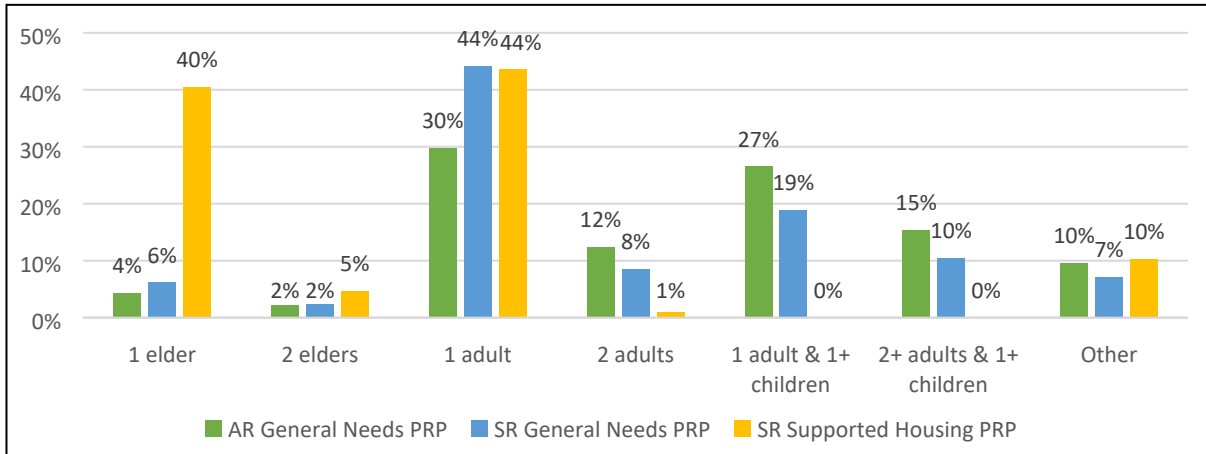
¹⁹ MHCLG Social Housing Lettings April 2017 to March 2018, England.

²⁰ MHCLG Social Housing Lettings April 2017 to March 2018, England.

²¹ Including 1 Elder (aged 60+) and 1 Adult households

²² 27% 1 Adult & 1+ children and 15% 2 Adult & 1+ children

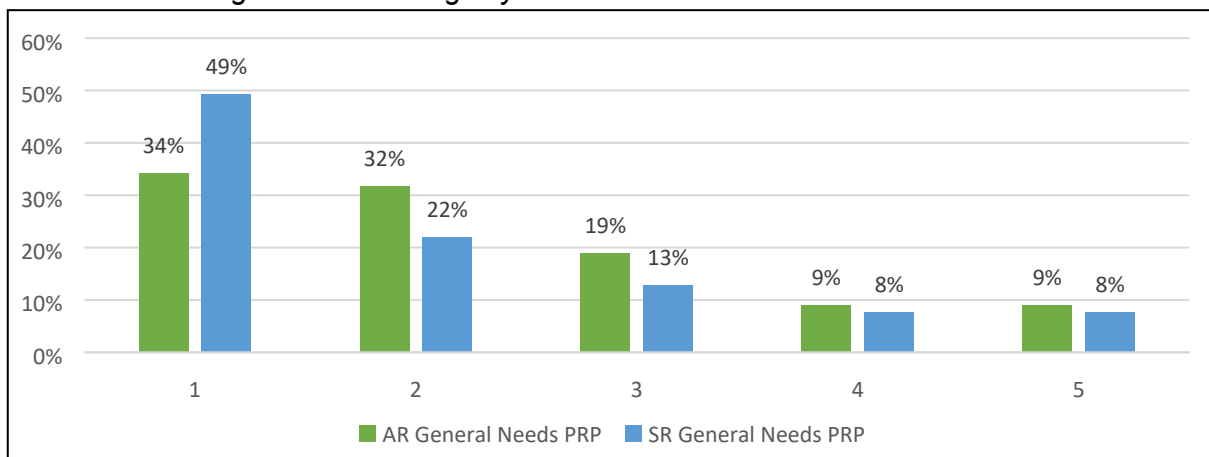
Chart S4: Percentage of PRP Lettings by household type Sefton 2013-14 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Over the 5 year period 37% of general need lettings at affordable rent were allocated to 3, 4 and 5 person households and 29% at social rent levels.

Chart S5: Percentage of PRP Lettings by household members Sefton 2013-14 to 2017-18



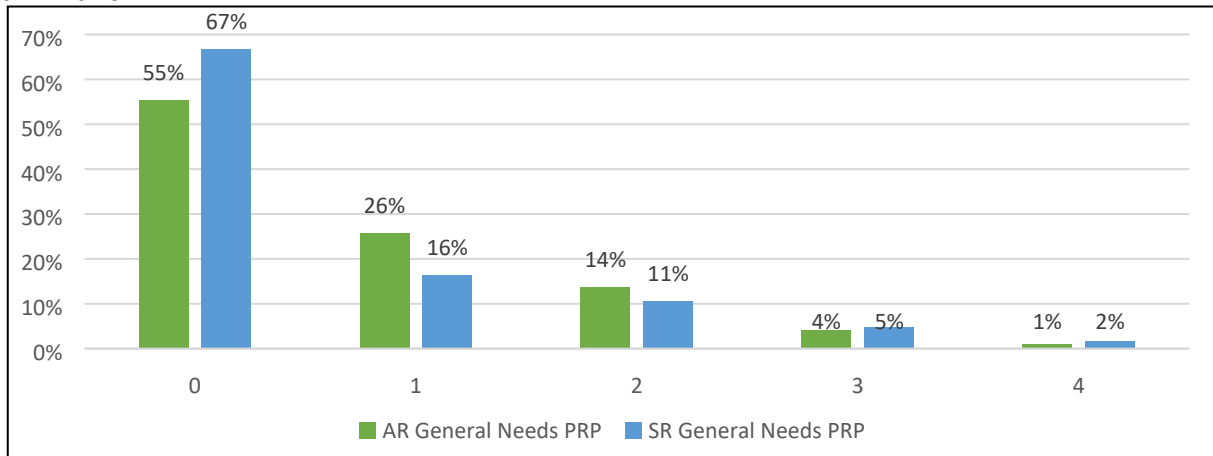
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Adult households made up 66% of all general need lettings over the five-year period. Households with 1, 2, 3 and 4 children made up 17%, 11%, 5% and 2% of all general need lettings.

45% of general needs lettings at affordable rent were allocated to households with children, compared to 33% of general need lettings at social rent levels.

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Chart S6: Percentage of PRP Lettings by number of children in household Sefton 2013-14 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Applicants who are not eligible or do not qualify

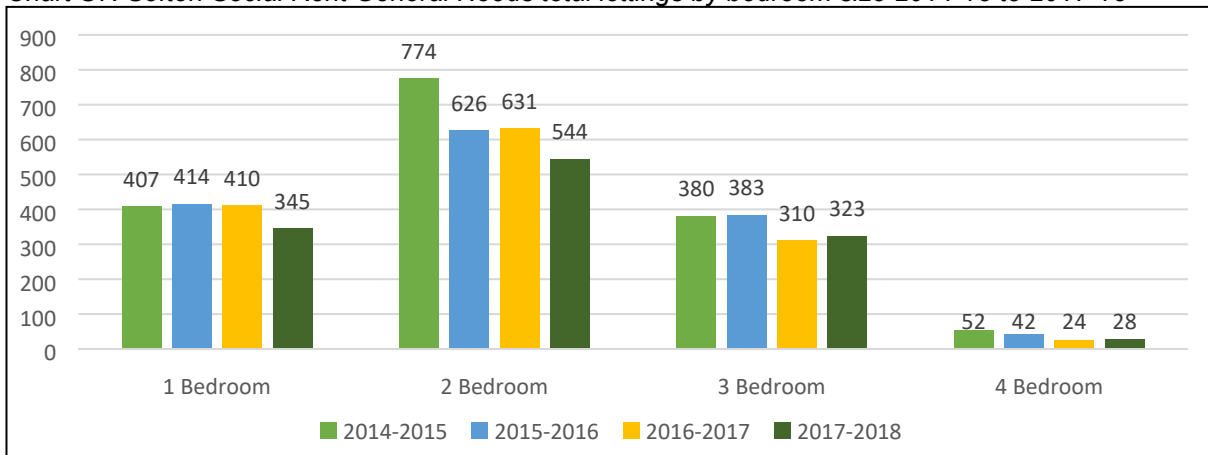
The PPP Allocation Policy sets out the conditions upon when an application can be deemed ineligible or non-qualifying²³ and how the applicant should be notified of such a decision²⁴.

PPP Data on ineligible applicants was not available.

Bedrooms sizes

Between 2014-15²⁵ and 2017-18, 2 bedroom properties made up 45% of social rent general need lettings, 1 and 3 bedroom properties made up 28% and 25% of lettings. The total number of social rent general need lettings has reduced by 23% over the 4 year period.

Chart S7: Sefton Social Rent General Needs total lettings by bedroom size 2014-15 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2014-15 to 2017-18

Between 2014-15 and 2017-18, 2 bedroom properties made up 53% of affordable rent general need lettings, 3 bedroom properties made up 26% and 1 bedroom 19% of lettings. The total number of lettings decreased by 15% in 2015-16 and again by 17% in 2016-17, the trend

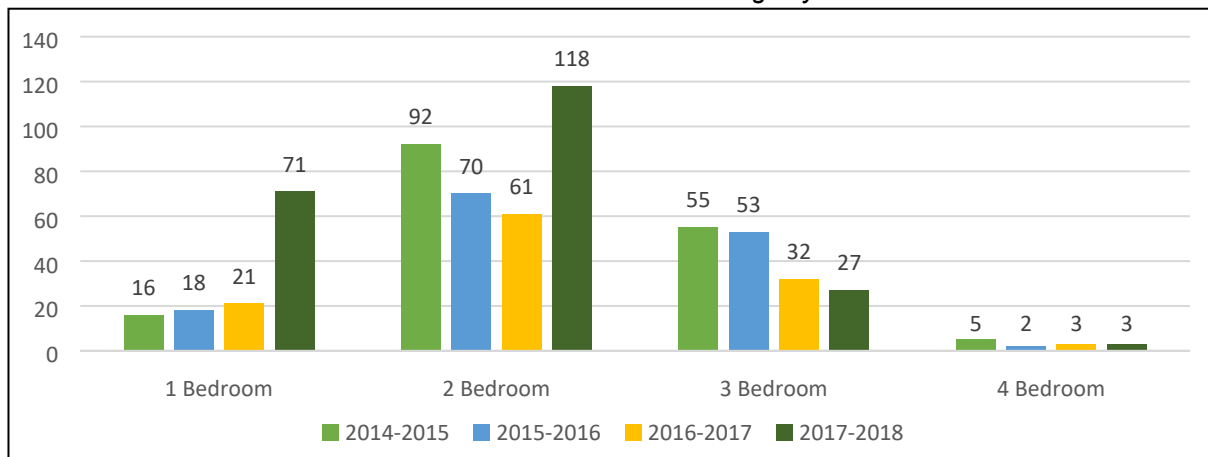
²³ Property Pool Plus Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Allocations Scheme (Effective 31st October 2018) Chapter 3.2 Ineligibility or non-qualifying Applications.

²⁴ An applicant will be notified in writing of a decision to assess or reassess an application as ineligible or non-qualifying, the notification will include: Reasons for the decision; and The length of time for which the application will be assessed as non-qualifying; and Steps they must take to address the grounds that deem them as non-qualifying; and Information about the right to request a review of the decision.

²⁵ 2013-14 lettings broken down by number of bedrooms were not recorded on CORE

changed in 2017-18 with an 87% increase from 2016-17, over the 4 year period the total number of lettings recorded an average reduction of 5%.

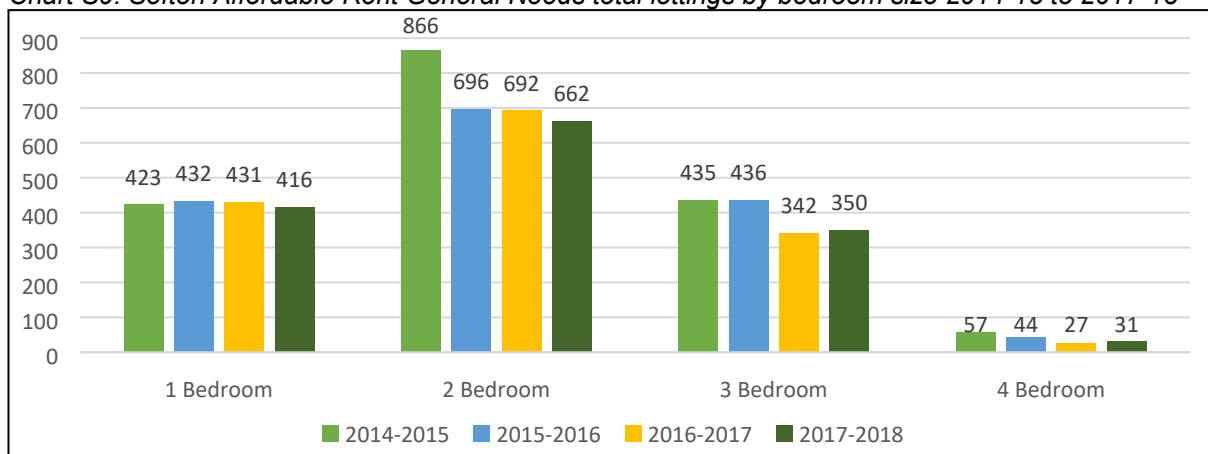
Chart S8: Sefton Affordable Rent General Needs total lettings by bedroom size 2014-15 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2014-15 to 2017-18

Between 2014-15 and 2017-18, 2 bedroom properties made up 46% of general need lettings in Sefton, there was an even distribution of 1, and 3 bedroom properties making up 27%, and 25% of all lettings. The total number of general needs lettings in Sefton has decreased by 18% over the 4 year period.

Chart S9: Sefton Affordable Rent General Needs total lettings by bedroom size 2014-15 to 2017-18



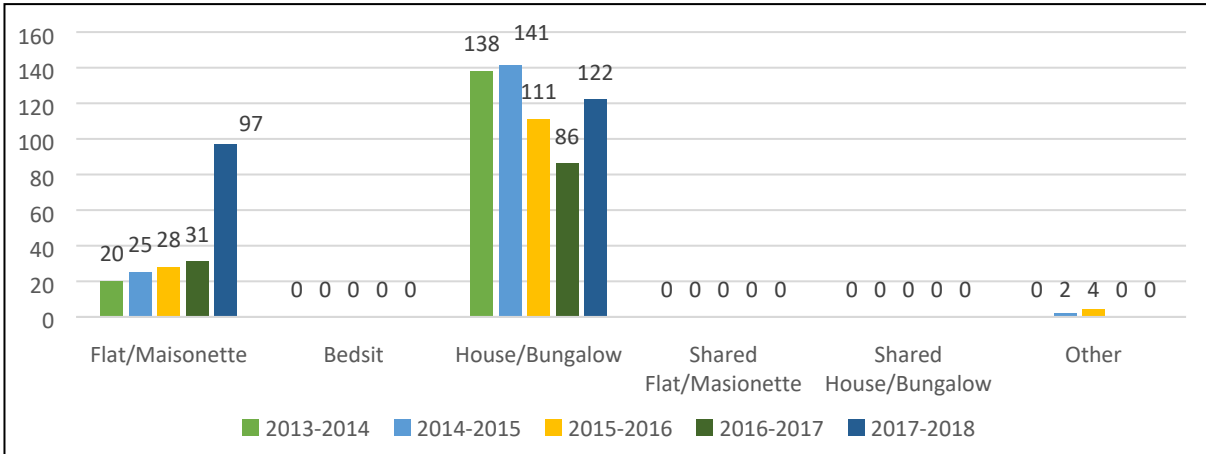
Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2014-15 to 2017-18

Property types

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 74% of affordable lettings were houses/bungalows, 25% of lettings were flat/maisonette. The number of flat/maisonette lettings recorded a 55% increase between 2013-14 and 2016-17, followed by a sharp increase of 213% in 2017-18. The number of house/bungalows has recorded a 17% average decrease over the 5 year period.

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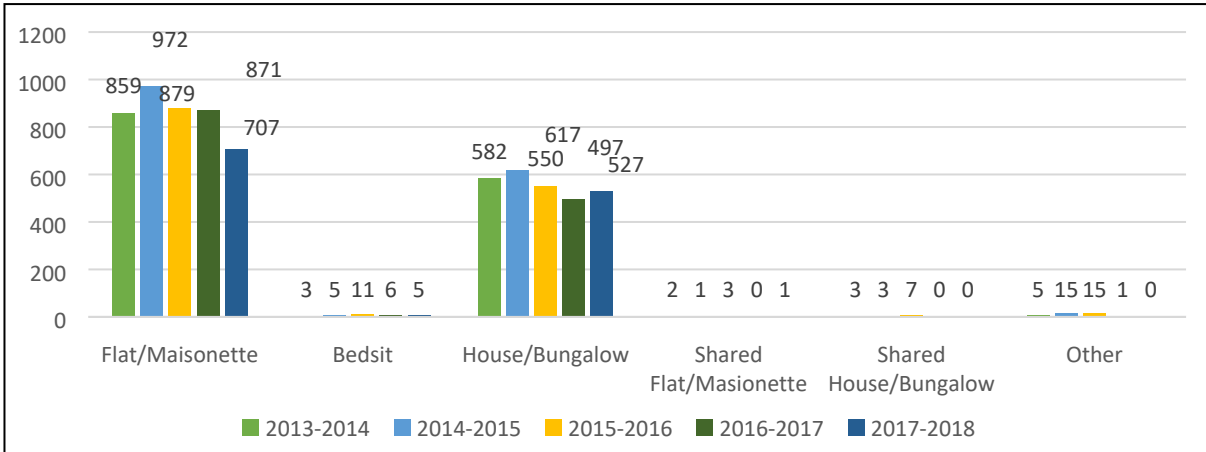
Chart S10: Sefton Affordable Rent General Needs total lettings by type of property 2013-14 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 39% of lettings were houses/bungalows, 60% of lettings were flat/maisonette. The number of house/bungalow lettings reduced by 21%, the number of flat/maisonette lettings increased by 13% in 2014-15 and subsequently reduced by 27% between 2014-15 and 2017-18.

Chart S11: Sefton Social Rent General Needs total lettings by type of property 2013-14 to 2017-18

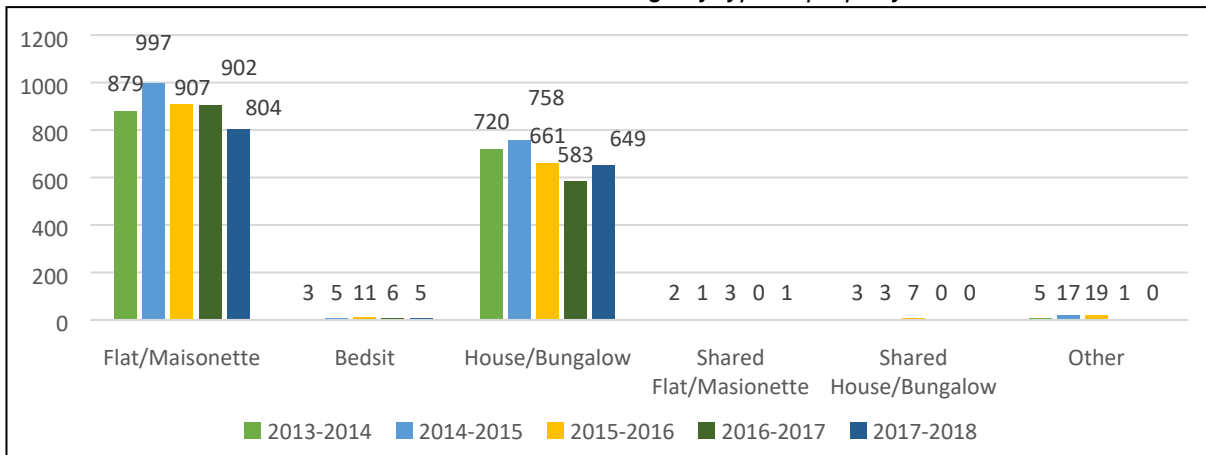


Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

A ratio of flat/maisonette to house/bungalow has averaged 56% flat/maisonette to 42% house/bungalow over the 5 years.

The number of house/bungalow lettings has reduced by an average of 8%, the number of flat/maisonette lettings has seen a 3% average increase over the 5 years.

Chart S12: Sefton General Needs total lettings by type of property 2013-14 to 2017-18



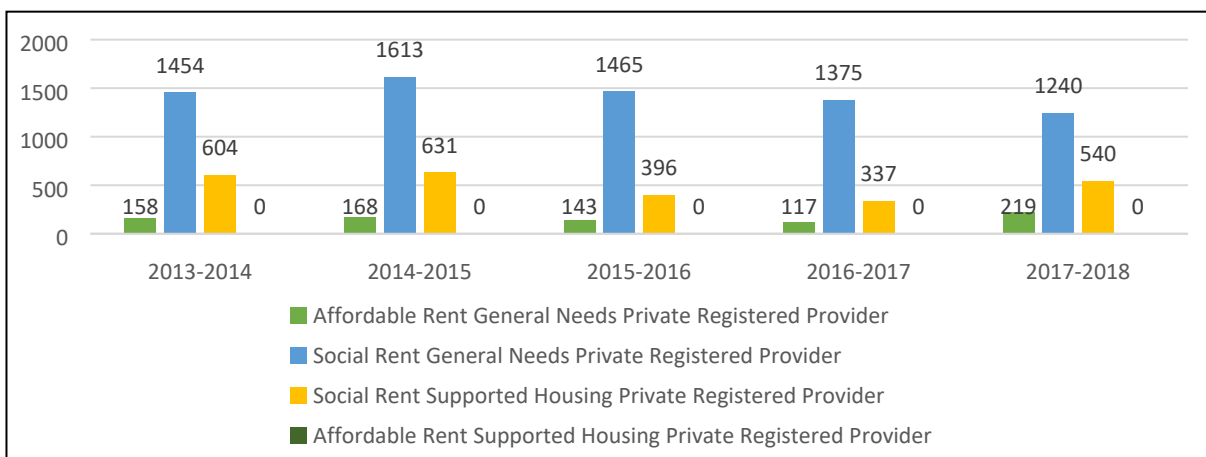
Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Supported Housing

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18 Sefton recorded a total of 10,460 lettings, 68% of which were general needs social rent, 24% supported housing at social rent levels and 8% general need at affordable rent.

The number of supported housing lettings has reduced by an average of 21% over the 5 year period, general needs at social rent levels has reduced by 15% whereas general needs at affordable rent has seen an average increase of 2%.

Chart S13: Sefton total lettings at social rent, affordable rent and supported housing 2013-14 to 2017-2018

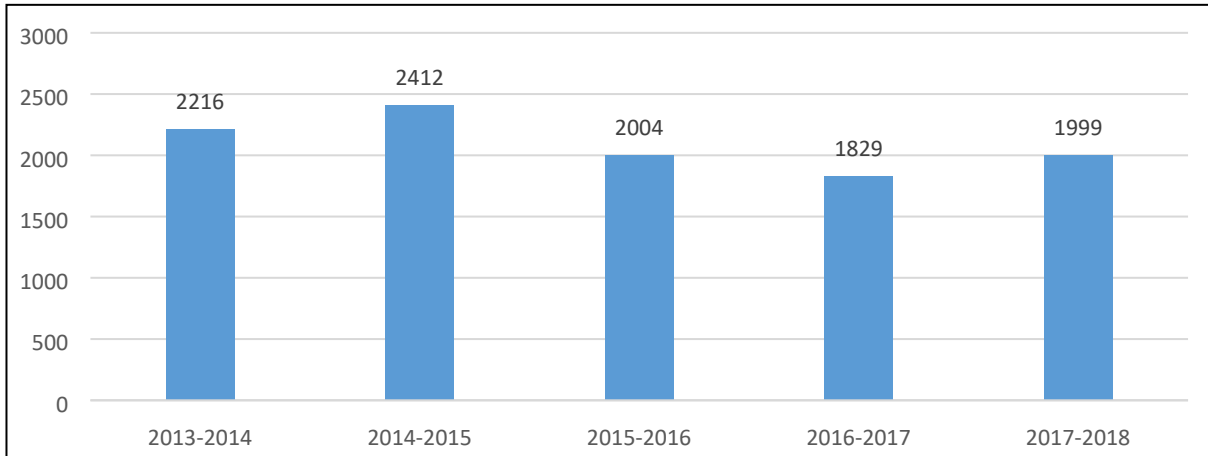


Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18 80,308 allocations were made across the 6 LCR Council areas, Sefton recorded a total of 10,460, equal to 13% of total allocations. The number of total allocations in Sefton saw an overall reduction of 7% over the 5 year period.

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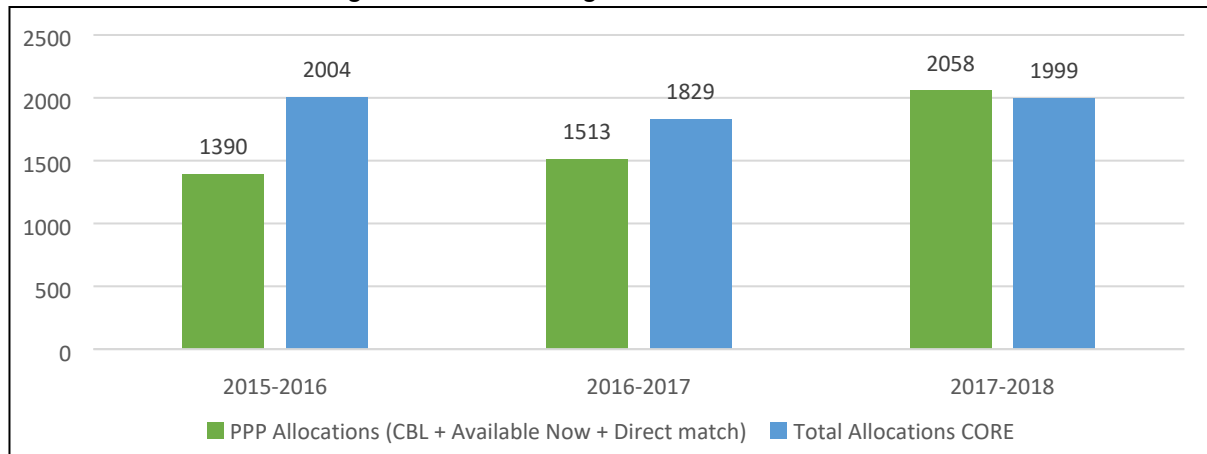
Chart S14: Sefton total lettings 2013-14 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Between 2015 and 2018 a total of 4,961 PPP allocations were made, equal to 85% of the total number of allocations (5,832) made in Sefton. The total number of allocations saw an average reduction of 4%. Sefton recorded a 48% increase in the number of PPP allocations however accuracy of reporting requires further scrutiny given the number of PPP allocations are greater than the total number of allocations recorded.

Chart S15: Sefton total lettings and PPP Lettings 2013-14 to 2017-2018

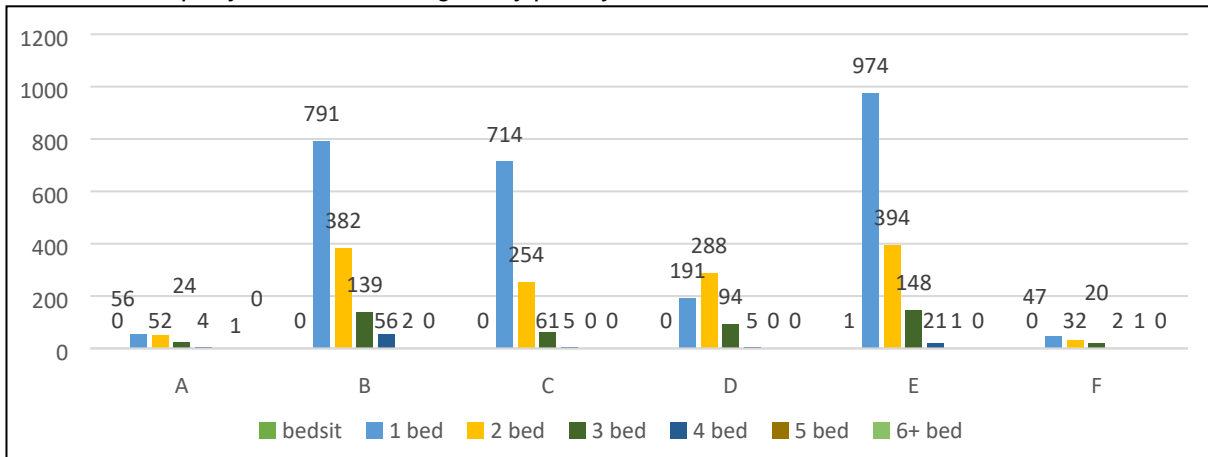


Source: MHCLG CORE Local Authority Level Tables and Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2015-16 to 2017-18

Property Pool Plus waiting lists

PPP and CORE waiting list numbers for 2018 correlate. PPP monitoring data provides a breakdown of applicants by priority band, 32% of applicants had been assessed as Band E, 29% Band B and 22% C. Over half (58%) of applicants required a 1 bedroom property, 29% required 2 bedrooms.

Chart S16: Property Pool Plus waiting list by priority band and minimum bedroom size – Sefton 2018

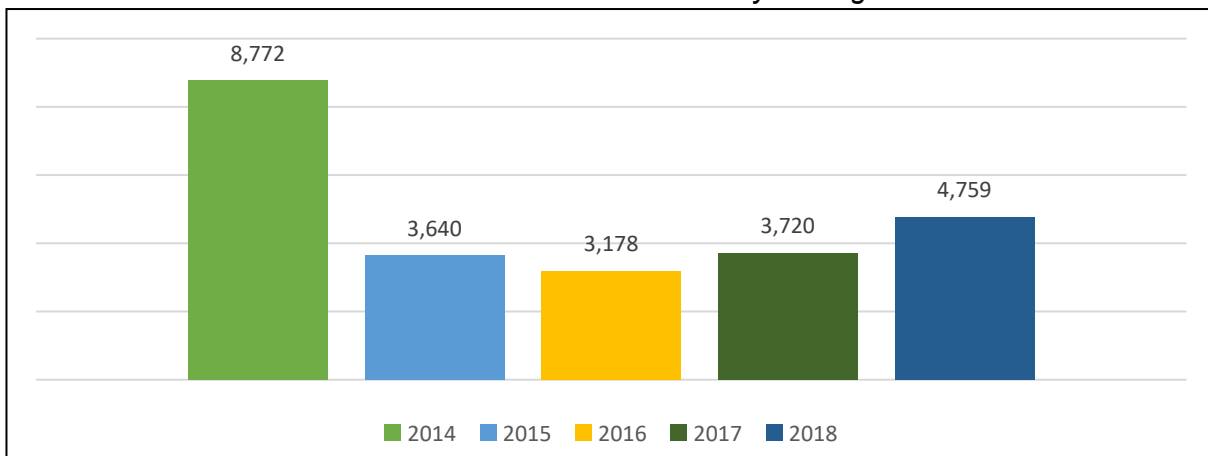


Source: Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2018

Local authority waiting list

The number of recorded households on the local authority waiting list in Sefton saw a 58% reduction in 2015 and a further reduction of 13% in 2016, numbers increased by 17% and again by 28% in 2017 and 2018.

Chart S17: Sefton number of households on local authority waiting list 2014 – 2018



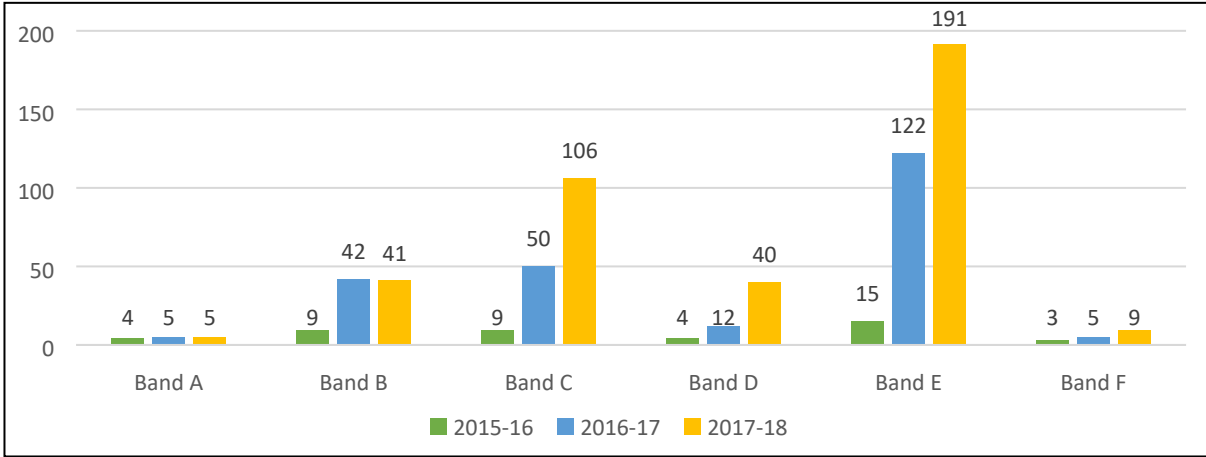
Source: MHCLG Table 600 Numbers of households on local authorities' housing waiting lists (updated October 2019)

Property Pool Plus bands

Between 2015 and 2018, 49% (328) of direct match allocations were made to households assessed as Band E, 25% were made to households assessed as Band C, 14% of allocations were made to Band B and 8% to Band D households.

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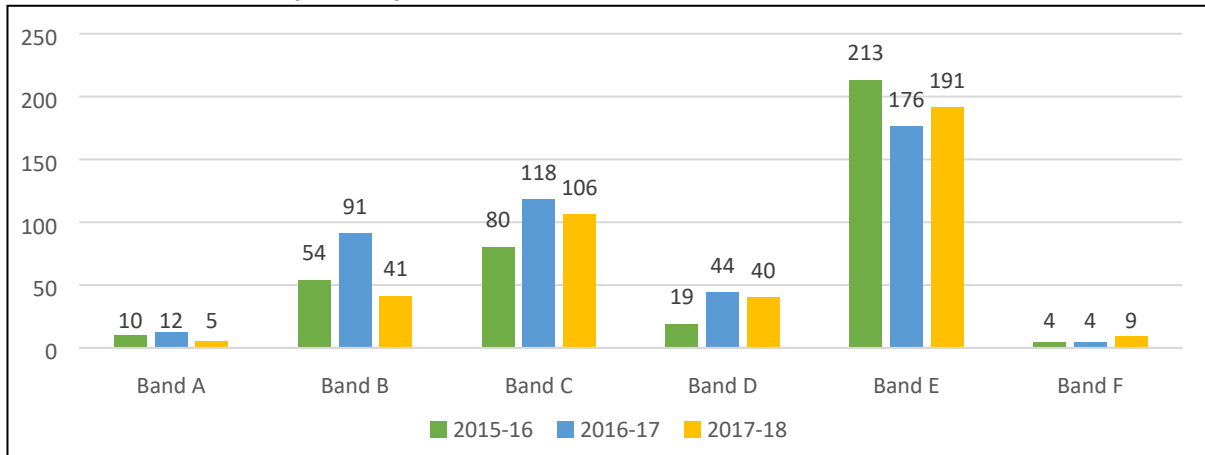
Chart S18: Allocations by Priority Band via direct match – Sefton



Source: Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2015-16 to 2017-18

Over the 3 year period, 48% (580) of 'available now' allocations were made to Band E households, 25% (304), 15% (186) and 8% (103) were made to Band C, B and D respectively. 2% (27) of allocations were to Band A households.

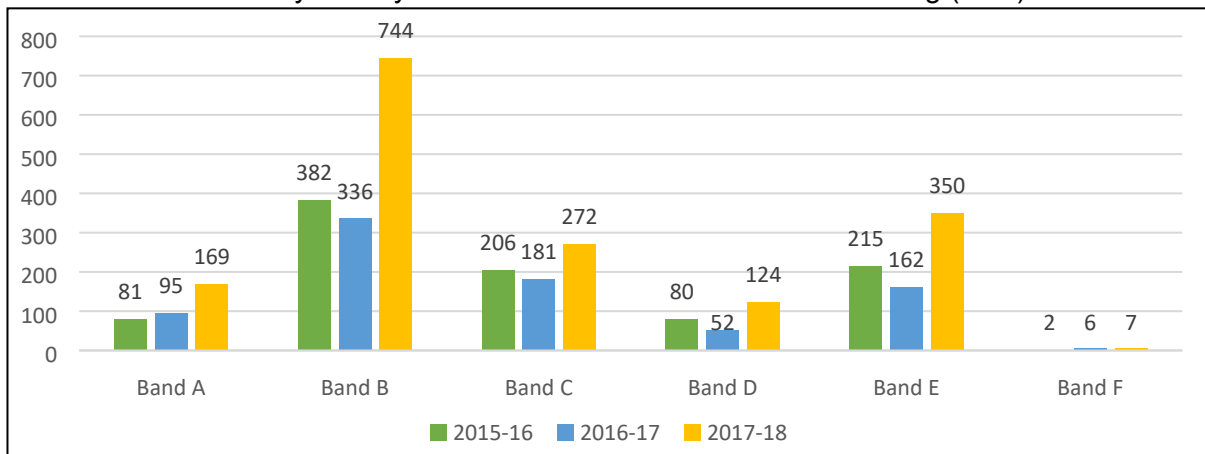
Chart S19: Allocations by Priority Band via available now advert– Sefton



Source: Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2015-16 to 2017-18

Over the 3 year period, 42% (1,462) of CBL allocations were made to Band B households, 21% (727) to Band E, 19% (659) to Band C and 10% (345) to Band A.

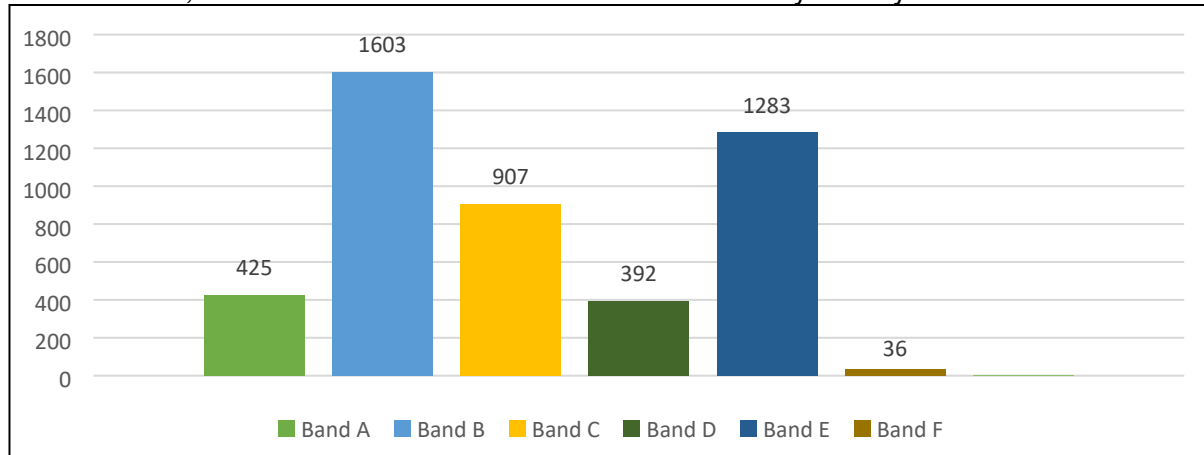
Chart S20: Allocations by Priority Band via available Choice Based Letting (CBL) – Sefton



Source: Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2015-16 to 2017-18

Of all allocations made between 2015-16 and 2017-18, 35% were to Band B households, 28% and 20% Band E and C respectively, 9% of allocations were to Band A households.

Chart S21: CBL, Available Now and Direct match Allocations by Priority Band – Sefton

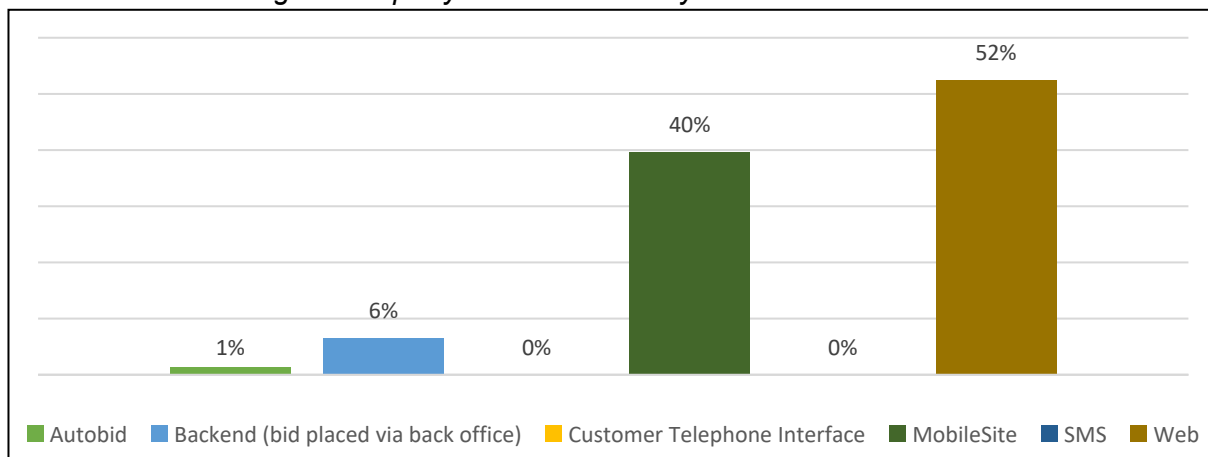


Source: Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2015-16 to 2017-18

Bids by source 2018-19

A snapshot of the total number of bids²⁶ recorded by PPP in the year 2018-19 records 18% of bids for properties advertised in Sefton. The majority of bids are made via the PPP website and mobile site respectively.

Chart S22: Percentage of Property Pool Plus Bids by source Sefton 2018-19



Source: Property Pool Plus shared monitoring data

MHCLG publish organisational level summary data²⁷ presented by percentage²⁸, MHCLG were not able to provide a breakdown of numbers for each organisation²⁹. Below is a list of PRP's operating in Sefton, an average of 48% of lettings in 2017-18 were Choice Based, 26% via a Common Allocation Policy and 18% Common Housing Register.

²⁶ Total number of bids made in 2018-19 411,125. By region: Halton 39,983, Knowsley 38,931, Liverpool 182,040, Sefton 73,794 and Wirral 76,377

²⁷ These tables present data at an (owning) organisation by Local Authority (LA) level and are derived from record level data recorded through the COntinuous REcording of social housing.

²⁸ All figures are unweighted. The data in the tables is not fully consistent with the data at national level in the statistical release as the national data is weighted. Weights are not included in the tables as these are not designed to be representative by organisation.

²⁹ Telephone enquiry made by Neil Morland & Co. to MHCLG Statistical Enquiries 10th October 2019

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Chart S23: Social Housing Lettings in Sefton – By Organisation³⁰ 2017-18

	Choice Based Letting	Common Housing Register	Common Allocations Policy
Adactus Housing Group Ltd.	61%	8%	2%
Anchor Trust	0%	0%	0%
Arena Housing Group	22%	11%	89%
Beech HA Ltd.	31%	14%	7%
Chorley Community Housing	92%	0%	0%
Crosby HA Ltd.	86%	86%	86%
Housing and Care 21	0%	47%	53%
Liverpool Housing Trust	50%	44%	44%
One Vision Housing Ltd.	96%	0%	1%
Pierhead HA Ltd	64%	36%	4%
Plus Dane Housing	0%	0%	0%
Plus Dane Merseyside	73%	0%	13%
Regenda Homes	88%	6%	6%
Riverside Housing Group	55%	9%	13%
Sanctuary HA	71%	45%	49%
The Abbeyfield Society	25%	0%	0%
Your Housing	8%	0%	77%

Source: MHCLG Social Housing Lettings in England - Organisation by Local Authority Level Tables 2017-18

On average, 96% of social housing lettings in 2017-18 were made to 'not homeless' households. More than half (58% average) of all lettings in 2017-18 are general needs at social rent levels, an average of 29% of lettings are supported housing at social rent. On average 64% of all lettings in 2017-18 were Starter/Introductory tenancies.

Chart S24: Percentage of Social Housing Lettings by Organisation. Sefton by type 2017-18

	Social Rent General Needs	Social Rent Supported Housing	Affordable Rent General Needs	Affordable Rent Supported Housing
Adactus Housing Group Ltd.	39%	10%	51%	0%
Anchor Trust	0%	100%	0%	0%
Arena Housing Group	100%	0%	0%	0%
Beech HA Ltd.	17%	83%	0%	0%
Chorley Community Housing	0%	0%	100%	0%
Crosby HA Ltd.	97%	3%	0%	0%
Housing and Care 21	0%	82%	0%	18%
Liverpool Housing Trust	75%	19%	6%	0%
One Vision Housing Ltd.	82%	9%	9%	0%
Pierhead HA Ltd	100%	0%	0%	0%
Plus Dane Housing	100%	0%	0%	0%

³⁰ Organisations with <10 lettings have been omitted from the categorical tables.

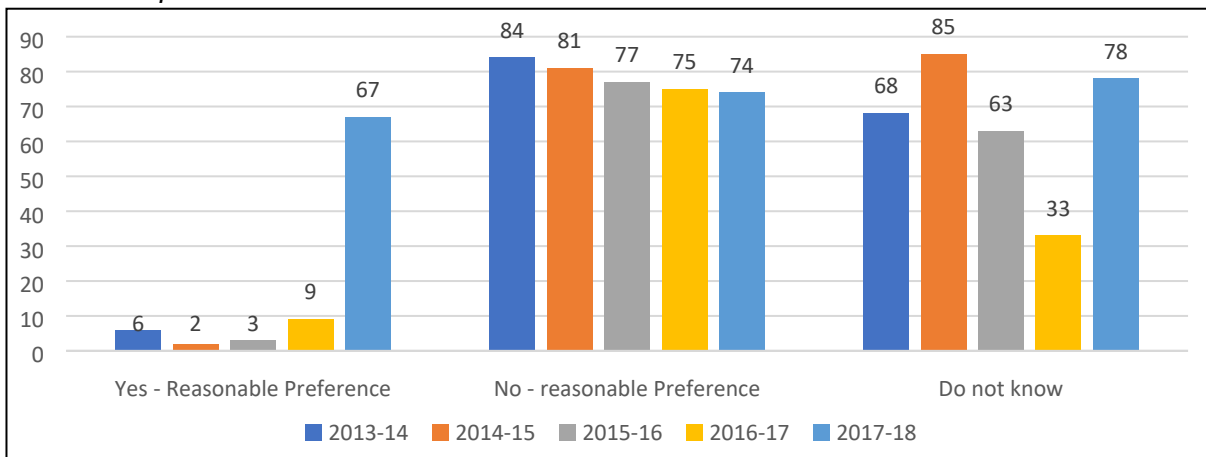
Plust Dane Merevside	80%	11%	9%	0%
Regenda Homes	100%	0%	0%	0%
Riverside Housing Group	38%	36%	27%	0%
Sanctuary HA	67%	31%	2%	0%
The Abbeyfield Society	0%	100%	0%	0%
Your Housing	85%	15%	0%	0%

Source: MHCLG Social Housing Lettings in England - Organisation by Local Authority Level Tables 2017-18

Reasonable preference

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 11% of affordable rent general need lettings were via reasonable preference, 49% had no reasonable preference and 41% of lettings were unknown. 2017-18 recorded a significant increase in the use of reasonable preference.

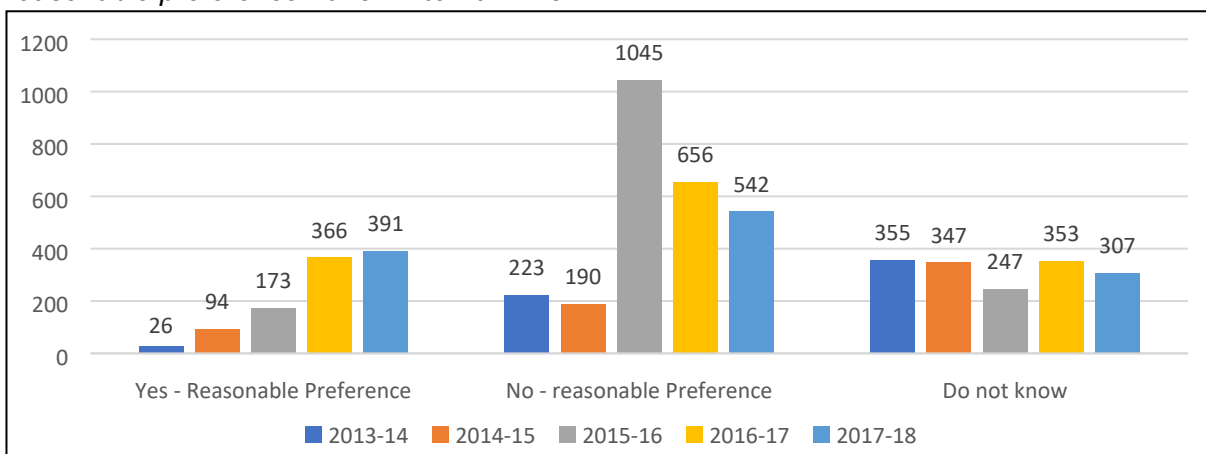
Chart 25: Sefton total number of affordable rent general needs PRP lettings to households given reasonable preference 2013-14 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

In comparison, the use of reasonable preference is higher for social rent general need lettings with 20% of lettings made via reasonable preference, 50% of lettings had no reasonable preference and 30% were unknown.

Chart S26: Sefton total number of social rent general needs PRP lettings to households given reasonable preference 2013-14 to 2017-18

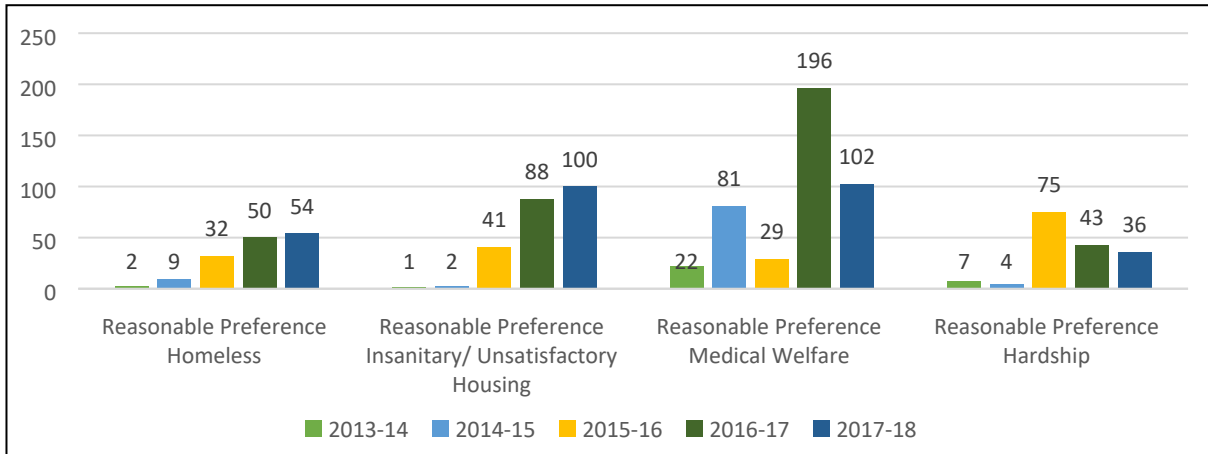


Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

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Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 19% of all general need lettings in Sefton were via reasonable preference, 38% of which had experienced medical welfare issues, 20% were leaving unsatisfactory housing and 15% had experienced hardship, 13% were homeless.

Chart S27: Sefton general needs PRP lettings to households by reasonable preference category 2013-14 to 2017-18

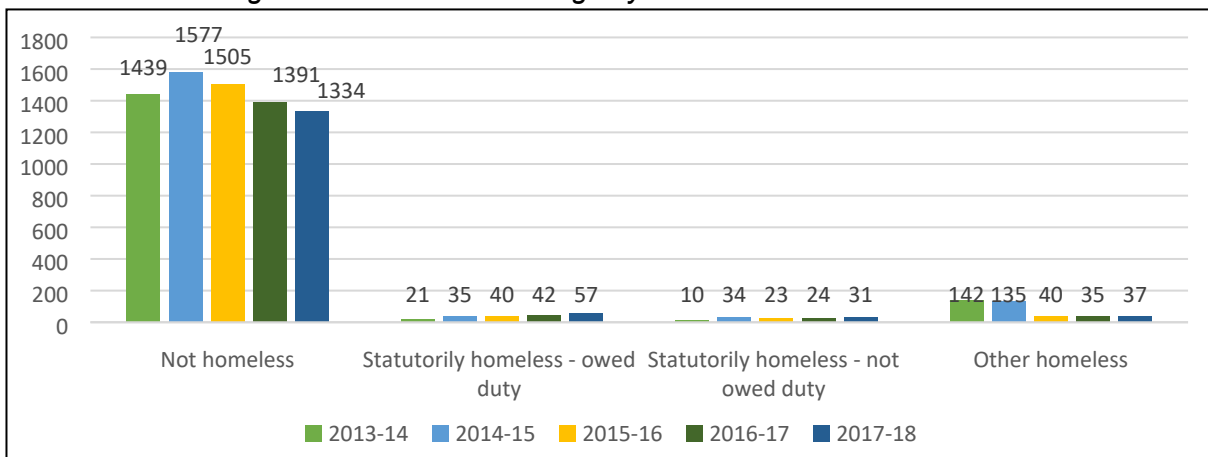


Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Homeless

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 91% of lettings were to not homeless households, the percentage of not homeless household lettings in Sefton has remained consistent, with an average of 91% over the years.

Chart S28: Sefton general needs PRP lettings by homeless status 2013-14 to 2017-18



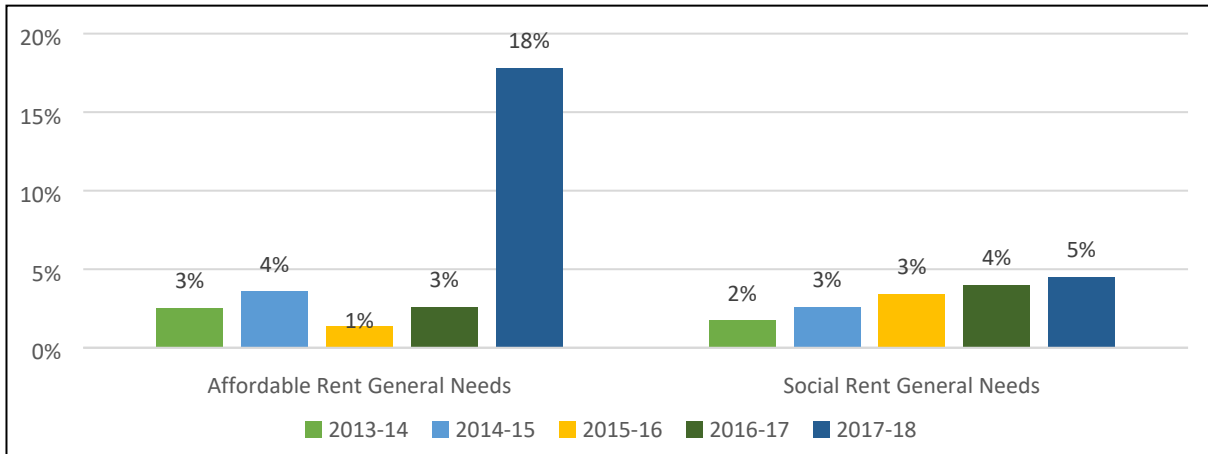
Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Property meets wheelchair user standards

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, 7% of all affordable rent lettings in Sefton met wheelchair user standards, compared with 3% of lettings at social rent levels.

Over the 5 year period 4% of general need lettings (including both affordable rent and social rent) in Sefton met wheelchair user standards. The percentage of lettings meeting wheelchair user standards has increased from 2% in 2013-14 to 7% in 2017-18.

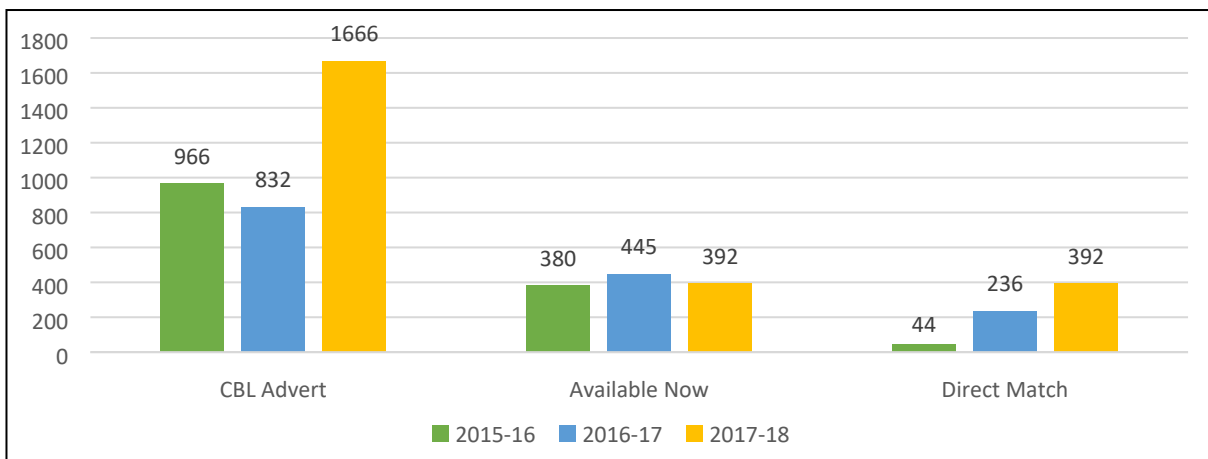
Chart S29: Sefton general needs PRP lettings by percentage of properties meeting wheelchair user standards 2013-14 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Communities & Local Government. CORE Local Authority Level Tables 2013-14 to 2017-18

Between 2015 and 2018, 65% of allocations were made via CBL, 23% available now and 13% direct match.

Chart S30: Allocations by Choice Based Letting, Available Now and Direct Match – Sefton



Source: Property Pool Plus monitoring data 2015-16 to 2017-18

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CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 21st January 2020)		
COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Patricia Hardy	Communities and Housing	21 st January 2020

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Area Co-ordination

The Community skip programmes across the borough continue to grow and are welcomed by the community.

- Netherton and Orrell programme has collected **7.28** tonnes of waste.
- Ford ward programme has collected **8.98** tonnes of waste.
- Church ward programme has collected **6.72** tonnes of waste.
- A new programme started in Manor Ward in October and has so far collected **4.82** tonnes. The skips are sited every two weeks alternating between each end of Woodend Avenue.
- The final phase of the programme in Knowsley Road and Albany Road in Southport will take place in the first two weeks of January. Previous skips have been well used.
- A skip will be placed in Preesall Close in January. The close has recently suffered from fly tipping.

The Firework display in Netherton took place on Tuesday 5th November and was very successful. An estimated 17,000 spectators viewed the display across 2 viewing areas. This year's display was launched by Arthur Snellgrove an 84-year-old local school crossing attendant who this year celebrated 20 years crossing children and parents safely on St Oswalds swing bridge in Netherton.

The event was supported by Merseyside Police who provided 3 Officers and 5 PCSOs and Sefton Youth Service who had 5 Sefton Youth workers in attendance. There were no reports of ASB on the evening.

Christmas light switch on events were delivered as planned across the borough.

Netherton's event was well attended and delivered activities all day including a Christmas market, Santa's Grotto and School Choirs.

L21 Network hosted the Kirkstone Road Christmas Light Switch on event held in Kirkstone Park. Some of the lights on the shops will need replacing for next year. Ford ward members are looking at options to ensure that these are replaced for Christmas 2020.

Ford Ward members met with Merseyside Police, Green Sefton and Community safety to discuss issues residents have been reporting about Anti-Social Behaviour in the Hatton Hill area. A flyer will be distributed to residents in the area in January to inform them of actions taken so far and projects that will be delivered in the future including working with Everton in the Community delivering diversionary activities in the area in partnership with Litherland Youth and Community Centre and Sefton Youth Service.

Sefton Borough of Culture

A small grants funding opportunity was launched on the 16th December. The process will offer groups and organisations the opportunity to apply for funding up to £15,000. There will be two application forms. One for projects up to £5,000 and one for £5,000 -£15,000.

The Borough of Culture steering group will review and authorise applications up to £5,000. Applications for over £5,000 will be reported to Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing to review and authorise.

Food bank

1 April – 31 August 2019	South Sefton	Southport
Total Vouchers received	3788	1384
Adults Fed	4746	1183
Children Fed	3164	1265
Total Fed	7910	3148
Crisis Type	Low income - 1757 vouchers presented 34793 people fed	Low income – 680 vouchers presented 1481 people fed
Family Type	Single 2126 vouchers presented 56.12%	Single 659 vouchers presented 47.62%
Age group	No Data available	25 – 64 1628 people

Hate Crime

New dates have been set for hate crime awareness training to be delivered at the Ainsdale learning and development centre. Feedback from sessions continues to be excellent. Sessions are attended by Sefton staff and staff and volunteers from partner agencies.

Following a meeting of the Equal Voice network which discussed racism in Sefton schools, Merseyside Police will deliver sessions in schools that will talk to children about the issues and training sessions will be provided for school governors in February and May.

Equalities

Ability Plus group meeting with staff from Sefton CCG’s to attend to discuss issues around healthcare in the area took place on the 2nd of December at Southport Town Hall. Issues raised included accessible information, particularly audio information for people with visual impairments, and issues around transport. The group is planning a meeting in February with a transport theme, looking at the difficulties that people with disabilities face when using the transport network.

Discussions are taking place with staff from Sefton Learning and Development team to set new dates for Equality Impact Assessment training for Sefton staff in 2020.

IYS

First Time Entrants

Sefton continues to be proactive through prevention strategies, particularly with out of court disposals and the use of Community Resolution. FTE’s are locally tracked at the end of each quarter using data from the YOT Database. Local tracking shows a reduction in all quarters for financial year 2018/19 and continued reduction comparing Q1 2018/19 with 17 FTE’s to Q1 2019/20 with 10 FTE’s.

Re-Offending

Local tracking also shows a reduction in Court Disposals during the first two quarters of 2019 compared with 2018. In Q1, 2018 there were 36 Court Disposals compared with 22 in Q1 2019 and in Q2, 2018 there were 34 Court Disposals compared with 24 in Q2 2019. There have been no Custodial Sentences in 2019 compared with two in Q2 of 2018.

Custody

Sefton’s custody rate continues to be the lowest in the last four years. However, a young person has very recently been sentenced to 12 months in custody. Page 122 will review this young person and present findings to the Cabinet Member as to whether this was a foreseeable risk.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

The RJ Lead for YOT is currently delivering the 'International Institute for Restorative Practice' training to a group of staff from YOT and IMPACT (pupil referral unit) volunteers preparing to become YOT Community Panel Members. The training is delivered over four days and includes a written test which can lead to accreditation for those who complete successfully. This training is recognised by the Restorative Justice Council and the Youth Justice Board as equipping staff and volunteers with a well proven methodology for delivering restorative intervention.

YOT Management Board Development Session

As part of the improvement journey, YOT Management Board members attended a development session including some new members to the Board including senior representatives from Venus, Adaction and CAMHS.

Sue Walker from the Youth Justice Board attended to discuss the Revised National Standards and the requirement to complete a thorough self-assessment of the implementation of the new standards which is due for submission in April 2020.

The board was very interested to hear the story first hand of a young man's progress whilst being supervised by YOT. The 17-year-old boy attended the session to talk about how his relationship with the YOT has helped him move on from serious crime to desistance from offending and into employment.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Programme

In November, the ACEs recovery toolkit adopted in a pilot programme which will be delivered in partnership with Early Help Thornton Family Wellbeing Centre and Holy Family High School. The target group will include targeting 13 young people who are displaying adversities in an educational setting. These will include young people aged 12-17, young people with low level mental health needs, young people who are not reaching their educational attainment goals, those displaying some additional needs (ASD) and Young Carers. The programme will be delivered over a 10-week period and will be fully evaluated.

Youth Service

Youth Bus

Staff on the Youth Bus have continued to support groups in and around the area of Bootle North Park, Peel Road, Queens Road, Seaforth, Litherland, Maghull and Netherton.

Staff continue to make contact with over 100 young people and families each week with a Christmas party being planned for 10th December.

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Youth Workers continue to work in partnership with the VIBE at Linacre Community Hub on Tuesday evenings delivering Duke of Edinburgh award activity. The young people involved come from different schools and backgrounds and are participating in expedition training. Some young people are referred into the project from Family and Wellbeing centres, however it is hoped that more young people from the centre itself will be encouraged to form a new group.

Melling

The group mainly run by volunteers with the assistance of Sefton Youth Service continues to be well attended. Some of the young people have been helping in the community by assisting the Melling in Bloom project. Young people continue to maintain their health and wellbeing by joining in various group activities including football and skipping. There have been darts and table tennis tournaments with the young people showing their competitive natures when faced with a challenge. A Christmas party has been arranged for the week before shut down as well as a trip to the ice rink. Young people now have the materials ready to make Christmas cards and decorations over the coming weeks.

New Beginnings

The New Beginnings members are taking part in **Page 123** with The Open Eye Gallery this month. The young people now have copies of the 'Zine' magazine designed as part of the last project with The Open

Agenda Item 9
Eye and the Atkinson Rooms of this were given to senior management at the last SYMBOL meeting to evidence the powerful work undertaken.

On average, we have around 25 young people involved with New Beginnings. There are multiple outcomes with young people as they discuss various topics including Mental Health, Relationships and issues around school/college.

They are now working towards the Ticket To Pride project with a launch event being planned for March. The event will take place at Southport Railway station. The marketing information is already in progress to include both the Sefton and New Beginnings logos.

Linacre Mission

Young people continue to take part in a programme relating to Knife Crime particularly looking at impact on the community Staff also continue to offer a variety of games and activities as well as drum and guitar lessons. Workers also continue to deliver outreach work when needed and have supported other youth sessions by covering staff annual leave.

SYMBOL

As reported to cabinet last month the latest SYMBOL meeting saw young people and Youth Work staff join with Cllr Hardy, Cllr Maher, Cllr Fairclough, Head of Communities Tanya Wilcock and Locality Manager Chris White to discuss youth funding. Tanya Wilcock spoke about funding reduction and the impact on the service. Cllr Hardy gave a presentation reiterating her commitment to Youth Services and made reference to the consultation that is taking place nationally. Table top activities for young people included an opportunity for them to share their views about the level of availability of youth services and the impact an increase/decrease of sessions may have. The next meeting will discuss Young People and Employment.

Youth Voice / Member of Youth Parliament (MYP)

The Youth Voice group / MYPs attended the last Youth Foria of the year on Sunday 1st of December at FireFit in Toxteth. The Sefton group will soon be meeting up with other Youth Voice/cabinet and MYP's from across the North West. The theme for the meeting will be Environment and Being Green. This will also end the year and be a celebration event.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

£74,000 boost in funding for the Human Library Project

Arts Council England have announced that they are extending the funding of the Human Library project for a further 18 months. The £74,000 will be used to extend the geographical scope of the project to the Netherton and Crosby areas. The project will deliver creative activities to engage with socially isolated residents and encourage their community participation. The successful delivery model will draw on the experiences of the original project to effectively target those residents in need.

Tech Lab Sessions

For National Libraries Week, libraries ran some unique ICT awareness sessions for adults using Ozobots, microbits and Raspberry pie devices. 2 members of staff ran several sessions aimed at showing adults the basics of computer coding and how to program the devices to carry out simple tasks such as remote messaging or turning a raspberry pie into a pedometer. The staff who volunteered to lead the sessions were mentored by senior staff and the sessions were as much a personal development programme for them, as it was for members of the public. They have now gained experience in delivering projects and delivering activities. Further sessions are planned, including the use of 3D printing.

Chronic Pain Support Group

Libraries ran a new initiative in November to Page 124
Libraries ran a new initiative in November to support residents living with Chronic Pain. An estimated 78,000 Sefton residents live with chronic pain, but there are very few support opportunities available,

particularly in the Crosby/ Waterloo area. Led by a library apprentice, who lives with chronic pain herself, Crosby Library ran the first of 6 pilot sessions targeting residents. The idea is to create a self- sustaining support group that will meet at the library with a view to combating isolation and mental health issues of people living with chronic pain. Guest speakers have been invited each month. This sessions' speakers were from the Brain Charity who spoke to a full house about the services and strategies available to alleviate the effects of chronic pain. The group will meet once a month at Crosby Library and if the pilot is successful, libraries will look to extend the project to a wider area.

Home Visit Service 30 years old

The home visits round at Meadows library has been in operation for 30 years this month. This service is co-ordinated by the Library Service but deliveries are carried out entirely by volunteers. They deliver books to residents who are unable to leave their homes. Remarkably, two of the original volunteers from day one, Rita Addison and Lynn Fairlie, still make deliveries. Over the years they will have taken books out to thousands of housebound readers, helping them continue to enjoy their reading and providing a valuable connection with the outside world.

THE ATKINSON

Exhibition programme

The Art Society worked with and funded The Atkinson to hold a series of workshops for local schools and colleges linked to the Westwood exhibition. The sessions were run by Lesley Raven, the Programme Leader BA (Hons) Fashion Art Direction from Manchester Metropolitan University and ten of her students. Classes were aimed at students studying fashion, textiles, photography and fine art. It was originally planned to hold one class but the demand was so great that the workshops ran for three days and involved 137 students from 7 schools.

The first Palette Club Invitation exhibition was very successful with sales of 18 paintings totalling £3205 and commission and hire fees of more than £1200.

Programming

The Atkinson Development Trust has funded subsidised places for over 550 schoolchildren from 11 Sefton schools to see Christmas shows at The Atkinson's theatre. The funding was targeted at schools with a high Pupil Premium, 8 of the 11 schools are from the south of the borough, including schools from Litherland, Bootle, Seaforth and Netherton.

Public Engagement

Access Change upgrade works scheduled to start in February. £10K funding from National Lottery Awards for All together with £3k funding from The Atkinson Development Trust. Access change will be developed in to a Changing Places facility, installed by Astor Bannerman contractors, who held the quote for three years whilst we sourced funding. We worked closely with Southport Access For Everyone (SAFE) and some of our disabled patrons to best describe how this facility will transform their experience here. Any visitors to Southport will find a much-improved facility with up to date fixtures and fittings to allow greater independence.

Library and Information Service

Early Years New Music Project beginning at the start of 2020. Sky Music Hub's successful BID from National Lottery Awards for All funding to work across Sefton and Knowsley.

Brighter Sound, in partnership with Note Weavers will recruit a mentor to support the process, and to organise delivery for CPD opportunities for volunteers who currently work with the library's story and rhyme time audiences. £1000 instrument budget available to spend across three library centres. Project will allow practitioners and the community to lead on the selection of instruments. Possible link with Borough of Culture, with an emphasis on 'Our Story'

~~HOUSING~~ Agenda Item 9

Liverpool City Region

I represent the Council on the Sub-Regional Housing & Spatial Planning Advisory Group, which feeds into the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority Strategic Agenda. I have been re-appointed as the Vice Chair of this Advisory Group, for 2019-20. There are number of new LA Member representatives on this Group.

I hope to use this position to have greater influence across the LCR.

The role of the CA is having a growing significance, in particular when the Govt allocate resources to the CA for the whole of the LCR. The CA are looking to work with Homes England to secure resources to help bring forward development of brownfield sites across the sub-region. We are supporting this exercise.

The CA have also been consulting on a LCR Spatial Development Plan. Together with Cabinet Member Planning and Building Control (Cllr Daren Veidman), we will be submitting a response on behalf of Sefton.

Rough Sleepers & Homeless services

In November 2018, we undertook an annual 'formal Rough Sleeper count' and found 11 rough sleepers, 10 of whom were in Southport. Recognising the numbers of individuals who are unable to or cannot use our hostel sit up facilities we have responded with a number of initiatives, including:

- a Winter Cold Weather Shelter (December to February).
- commissioned MerseyCare to provide a health outreach service
- secured funding from MHCLG's Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding 2019/20, to continue to deliver the health based service alongside our homelessness rough sleeper outreach services for a further 12 months
- introduced 8 additional Complex Needs beds within existing hostels, together with enhanced support services
- funding to support clients with 'no recourse to public funding'.

We have submitted a further funding bid under the Government (MHCLG) Homeless Cold Weather initiative for 2019-20 winter period, which has been agreed and will provide an enhanced sit up service over the winter months.

I approved a bid for funding under the Governments 'Rapid Rehousing Pathway initiative', our bid was successful and we will receive funding of £142,000 in 2019/20, which will fund initiatives to increase access to housing for those people within temporary and emergency hostel accommodation or accessing Sit-Up services in order to relieve some of the bed blocking within our homeless hostels. The funding also allows two Navigators to assist clients with high & medium level needs, facilitating access into services and using flexible personalised budgets in order to access whatever a person needs to make progress.

Each year each Local Authority is obliged to advise the MHCLG as to the extent of Rough Sleeping in the borough on an annual basis. The **2019 Rough Sleeper count** is based on a single, typical night between 1 October and 30 November and as we have done in previous years the Councils within the Liverpool City region co-ordinated our Counts on the same night. The 'typical night' chosen for the estimate was the evening of the 12nd November to the morning of the 13th November 2019.

A spotlight-count was carried out in both Bootle and Southport town centre this year simultaneously. This was followed by an estimation meeting where the data from the Spotlight Count was shared with various partner agencies to verify the data. The count has now also been validated by Homeless Link. The total number of rough sleepers in Sefton on this year's chosen night was **two (2)**.

The reduction in rough sleepers in 2019 compared to 2018 can be largely attributed to the good partnership working by our commissioned services. The external MHCLG funding has also had an impact due to introduction of the different additional services mentioned above.

The LCR CA are leading on the development of a **Housing First homeless initiative**. This is a Housing and Support service model for homeless people with multiple and complex needs, that existing services are unable to effectively support. Unlike a traditional homeless service approach, clients will be assisted to

move directly into their own home and receive adequate support for as long as the requirements of this service is being rolled out on a 'test and learn' basis from July, with a full roll out of the service later this financial year.

The CA have recruited staff teams to deliver the test and learn phase of the service. During the Test and Learn Phase, Sefton have utilised our Complex Needs Panel (chaired by Sefton Housing Options) to consider suitable cases and make referrals to the Housing First Service.

We submitted 19 potential cases, and to date attempts to engage with 13 are in the process; 3 are engaging with their existing support providers in order to present them with a Housing First offer; 2 are on the watch & wait list. To date 1 client has been rehoused in Sefton.

The CA originally indicated that in the Test & Learn phase they would have capacity to take 60 clients from across the Liverpool City Region. However, they have decided to recruit two additional support teams during the test and learn phase, which will increase service capacity to 80, when we will be asked to provide additional referrals.

The CA have established a Charter with housing associations which will act as a protocol for sourcing properties for the Housing First clients.

The CA are also commissioning a rough sleeper outreach service, to engage with people who would be suitable for the Housing First initiative.

We have commissioned a 'pilot' temporary accommodation and support service with Riverside housing association, for homeless families who face difficulties accessing their own independent housing. This service went live from 2nd December 2019.

Housing Development Company - Sandway Homes

The Company has been operational since January 2019, with the Council's Head of Commercial Development acting as Managing Director.

Schemes have now been designed for three Council owned sites in the borough with all of the designs being fully compliant with Sefton Council's planning policy.

Planning applications have been submitted and approved for two of the three sites: -

- 1. Land bordering Barton's Close, Southport: 30 houses for sale (10 Affordable Houses and 20 for open market sale)
- 2. Land bordering Meadow Lane, Ainsdale: 48 houses for sale (16 Affordable Houses and 32 for open market sale)

Construction is due to start early in 2020.

A planning application for the third site, bordering Buckley Hill Lane in Netherton, is being compiled and is due for submission early in 2020.

Private Rented Sector Licencing

Our 3 private landlord licensing schemes went live on the 1st of March 2018- focusing on the licensing of all private landlords in Bootle, but developing stronger 'Additional HMO' licensing schemes to cover more types of HMO properties for Southport and Waterloo.

We have been actively promoting these schemes to ensure as many landlords as possible apply for Licenses. We have been writing to landlords who have not applied for licenses to inform them to do so, as we uncover unlicensed properties. Final warning letters have been sent out in relation to unlicensed premises. The majority of these have or are now in the process of making an application. Further investigative work is being undertaken on those that have not submitted applications and these will then be considered for enforcement action (Prosecution or Civil Penalty).

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As at the end of November, the numbers of full applications is 2370 (previous report 2249) received and partially completed applications of 373 takes the total application figures up to 2743 (previous 2728), which is 91% of the number of premises that we anticipated would require a licence.

We have had some staff turnover over recent months, reducing the capacity within the Housing Standards Team. We have recently carried out Licensing Compliance officer recruitment to 3 vacant posts. Staff began to start in post during October.

Officers have carried out and planned 550 compliance visits (previous report was 502). 45% of properties inspected have been fully compliant on 1st inspection. This figure continues to drop from an initial 49%, as the properties that we are now inspecting are not just those requesting/achieving accreditation, so there are more issues/deficiencies being identified. Where we uncover non-compliance, informal action is taken to give the landlord opportunity to remedy the issues identified. There is a requirement to revisit these properties to ensure compliance, resulting in a higher number of property visits staff have to undertake. Of the 55% non-compliant on first inspection, over 90% were fully compliant on 2nd visit.

638 hazards under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System have been removed from properties as a result of the proactive compliance visits (476 in previous report). Of the 29 hazards that can be identified, Fire safety, Falls between levels, Falls on stairs, Damp & Mould and Electrical hazards were the hazards most commonly identified. Since the schemes began, 113 properties have had serious Category 1 hazards removed (previous report 86 properties).

We have worked with the Anti-social behaviour team and police who have identified some problematic properties in relation to ASB. These properties will be a priority for enforcement for either not having a licence or not complying with the ASB licensing condition.

We had received a number of allegations about landlords or their tenants tipping rubbish outside their properties, particularly in alleyways. We have issued a letter to all landlords reminding them of their duties to help prevent such nuisance and behaviour.

Over 300 final warning letters have been sent out in relation to unlicensed premises. The majority of these have or are now in the process of making an application. We are finding that it is often the case that if we identify one unlicensed property we uncover that the landlord has many more. We have recently had one landlord submit 20 applications after receiving one final warning letter. Several properties are at the "Intention to serve" status for Civil Penalty action and Compliance officers are working through the policy to determine level of fines for each. It is anticipated that the numbers of enforcement action in the form of Civil Penalties or prosecution will steadily increase.

Any properties that are identified as having poor housing conditions, from the receipt of a complaint and do not have a licence application will be prioritised for enforcement action.

The 23 Civil Penalty Notices served on one landlord. A date for mediation with the landlord has been set by the First Tier Housing Tribunal for 9th December 2019 but the appellant did not attend, so a full hearing date will be set, likely in January.

A further Civil Penalty Notice has been served for failure to licence a HMO that requires an Additional HMO licence.

2 x Rent Repayment Orders are being pursued on the 2 properties on which we have had successful prosecutions. The total monies we are seeking to recover is £28,000 in Housing Benefit paid to the landlords whilst the properties were unlicensed. Recovered funds will come to the Service to be spent on housing enforcement activities.

One landlord has been added to the National Rogue Landlord Database. This landlord also appealed to the Crown Court on the level of fine imposed on conviction at the Magistrates Court. The level of fine was significantly reduced to a total of £25,000.

Agenda Item 9

I have recently approved updates to the Housing Strategy Delivery Framework. We have made progress with a number of Actions and housing priorities that were contained in the original Housing Strategy and its Delivery Framework, since its adoption in 2016. Since then there have been wide-ranging new housing policy, legislation and council priorities that have emerged since.

Included in this Delivery Plan is a commitment to look at the feasibility of providing new Council Housing for social rent. In the meantime, Cabinet has given approval to request Sandway Homes to provide up to 5 new Council homes as part of their development proposals.

Extra Care Housing

At its meeting in March, Cabinet considered a report about the future provision of extra care housing for older residents. Together with Councillor Cummins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, I will seek to oversee the work required on the Council's approach to Extra Care Housing. Extra Care Housing has been identified as a model which helps people to live independently at home for longer, thereby either delaying or preventing the need for long-term residential care and helps people to remain well, therefore avoiding Hospital admissions.

We have agreed to fund an additional staff post to lead on this piece of work. Recruitment has been undertaken and we will have someone in post in January 2020.

Empty Homes

I recently reviewed the current position regarding vacant homes within Sefton, and the implementation of the Empty Homes Plan 2019-2024. As at October 2019 the current total proportion of vacant homes in Sefton stands at 4.15%. This equates to 5,304 properties in the Borough. This is a small reduction on the 4.22% in October 2018, and below the past 6 year average annual figure of 4.35%.

The total proportion of vacant homes in the borough has remained relatively static over the past few years, however the long-term average has reduced significantly from a high of 6.2% in 2008.

The current total proportion of properties empty for 6 months or longer stands at 2.2% equating to 2,811 properties. This is a small reduction on the 2.35% in 2018. Again, the proportion of LTVs has remained stable over the past few years.

In terms of progress in delivering our Empty Homes Plan (2019-24),

Our Strategic Aim is to; *'focus our intervention activity to reduce the number of long term privately owned empty properties across the borough, therefore helping to increase housing supply, but more importantly to improve neighbourhood conditions by tackling problematic empty properties.'*

To help achieve this aim, the Empty Homes Plans 2019 – 2024 focuses on three key objectives. In terms of our progress (over the first year of the plan) and the work we have undertaken to deliver the Plan Objectives:

- **Objective 1: Raising awareness of long term empty properties as a wasted resource**

On 20th March 2019, Sefton Council partnered alongside local authorities across Merseyside and Cheshire to host a free 'Empty Homes Event' at Liverpool Town Hall. The aim of the event was to offer advice and support to owners of empty properties across the region.

More than 80 property owners and landlords attended the event, and the feedback given was very positive, as a result, the Sub Regional Empty Homes Group are planning for the event to be held annually.

This event was promoted in the local press, and invitations were sent to owners of long term empty homes, whose properties are in the designated selective licensing area.

The Housing Standards team also regularly write to empty property owners to try to encourage them to bring their property back into use.

• **Agenda Item 9** **Objective 3: Utilise the full range of enforcement powers to target and bring problematic properties back into use, through cross departmental working, focussing primarily on those empty properties, particularly those who own homes in the selective and additional licensing areas, to bring properties back into use through advice and assistance, including early intervention and preventative measures.**

On 22nd July 2019, the Council sent 140 letters and leaflets to property owners who own homes in the selective licensing area, where those properties had been empty for two or more years (and on the 100% premium council tax charge).

18% of the empty property owners responded to this letter, & we were able to gather useful intelligence as to why they had left their properties empty, with the main reasons stated as being; financial, legal and other issues.

After sending the letters, some owners contacted the Council and advised of their intentions for their properties:

- 8 said their properties were undergoing renovations, and it was their intention to bring them back into use;
- 2 said they would be selling their property privately at auction;
- And 1 said that they were now actively seeking tenant(s)

Furthermore, a recent Council Tax search on those targeted properties showed that:

- 11 of the 140 properties are now occupied;
- A further 2 have new owners.

The department's 'proactive' intervention has seen 6% of those long term empty properties come back into use, with an additional 10% likely to be occupied in the next few months.

- **Objective 3: Utilise the full range of enforcement powers to target and bring problematic properties back into use, through cross departmental working, focussing primarily on those empty 2 years or more in the selective and additional licensing areas.**

Sefton Council can take enforcement action if the empty property is causing a statutory nuisance or a public health issue, and if the Owner is being uncooperative or untraceable.

Enforced sale is a particular tool that the Council has been successful in using, especially with regards to long-term empty properties. This procedure is primarily designed as a debt recovery process. However, it provides an effective method for bringing long term, problematic properties back into use, and has been adopted by Councils across the country.

Over the past 8 years, enforcing the sale of empty properties has recovered debts owing to the Council totalling **£352,315.17**. This work brings together the twin aims of maximising the recovery of debts, whilst bringing difficult, empty properties into use.

Social Housing Allocations (Property Pool Plus)

I have recently reviewed information about social housing allocations and lettings. The total number of applicants on the Housing Register is currently 5963, and by Priority Band the largest numbers of applicants are in Band B (30%) and Band E (31%). Looking at bedroom requirements, the largest numbers require 1 bedroom accommodation (57%) and 2 bedrooms (29%).

For comparison purposes, the Total numbers of applicants from the Housing Register at June 2015 was 3929; hence we have seen a significant increase (52%) in the total numbers of applicants since then. However, the distribution of bedroom size needs has broadly remained the same.

In terms of Number of properties becoming available, the number of properties becoming available to let and advertised via the Property Pool Plus (PPP) Allocations service, over Quarter 1 (April to June) 2019, shows the average number of applicants making bids for properties which become available is; 45 bidding for 1 bedroom properties, 59 for 2 bedrooms, 130 for 3 bedroom, and 78 for 4 bedroom properties.

In terms of **Nominations** provided to housing associations from the Council's Housing Register, generally housing associations have been expected to provide the Council with 50% nominations. This is seen as an 'industry norm', and help RPs fulfil their duties to assist Council's discharge their housing duties (such as homeless duties). However, in the case of OVH, the stock transfer contract requires them to provide the Council with 75% nominations.

Lettings made via PPP are considered to be nominations, together with some direct lets (made outside of PPP), for example under the Children's services protocol for Care Leavers.

The latest publicly available information published for the Sefton area in 2017/18, shows there was a total of 1761 lettings (new and relets across all RPs) of which 1421 were classed as Choice-based (PPP) lettings (80.7%).

We will continue to monitor the proportions of PPP nominations achieved to ensure that Registered Providers are meeting their required quotas. The Social housing lettings in England, 2018/19: Continuous Recording (CORE) data is due to be released in early 2020 allowing a further examination of the PPP nominations information for the latest period available.

Sefton participates in the Property Pool Plus scheme along with Liverpool, Wirral, Knowsley and Halton Councils, as well as the participating housing associations. The Local Authorities have collectively agreed to review the current Policy and associated service arrangements. An external consultant has been appointed to undertake this exercise, which began in August and will take place over the following 9 months.

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CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) - 21 January 2020		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Marion Atkinson	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills	January 2020

GROWTH AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATES

The Regeneration Team are continuing to develop a range of growth and investment projects identified across the borough and included within the Bootle, Crosby and Southport areas. This includes exploring potential funding sources that might be available to assist with delivery and partnership development opportunities.

1. SOUTHPORT

Southport Town Deal

Work continues corporately to develop the Southport Town Deal funding bid. This includes a first stage checklist submission all funders need to submit before the end of December 2019. The Town Deal Prospectus requires all bidders to establish a Town Deal Board to oversee the development of a Town Deal Investment Plan to be submitted in Summer 2020. This will allow up to £25M potentially to be allocated to Southport. The other three shortlisted centres within Liverpool City Region are Runcorn, Birkenhead and St Helens all of which are to benefit from this funding source.

Southport Market

Draft proposals for the refurbishment of this Council owned facility are in progress following consultation in October 2019. Work is progressing to develop a business case which will support the facility and enable a much stronger food and drink offer within the facility. It is hoped the proposals will help improve the attraction of the market and surrounding area to both local residents and visitors to Southport. It is anticipated that this business model will help to generate and drive additional footfall in the town centre and help diversify the current offer in line with the Southport investment strategy. This will look to utilise town centre funding secure from the Combined Authority to help deliver the wider Southport Investment Framework. Southport was one of several bids from across the region.

Southport Townscape Heritage Initiative - A Townscape Heritage Bid submitted in June 2019 was approved in September 2019 for a £2.5m scheme (with just under £1.7m provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund). The project focuses on the properties between Lord Street and the Promenade and enhance the quality and strength of the linkages between the town centre and the Seafront and will aim to increasing the levels of economic activity within the target area. Key delivery staff have been recruited and discussions with potential grant applicants has commenced, many of whom have indicated early requirements to invest and take advantage of grant funding. Awaiting formal confirmation of commencement date from HLF.

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CROSBY VILLAGE

St Modwen Property Ownership

St Modwen have now disposed of the majority of their interest in Moor Lane, Crosby Village (excluding Telegraph House site) to a London based property company Farcastle Limited who will manage the blocks on Moor Lane that have been refurbished and let on short-term leases. Sefton are continuing dialogue regarding Telegraph House with St Modwen's.

Town Centre Funding - CROSBY

Following Government's refusal to approve first round of Future high Street Fund, the Council is continuing to explore other possible funding sources for town centre regeneration including the second round of FHSF and any further "Stronger Towns" (Town Deal) allocations. The Council are also exploring emerging retail, commercial and town centre research and best practice to help inform implementation of the town centre development framework including how to broaden out the range of retail and non- retail uses on offer and associated access/parking arrangements.

2. BOOTLE TOWN CENTRE

Bootle Town Hall – The Council are progressing maintenance work to the existing operational town hall building to ensure it is fit for purpose. The wider town hall complex is proving challenging and officers are exploring options for achieving a viable financial solution that fits with the Council's asset management strategy. Exploratory discussions of potential Heritage Lottery funds are being investigated to try and address the wider complex.

Bootle Strand – The Strand Shopping Centre feeds directly into the key priority of ensuring retail remains a core function of Bootle Town Centre, despite the current challenging retail market. The Council is driving development for a re-invigorated Strand Shopping Centre, that looks outward and has a diversified leisure and retail offer whilst maximising its location on the Leeds/Liverpool Canal. In line with the Bootle Town Centre Investment Framework, work is progressing to broaden out the offer in terms of non-retail services, leisure, food and the evening economy - exploring the commercial operation and find the right solution for this key asset for Bootle and Sefton, including its contribution to the Council's Growth Programme.

Work is also ongoing on the repair and maintenance work to the Strand Shopping Centre. The Council are continuing to explore opportunities for attracting further investment into the centre, particularly given the decline of the high street retailing in favour of online retailing and continued competition from out-of-centre locations.

Bootle Town Centre – Discussions are ongoing with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority regarding the future of Bootle Town Centre and additional resources that could be accessed for progressing the Bootle Town Centre Investment Framework in addition to the Town centre Commission funding secured in 2019. This could help to support a range of activities including diversifying the town centre offer, improving access/connectivity within the centre, improving the public realm/open spaces including the canal corridor and also encourage greater engagement and involvement of key stakeholders in the area to help develop and revitalise the town centre.

CROSBY LAKESIDE

Crosby Lakeside is an important Council asset that supports a range of key council priorities, including:

- Providing visitor facilities at a key coastal gateway, with an important role in helping both to attract visitors and contribute to the local visitor economy as well as helping to manage visitors in the most sustainable way (in-line with the Coastal Plan).

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- Providing facilities that help support and promote the Council's Health and Well-being priorities, including indoor and outdoor activities with a membership gymnasium and water-based activities.
- Providing residential, activity and education facilities for school's community groups such as the Sea Cadets.
- Increasing accessibility to leisure and recreational services, including for those with disabilities.
- Providing local employment.

This important asset is now 10 years old and in need of significant investment in improvements to secure its long-term future. In November 2019, Cabinet approved proposals for the Council to fund a significant £3.1million refurbishment and enhancement of the hospitality facilities and for the Council to enter in to a Joint Venture (JV) to transform and enhance the hospitality offer. A self-contained, purpose-built accommodation ('bunk barn') with self-catering facilities available on the upper level which will be able to host community groups. External funding will be sought for delivery of this project from LCR CA.

The leisure facilities will remain open for business and operational throughout the duration of the works, any disruption due to construction work will be kept to a minimum.

Communications are ongoing for Crosby Lakeside including regular updates to centre staff as the project progresses. Press releases have been sent out and information has been circulated on the Council's intranet, internet (My View) and on social media. A meeting will take place early in the New Year with key local groups to discuss the proposals with them including the Waterloo & Crosby Coastal Towns Team, Seafront Residents Action Group, Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership, Church Ward Forum, Friends of Waterloo Seafront Gardens.

Further information will be circulated as the design develops and funding secured both internally and externally and further progress reports will come through to Overview and Scrutiny throughout 2020. It is expected that the planning application will be submitted by mid-January 2020.

INVESTSEFTON UPDATE

ERDF Business Growth Programme (BGP) evaluation

The BGP was the subject on an independent evaluation to assess impact on phase 1 delivery (January 2016-December 2018). The work was carried out by Ad Specialists on a city region basis and feedback to date has been really encouraging, including:

- Overall expenditure was within 8% of the forecast in the original Grant Funding Agreement.
- Attainment of outputs was in line with the original Grant Funding Agreement with the exception of the employment increase target. **Actual achievement of this output was 69% of the original target.**
- The programme was highly successful in its aim to engage and support business with little or no previous experience of publicly-funded support. **39% of survey respondents had not accessed free public business support before, and a further 13.5% had not accessed such support for a long time.**

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- Businesses are highly satisfied with the support provided – **88% of survey respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied**. This high level of satisfaction was present at each stage in the customer journey from initial registration to completion of support.
- **The most frequently suggested improvement for the next phase of the programme was a more regular follow-up of progress from Advisors**. Businesses clearly value the support from Advisors and would relish the opportunity for longer-term engagement.
- Businesses supported by the programme had a significantly different trajectory over 3 years compared to the wider City Region business base. **BGP companies created 3.23 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs from 2015/16 to 2017/18 whereas the wider business base didn't create any FTE jobs. BGP companies saw turnover rise by 20.5% whereas turnover rose by just 1% in the wider business base.**
- The programme facilitated the creation of **1,273 net jobs over 3 years generating £60.8M of Gross Value Added for the City Region**.

InvestSefton outward engagement

InvestSefton has now moved its Business Clinics in the Atkinson to a monthly basis, underpinned by themed events run by business experts. The clinics are for anyone thinking of starting or growing their business covering a range of topics such as accessing finance, business ideas, sales and marketing. InvestSefton's Advisors and a mix of volunteer mentors including accountants, and local entrepreneurs are on hand to offer advice and guidance. To date the clinic has hosted over 100 businesses and potential business start-ups through either 1:1's or events.

InvestSefton's most recent events were:

29th October -Southport Town hall

Cyber attack prevention and artificial intelligence-A small event attended by 7 businesses including 3 women business owners. Feedback included:

"The support provided was invaluable"

"Would welcome further support on this"

6th November-Crosby Lakeside

SeftonCrowd funding opportunities- This was to support the Council's Civic Crowd Funding scheme launched in January. This initiative enables organisations to create local projects to improve Sefton. InvestSefton supported Jayne Vincent (Public Engagement Officer) by promoting to businesses. The event was a success with 27 businesses attending and there has already been some interest shown by InvestSefton businesses in investing in projects including a community café.

The team structures feedback from events in a way to elicit information on immediate or future business needs so Advisors can plan support accordingly. InvestSefton responds to spikes in demand by organising business workshops for groups of businesses. The events form a key part of delivery as it allows InvestSefton to reach a wider number of businesses on key topics relevant to their needs.

InvestSefton is in the process of updating investsefton.com. This will be a complete refresh including an event management function.

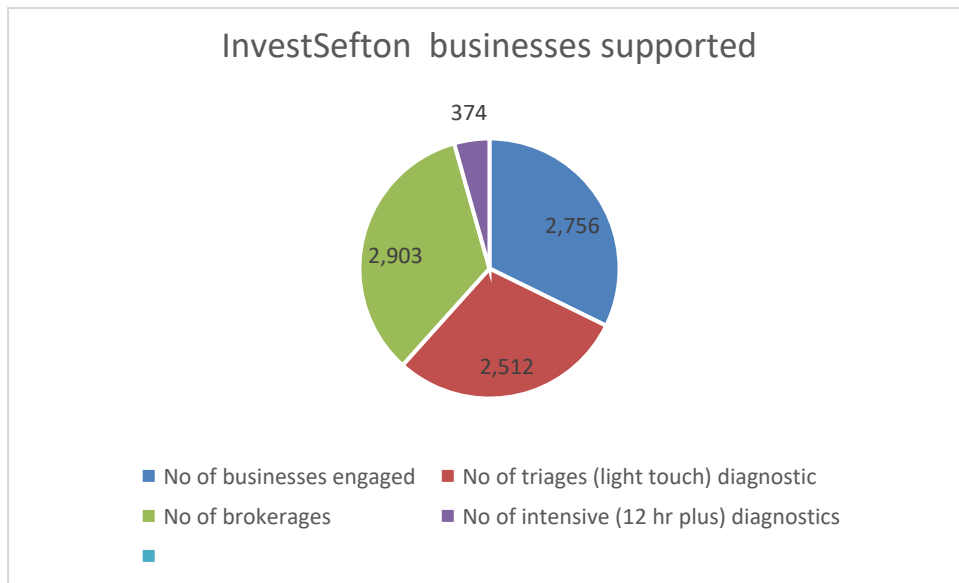
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The team promoted **Small business Saturday on 7th December**. This event aims to highlight and showcase UK small businesses and independent retailers. InvestSefton adopted the Small Business local authority package including:

- Displaying Small Business logo's on the InvestSefton website and all team member signature emails
- Tweet (once a week)
- Send a mailshot to over 2000 businesses advising them of the campaign
- We will also offer Sefton based small retail businesses the opportunity to be promoted on our twitter account between Monday 2 December – Saturday 7th December. This will be branded it small business Saturday so it won't look like we are promoting random businesses.

Business engagement

Since the start of the original Growth Hub contract (April 2016) to 7 November 2019 InvestSefton has:

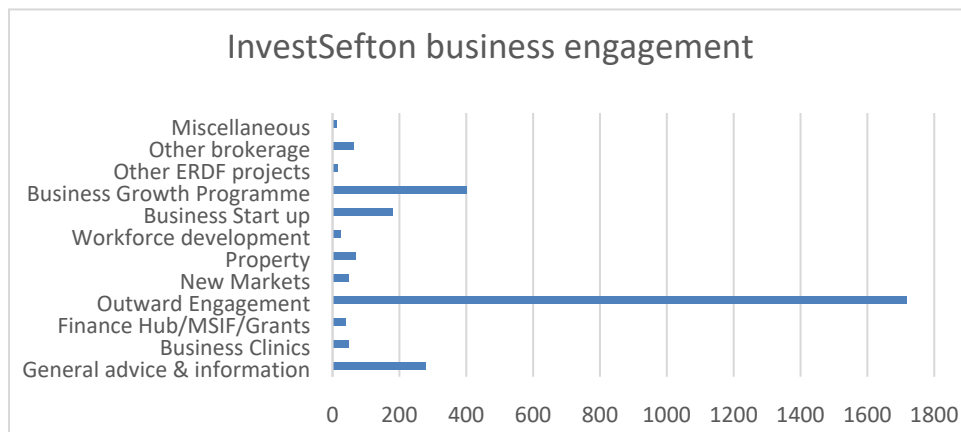


- Engaged with 2,756 businesses
- Provided triage (light touch diagnostic) to 2,512 individual businesses
- Initiated over 2,903 brokerages and 374 intensive diagnostics with businesses

Diagram 1 illustrates the key areas of engagement recorded through Sefton's Growth Hub on a cumulative basis. Outward engagement in the form of events/social media remains the highest source of engagements with businesses which requires a more proactive approach from the team particularly, through its 'one too many' approach. This is intense ongoing work and the fruits of this are shown in the increased demand for and attendance at workshops and events including Sefton Economic Forum.

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Diagram 1- (Up to 7 November 2019)



The CRM system is subject to fluctuations and is currently under revision:

- General advice and information relates to a wide range of business enquiries through the Sefton Growth Hub = **279**
- Business Clinic relates to individual mentoring at the Atkinson but does NOT include numbers attending events which are captured separately in outward engagement = **49**
- Finance Hub is managed by Merseyside Special Investment Fund and includes managed referrals to their various funds by the team; it also includes grant enquiries = **39**
- Outward Engagement generates the most significant number of business leads and enquiries and are based on InvestSefton's one to many approach including events/workshops/social media campaigns = **1,719**
- New Markets is a specific ERDF programme offering subsidised commercial support to businesses = **49**
- There have been **69** specific sites and premises enquiries
- Workforce development; Skills for Growth Fund and employment refer to general enquiries to LCR wide funding = **25** It should be noted that InvestSefton and Sefton@work already work closely on local referrals not included here.
- Referrals to the ERDF Enterprise Hub remains strong and the team works closely with the Womens Organisation and their consortium partners which includes Bootle based SAFE. This work includes initial capture of start-up enquiries, some one to one to work and specific enterprise events = **180**
- The ERDF Business Growth Programme is InvestSefton's prime ERDF assisted initiative for Sefton SMEs = **401**
- Other ERDF projects include LCR 4.0; LCR Activate, LCR Manufacturing and the Eco-Innovatory providing support for key sectors and low carbon activities = **17**
- Other brokerage (**64**) and Other referrals (**12**) refer to enquiries not specified in other support programmes and include Trade/export, Growth Service and Chamber of Commerce activities

In all cases enquiries from businesses result in an initial diagnostic from Business Growth Officers with details recorded onto the CRM system.

EU Exit

The Council's EU Exit group has resurrected meetings following the recent election. Much work has already been carried out on an LCR basis and from a business perspective InvestSefton has been providing regular updates at Sefton Economic Forum briefings from EU Exit experts and ensuring businesses are kept up to date with weekly bulletins from the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The bulletins are well summarised and offer a range of links for businesses across all sectors. **InvestSefton is looking to arrange a Sefton Economic Forum on 24 January 2020 in the Vincent Hotel, Southport.**

As part of the team's ongoing Growth Hub activities BEIS has asked for weekly feedback from businesses on any issues they face relating to EU exit. To date InvestSefton has collated **over 50 responses.**

Blue Cow Digital Limited



Blue Cow Digital Limited is a digital marketing agency based in Southport, which specialises in web design, digital marketing and social media for business. The company was launched in 2018 by James Brayshaw, owner of The Adaptive Comms Group Limited, an independent telecoms and IT company established in 2003 which employs 25 staff, with a turnover of £3million. Blue Cow Digital Limited was developed in response to a growing demand from small-to-medium sized businesses for a 'one stop solution' to managing their online digital presence. The company's services include web site hosting, SEO and graphic design, and bespoke videos for web and social media marketing. Blue Cow Digital Limited has won significant market share. The has business recruited several new creative staff with long-term industry experience, and now has over a

100 new business clients, with the potential for repeat business and business growth in 2020, and onwards. InvestSefton has supported Blue Cow Digital Limited on its growth journey, working with their marketing and customer development team on its CRM system, and new market development.

James Brayshaw has also collaborated with the Sefton Business Growth Hub, part of Investsefton, by using his experience to facilitate business workshops for other Sefton companies, on digital marketing, and social media.

Managing Director James Brayshaw said, "Our long-term reputation and experience in the sector has stood us in good stead, in developing this new digital service offer. Investsefton has a range of funded business support available to Sefton companies. I would encourage businesses of all types who are growth-oriented to contact the Growth Hub, and see how they could benefit."

Business Friendly Sefton

The Sefton Business Friendly Sefton group collaborated on the third Business Post one page insert with the November issue focusing on InvestSefton. Jonathan Kearney has produced an excellent narrative which can be viewed at page 7 **[Click to view latest Business Post](#)**

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A Business-Friendly Sefton workshop for 30 Council business facing staff took place on 19th September to look at four key topics identified by the steering group: Sharing business information; social value; business communications and maximising local employment.

Some of the actions to be taken forward include:

- Developing a shared Business Customer Relationship Management system; ensuring existing systems compatible
- Developing a business welcome pack to all new businesses to Sefton, issued via Business Rates to new occupiers; Kris Swift is co-ordinating with Jonathan Kearney
- Update Council tent cards-business card providing key contacts within the Council
- Ensuring Council work on Social Value is joined up and includes support for local employment and suppliers; development of Policy Action Plan and virtual team
- Developing more good news stories
- The Head of Economy and Growth is looking to develop a Design and Business Awards event in Summer 2020, Aintree Racecourse is a potential venue.

Inward Investment update

Mersey Reach

- Remediation and site preparation works are now complete, with the bund and acoustic fencing in situ.
- The main contractor has been selected and start on site will commence November 2019. Practical Completion for phase 1 is scheduled for August 2020
- There is interest in the site from a number of local businesses ranging from 20,000 - 30,000 sq ft and the team will continue to support attracting new tenants.
- Enquiries from outside of the region have also been received. InvestSefton updated Chancery Gate and their property agents on the funding programme recently announced by the CA and advised how this could support new inward investment enquiries.
- PR opportunities will be developed when appropriate in relation to commencement of works on site and the announcement of end users.
- InvestSefton have introduced Chancery Gate to Sefton@Work to agree the terms of the Employment Charter. Completion of an Employment Charter is necessary to discharge one of their planning conditions. In addition, introductions will be made to known end users for recruitment support via Sefton@work
- This scheme and Sefton's approach to Social Value (as evidenced by this development and relationships with the developer) resulted in a Sustainability award at the Institute of Economic Development.

Santander

- Santander has now received planning consent for its £75m investment at the site in Bootle. InvestSefton will continue to stay engaged with Santander to maximise the opportunity for local business and residents.
- It has facilitated a meeting with Santander's 'Breakthrough Incubator Manager, who is tasked with supporting the development of co-working/incubator space in the new building, with the University of Liverpool Partnership Director about long term skill development requirements and a further meeting was held with the University of Liverpool's Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education regarding future opportunities.

TOURISM UPDATE

Business Tourism

- At the start of the last quarter of 2019/20 we have seven confirmed events worth approximately £5.1m to the local economy, bringing in 11,110 bed nights.

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These include the National Pensioners Convention for 2020 (Approx. 800 dels over 3 days), The World Snooker Players Championships 2020 and The Oddfellows Conference 2021.

- 37 enquiries have been generated so far in this financial year, worth a potential £17.24m to the area.
- 15 events will take place over 2019/20 worth around £10.3m and generating 22,400 bed nights to the destination.
- Marketing: Committed to Confex and The Meetings Show for 2020, ongoing campaigns with Mash Media and The Delegate Wranglers, relaunch of Delegate News as Talk Southport and working towards rebrand from Southport Conferences to Meet Southport.
- SIF funding has been secured that will allow increased subvention to be offered to new and existing conferences with the aim of securing additional conferences over the next 2-3 years. The funding has also allowed a new Conference and Sales Manager post to be created.

Destination Marketing

- Autumn destination radio consisted of radio (Smooth FM and Gaydio), digital and PR. The Smooth campaign alone reached over one million people in the north west.
- Work on Visit Southport website continues to ensure it is a highly visible site on search engines. General updating and maintenance ongoing.
- The 2020 Visitor guide has been printed and delivered (50,000 copies). Distribution commences early January via mailing house fulfilment, online and direct mail promotion and displays in key high footfall sites across the north west.
- PR agency for 2020 confirmed as Fido. Meeting held 8 January re destination PR. A further meeting re event PR is to follow later this month.
- Marketing Southport current membership stands at 119, (Central 12 & Southport Bijou Cinema have joined since the last report).
- Planning is underway for a travel trade familiarisation trip in September of this year, targeting high profile / quality GTO's and coach operators.
- Targeted ads (with complimentary editorial) have been booked with coach and group travel publications including; Coach Tours UK, Group Travel World and Group Travel Today.
- Southport will be attending the British Tourism and Travel Show in March. As part of the show, we have submitted an entry for 'Coach Friendly Destination of the Year'.
- The 2020 Southport Eating Out Guide (15,000 copies) has been sent to print with delivery early January.
- Advertising sales for the Visitor Passport are underway, with the piece going to print in February – this is to support travel trade, conferences and local accommodation providers.

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Events 2020

Food and Drink Festival

- Booking forms were sent out before Christmas to Street Food vendors and Producers to attend the 2020 event.
- The closing date is the 7th February and interest has been once again overwhelming.
- Bookings will be confirmed at the end of February.

Air Show and Fireworks

- Both events are currently being reviewed and alternative ways to increase income and reduce expenditure are being looked at.
- Procurement is taking place to secure or extend contracts for both events.
- A new ticketing system is required due to the contract ending in 2019 – this is currently being procured through the Chest and the new contract should be in place by the end of January.

Borough of Culture

Illuminos - In March 2020 there will be a spectacular celebration of the Sefton Coastline, as part of the Borough of Culture programme. Using the three sites of Waterloo Town Hall (13th March), Bootle Town Hall (14th March) and The Atkinson, Southport (15th March), a trilogy of large-scale video projections will be created on consecutive nights, each a chapter in an interwoven story that connects the coastal towns and people together.

Sefton Council major event dates were announced in December.

2020 Major Events Dates

Food & Drink Festival	29 th – 31 st May
Southport Flower Show	15 th – 18 th August
Southport Air Show	11 th – 13 th September
British Musical Fireworks Championship	25 th – 27 th September

Tourism Operations

Outdoor Markets

- The Outdoor Markets enjoyed another successful year in 2019 with traders' keen to trade in Southport and Formby.
- The outdoor markets have now ceased and will resume at Easter, sooner if the weather is favourable.
- As part of the Market review the outdoors markets will be looked at to see how improvements can be made and how the markets can grow.

Seafront

- Merseyside Fire Service will be carrying out their annual training exercise on Southport Pier in the near future. They will be familiarising staff with the Pier structure, and the drills employed during an incident.
- An extensive maintenance and refurbishment programme for Kings Gardens is being developed, in preparation for the 2020 season.

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- Final works continue on the Pier as part of the Southport Coastal Community Fund, it is hoped the final phase (improved access) will be complete by summer 2020.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING UPDATE

Sefton@work General Performance Data to October 2019

Data Description	Source and Path	Range	Figures
Total Clients accessing service	Job seeker/Reg Date (adviser caseload)	Since 01/01/2016	3,801
Footfall (instances of people using Sefton@work facilities & premises)	Clients accessing service at Stanley Road	Since 01/01/2016 October 2019	33,889 648
New Clients accessing service	Job seeker/Reg Date	October 2019	119
New clients registering by age	Job seeker/Reg Date/Age range 16-24/25-49/50+	October 2019	16-24 44 25-49 54 50+ 21
Clients with Disabilities/Health Conditions	Enquiry/W2W/any status/Disability long term health/learning diff	Since 01/01/2016	980
Clients without basic skills	Enquiry/W2W/any status/without basic skills	Since 01/01/2016	1,068
People leaving support into jobs/self-emp/ or training)	All projects	Since 01/01/2016	1,195
No. of interviews with clients	Formal interview with trained adviser	Since 01/01/2016	12,831
Training attended	Training attended	Since 01/01/2016	849

Sefton@work – working with employers

Employer Engagement has continued in this period, with the main outcomes of this activity delivering the following:

- 2 additional vulnerable clients have been placed into ILMs
- 3 Routeway clients have commenced at Citizens Advice
- Emergency First training for employer delivered in conjunction with SACL
- Sector based work academy delivered with independent training provider and DWP
- 56 new opportunities have been managed in the period. These vacancies have included: Retail/Grocery Store, 2 Warehouse staff, a supply company for the Construction Industry, a Distribution company, a Furniture Outlet, wholesale Pet Food Supplies, and a Rope Access Works company (Specialist Height work for tall buildings).

Employment Engagement staff also carry out door to door marketing at this time of year particularly targeting very small employers. They have covered industrial estates throughout the borough to generate new contacts and offer recruitment/HR support packages.

Discussion have also taken place with Sandways Homes to scope out the potential for employment and skills agreements to be implemented as part of the business model.

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Section 106 employment and skills agreements

Consultations have been ongoing with Chancery Gate related to the employment and training plan and these have progressed well. The key aspect of this agreement is that the developer has not only been positive about working with us to discharge obligations in the construction phase but also has undertaken to pass identical obligations on to the end users of the project. This is invaluable for our clients.

Sefton@work has also been introduced to the McLaughlin and Harvey, the lead contractor involved in the new Sainsbury's store at Meols cop where a Section 106 employment and skills plan has been included.

Promotional Work – Thousand Stars event

As a means of celebrating the milestone of successfully placing 1000 people into jobs during the Ways to Work project in Sefton, Sefton@work is preparing an event to take place in Bootle Town Hall on February 7th 2020. Clients are currently being identified for filming. Employers will also be invited to attend in order for their contribution to be marked. Planning meetings with Comms team have been held.

STAR awards 2019

Both Sefton@work (with Invest Sefton as part of Investment and Employment) and Sefton Community Learning were nominated for STAR awards in the Chief Executives category.

Adult Community Learning Service

4.1 SACL General Service Update

	October 2019
Unique Learners	762
Enrolments	943
Attendance	87.33%
Pass Rate	99.48%
Venues	34

4.2 Test and Learn pilots

Business Ready digital skills

The Service has successfully completed a recruitment exercise and has appointed a key worker for this pilot project. Delivery arrangements are being put in place including using the facilities at Sefton@work in Bootle town centre to target job-seeking learners and devise programmes that meet employers needs.

Blended Learning pilot

A new business case is in development and will need to be agreed with the CA team. This amended delivery plan will be based on the procurement of a bespoke new learning platform and its application within a community learning setting rather than the initial plan which centred upon the appointment of a project co-ordinator.

4.3 Recruitment

An offer has now been made to appoint a new Site supervisor who will be starting 9th December 2019. This will be an important post for the service to help manage building issues which have proven problematic in the past.

4.4 Social Enterprise Support – Community Bistro

Over the last 3 months SACL has continually supported the Bistro to provide 540 free community meals.

This support has included from referring volunteers, providing Food and Hygiene courses and organising collections from staff and learners. In the period to Christmas the Service will be supporting with requests for food donations to reach a target of 90 Christmas Hampers for local families.

4.5 SIF Skills Capital Bid for Cambridge Road centre

A bid for SIF Skills Capital was developed and delivered to the LCR CA for assessment in order to meet the deadline on 31st August 2019. At its December meeting the Combined Authority approved the bid for the project, which was costed at £1.275m. Officers are expecting to receive an offer letter from the Combined Authority shortly and approvals to accept the grant will be put through the Council's systems in due course. The objective of the refurbishment of this grade 2 listed building will be to provide a modern learning environment for adults, alongside the existing Community Pantry social enterprise and accommodation for Career Connect Ltd. There may be the potential to offer space to other tenants once the project is completed. A key aspect of the project will be the upgrading of the broadband connectivity to the building in order to provide more effective and reliable digital training.

Service Continuity during the refurbishment phase will be of the utmost importance as the Community Learning Service will need to ensure that targets are met to comply with the requirements of the Adult Education Budget revenue grant.

Officers are currently making plans for service continuity and this may involve a greater emphasis placed upon outreach delivery across the Borough with minimal learning activity within the centre when contractors are onsite.

The plans are not expected to affect the operations of the SING Plus organisation, who lease a property immediately adjacent to the Cambridge Road building, but officers will undertake to inform the group about the project once timescales are confirmed.

4.6 In-house Pre-Recruitment Training Programmes

Aspiring Instructors 2020

Planning is underway to deliver a programme commencing in February 2020, with the intention that numbers on the programme should be increased. Executive Director is leading on negotiation with DWP to attract additional funding to support this, having been delayed by the general election. The programme for 2020 will benefit from some administrative support supplied through Localities and will target local residents who wish to gain employment in the Leisure, tourism, outdoor education and sports sectors. Community Learning will provide several key inputs during the 16 week course including presentation skills, team working, health and safety etc. Any additional funding from DWP will be used to cover certification and licensing costs associated with specialist coaching qualifications not available through Community Learning.

The Aspiring Instructors programme has been highly successful over the years and has transformed many peoples lives who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to participate in this area of work, many of whom were living with adverse health issues , complex barriers, low skills, poor self-esteem or simply felt they were too old for such an intense programme of activity. While many graduates of the programme have progressed to work within the Council, others have gained employment with notable employers in the fitness, sports and specialist tourism industries. Others, having gained from the confidence and qualifications from the

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course have changed direction and found employment in a wide variety of occupational sectors.

Working with our Partners at DWP and MerseyCare, our Aspiring Instructors Course for 2019 was nominated and for the iNetworks Awards Ceremony and won the 'Changing Lives through Opportunities' Award which was given at a ceremony in London.

4.7 Green Sefton Employment Pathway

Sefton@work and Community Learning have been working with Green Sefton to devise a pre-recruitment package for local residents wishing to access employment in land management, horticultural skills and other aspects of work undertaken through Green Sefton. The programme commences with an open day, where Green Sefton will provide information sessions to pre-screened Sefton@work clients who have expressed a preference for this kind of work. Community Learning will provide a number of sessions related to key workplace behaviours, health and safety awareness etc. Sessions will also be held to outline the Council's recruitment process followed by support with application and interview techniques. Clients who progress satisfactorily will have access to a guaranteed job interview with Green Sefton. This is being run as a trial project and an evaluation report with lessons learned will be produced once completed.

5. NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service

5.1 September Guarantee

Work on this year's September Guarantee has taken place and based on last year's % figures, the following have been achieved:

The number of Year 11 pupils with an 'offer' recorded for this year is 98.5% which is a 0.1% increase from 2018.

The number of Year 12 with an 'offer' recorded is for this year is 95.4% which is a 0.7% increase from 2018.

5.2 NEET and Not Known

Academic Age 16-17

The combined NEET and Not Known figure has been reduced by 9.54%.

NEET has been reduced by 0.74% and Not Known by 8.80%.

EET has improved by 9.54%

Academic Age 16-18

NEET has been reduced by 1.03% and Not Known by 3.26%.

EET has improved by 4.27%

In addition, the number of 16-17 young people entering learning opportunities has increased by 10.08% and by 5.06% for 18 year olds.