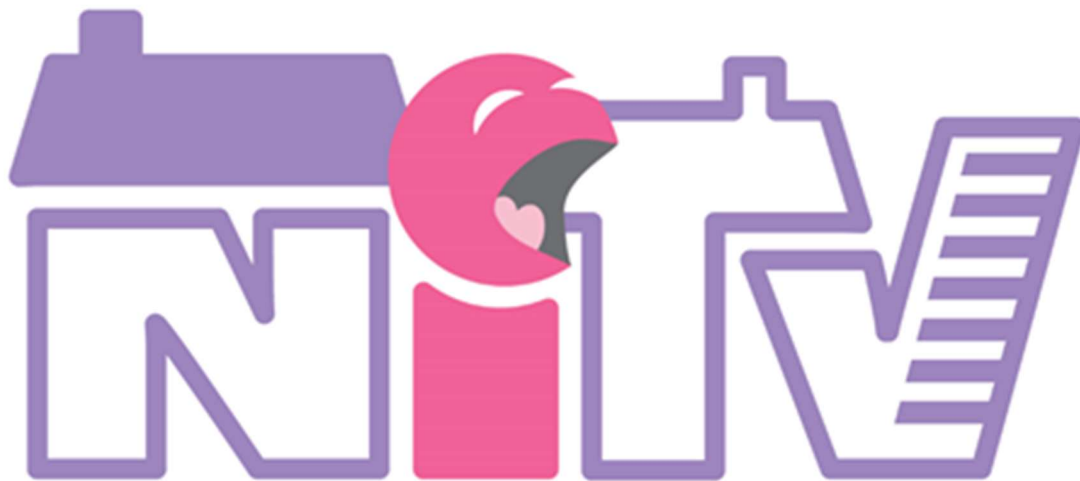


# Allocations and Lettings Policy Consultation

Report January 2023



**NEWCASTLE INDEPENDENT  
TENANT VOICE**

Empowering Tenants and Leaseholders, making a difference to real lives

# Report Recommendations

1.

- Allocation and letting's policy should be representative of all people especially those with physical and mental disabilities. Care should be given when changing the policy to include needs for those who require additional support such as carers or specialist equipment.

2.

- The views and concerns of customers must be at the centre of the policy and proposed changes if a greater level of customer satisfaction is to be achieved.

3

- Continue to build on best practice to improve the customers experience and expectation when applying for social housing. Make it a quicker and easier process.

4.

- More emphasis is required when housing people with mental health issues to ensure fairness, equality and satisfaction.

5.

- Staff development for officers to help them support tenants with mental health issues and other protected characteristics. This will help remove barriers for those trying to access social housing and will meet the needs of the applicant.

6.

- Report to be distributed to NCC departments and appropriate working groups

7.

- More communication by developing opportunities for tenants and customers to have informal discussions, share issues, concerns, and ideas with FHU and YHN officers.

8.

- Continue to protect the rights of the most vulnerable customers by ensuring staff have the right tools, knowledge, training, and expertise to provide a consistent and effective service for customers.

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# Section 1

## Introduction

### Purpose

Newcastle City Council (NCC) are planning to make changes to the way they allocate their social housing across the city. Newcastle Independent Tenants Voice (NITV) have been commissioned to engage with residents and service users to find out their views and opinions about the proposed changes to the current Allocations and Lettings policy.

### The context of this engagement was to:

- Operate independently of Newcastle City Council and analyse data, responses.
- Understand what the users think about the changes to the Allocations and Lettings Policy.
- Understand what users like and dislike about the Succession policy and if changes are needed.

### Background

Each year the Fairer Housing Unit (FHU) produces a review of the demand and supply of social housing in Newcastle. The purpose of this current engagement is to help identify housing trends which informs changes required to policy and procedures. The FHU would like to engage through NITV as part of this process to help determine the following:

- The city's Allocation Policy and processes.
- To help identify any improvements for customers.
- To help identify any emerging policy issues.

The Allocations and Lettings policy is a key part of the jigsaw to delivering changes to the way in which social housing is accessed in Newcastle as it lays the foundations for the allocation of social housing in Newcastle.

As a landlord NCC's duties are set out under Part 6 Housing Act 1996 which states that local authorities have a legal duty to have an allocation scheme which determines priorities for the allocation of accommodation and the procedures that must be followed. All Councils have this duty, even those that no longer hold stock. The legal duty lies with NCC while our arms-length management organisation, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) is responsible for the delivery of the service to residents.

A housing authority allocates accommodation when it:

- ✓ selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by that authority.
- ✓ nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority.
- ✓ nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a private registered provider (or registered social landlord in Wales) ([section 159\(2\)](#)).

**“After living in my home for 20 odd years if I died my son who has lived with me since he was born 17 years ago should not have to leave our home”**

**“I think you need to look at personal circumstances regarding children's disabilities when banding, as some families are in crisis and are not given the help”**

### **Drivers for change:**

- Newcastle City Council Allocations and Lettings Policy was last reviewed in 2017.
- There has been changes to legal duties and incorporating new legislation and statutory Codes of Guidance that have been introduced (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017).
- To improve the customer experience and make the policy easier to understand by customers and staff leading to fairness, consistency, and transparency.
- Increased demand for social housing.
- Changes to the needs of customers and pressures on the Housing Revenue Account.
- Removing barriers to customers accessing housing that they need
- Considering the new regulatory framework that is being introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Meeting the new obligations for social landlords in terms of fire and building safety with the introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Bill.

### **As part of the consultation the following key areas were identified to explore:**

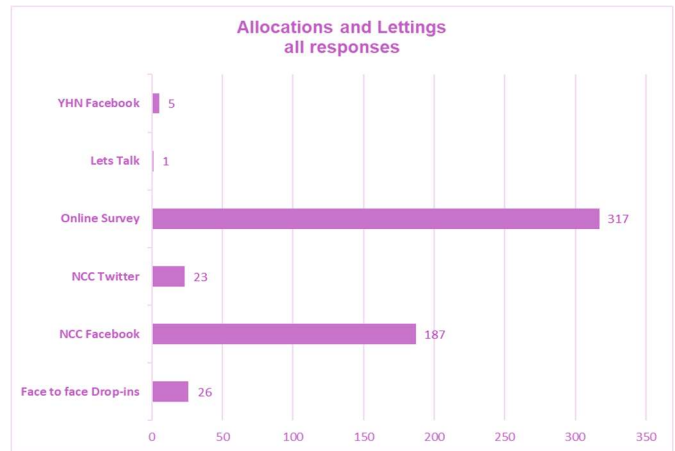
- Comments about the proposed changes to the policy
- Whether changes would be unfair to people with protected characteristics
- People's experience of applying for council housing
- The application processes

# Section 2

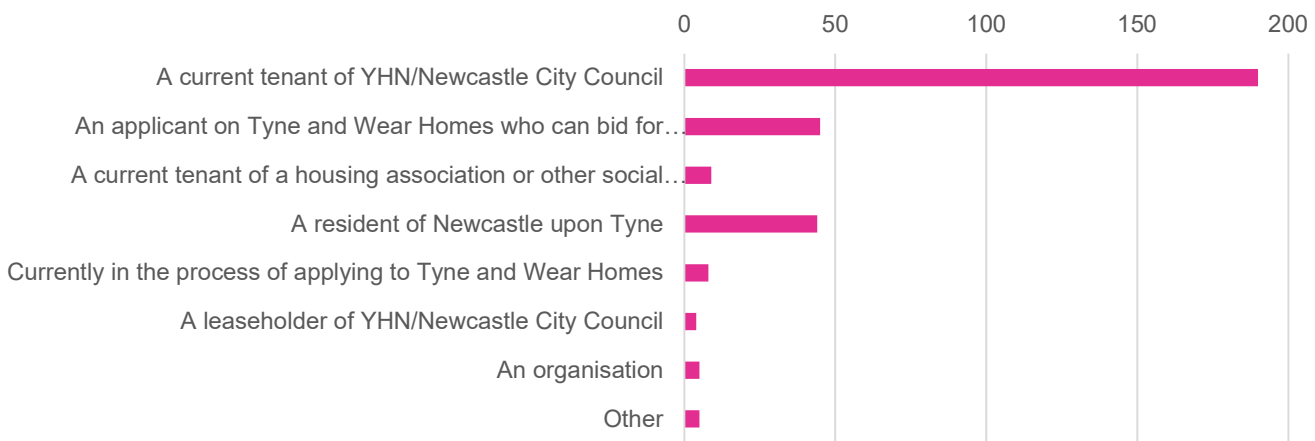
## Engagement Activities

The engagement activities carried out for this consultation have successfully resulted in the following:

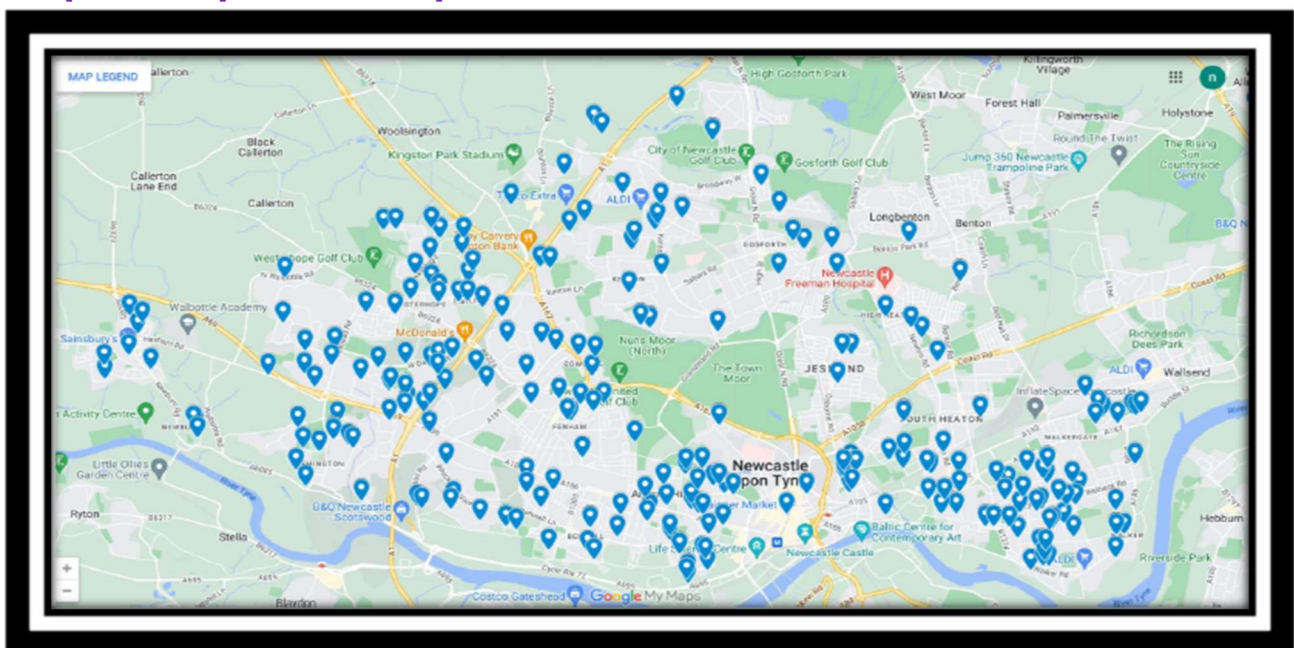
- 317 submitted questionnaires
- 187 Facebook comments
- 26 people attended our face-to-face drop-in sessions across the city
- 23 Twitter comments
- 5 YHN Facebook
- 1 Lets Talk comment



### Who engaged with us?



### Map of respondents' postcodes



**17%** of the people engaging with us said they lived in the NE6 area of the city. This is Walker, Heaton, Byker, Walkergate, and St Anthony's area of the city and is east of the city centre.

**61%** of the people were tenants and **2%** were representing an organisation.

**15%** of the people engaging with us had applied to Tyne and Wear Homes and were waiting to be allocated a property.

**51%** of participants had applied for a property in the last 12 months and nearly half of the participants had a long-term health condition.

**“Most of these changes seem like they will be good for people applying for homes”**

**“I think it definitely needs updating as I have been on the bidding scheme since 2015 and still no further forward”**

### **Most comments received**

We received the highest number of comments about the proposed changes to priority bands, **60** people responded. This was followed by **48** people sharing comments about the bidding for properties process.

# Section 3

## Discussion and findings for the proposed changes to policies and procedures from online forms

### 2.1 MAXIMUM INCOME

#### Maximum income

**Current policy:** You cannot apply to join the housing register if you earn over £50,000 a year.

**Proposed change:** Remove the income limit so the amount you earn will not stop you applying to join the housing register.

**Why we are proposing this change:** The current rule does not consider people's circumstances and what their outgoings might be. For example, you may have high living costs or a lot of people who depend on you. Some applicants may have a high income but not be able to afford to rent privately or buy a house. Removing this rule allows everyone the opportunity to apply for housing that they can afford.

#### Discussion and findings

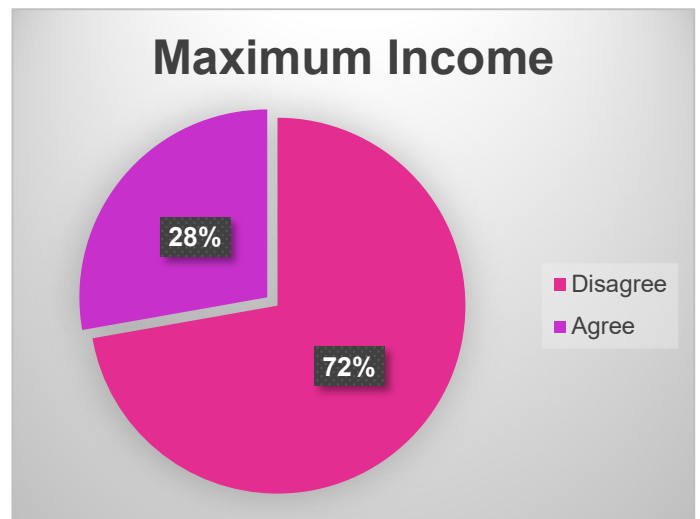
- 18 People responded
  - 13 Disagree
  - 5 Agree

Participants told us not to remove the income limit as they felt that social housing should be for people who need affordable housing especially those on low income and those who are vulnerable.

#### Participants told us:

“The proposal about maximum income seems fair and reasonable”

“The removal of the income amount is a good idea; I don't think people who earn higher wages should be able to apply for social housing”





## 2.2 LIMIT ON ASSETS

### Limit on assets

**Current policy:** If you own assets worth over £100,000 you can only join the housing register in special circumstances. Assets include any property you own such as your house, savings and investments.

**Proposed change:** Remove the £100,000 figure and consider people's individual circumstances. Homeowners would only be allowed to join the register in special circumstances such as if they are unable to afford the housing they need.

**Why we are proposing this change:** This rule can stop older people from applying for housing with care or sheltered accommodation even if they are experiencing difficulties living in their own home. The change will allow us to consider individual circumstances.

### Discussions and findings

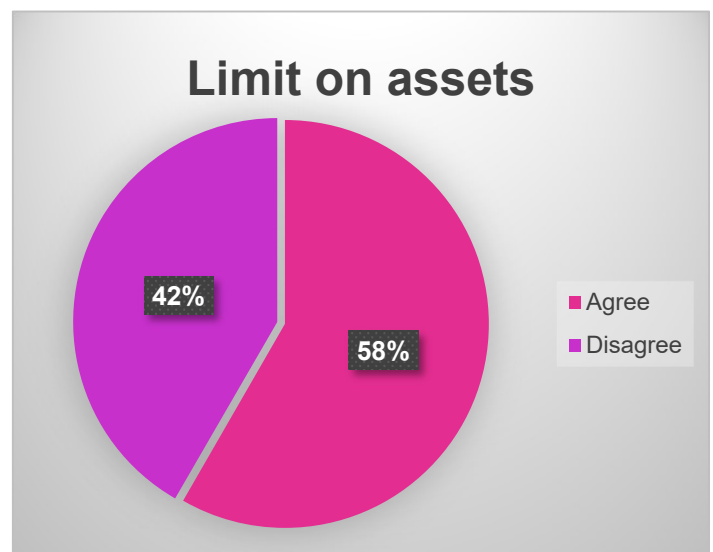
- 13 People responded
  - 8 Agree
  - 5 Disagree

Most participants told us that the limit should be removed. More emphasis should be given to **“care and consideration into individual circumstances when people are moving into assisted living or sheltered accommodation, especially when social housing is in high demand.”**

### Participants told us:

“Council housing is in short supply and should be kept for people who need affordable social housing, keep the income and asset limit”

“I would be pleased if the assets restrictions were removed. I live in an anchor housing property which is badly maintained. I look with envy at the council block across the road, but I was turned down for a property, because I own a draughty, miserable flat”



## 2.3 COUNCIL AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

### Council and housing association tenants

**Current policy:** You can apply to join the housing register on the same day you move into a council or housing association home.

**Proposed change:** Council and housing association tenants would need to live in their home for a year before joining the housing register. This won't apply if you are assessed as needing to move, for example if you need to move for medical reasons.

**Why we are proposing this change:** This rule will help save money. On average it costs the council £2,800 every time a tenant moves house. This reduces the amount of money available for improvements to other houses. We think it is reasonable for tenants who don't have a housing need to live in their property for at least a year before they apply to join the housing register.

### Discussion and findings

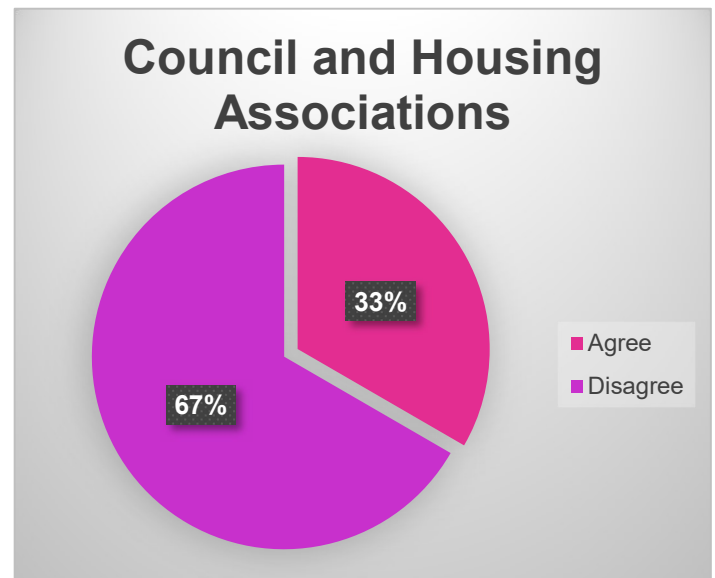
- **9 People responded**
  - **6 Disagree**
  - **3 Agree**

Those who participated in this question told us that the new proposal could leave tenants in vulnerable housing situations eg: **“located in an area experiencing high levels of crime or anti-social behaviour, and they would still have to endure their tenancy for a minimum of a year, this would be detrimental to their health and wellbeing”**.

#### Participants told us:

“The amount of waiting time to move should be reviewed, especially when there are medical reasons”

“I agree, one could accept a property out of necessity to escape homelessness but know already that is not suitable in the long term”



## 2.4 PEOPLE FACING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

### People facing financial difficulties

**Current policy:** You can't join the housing register if you have a Debt Relief Order or Bankruptcy Order that includes a housing debt to the council. This includes rent arrears and money owed for damage to property.

**Proposed change:** Remove the above rule and allow people to apply to the housing register if they have a Debt Relief Order or Bankruptcy Order that includes a housing debt owed to the council.

**Why we are proposing this change:** You can only get a Bankruptcy Order or Debt Relief Order if you get professional debt advice to help resolve your financial problems. We think it is reasonable to allow people who are getting professional help and taking steps to address their debts to join the housing register.

### Discussion and findings

- 14 People responded
  - 12 Agree
  - 2 Disagree

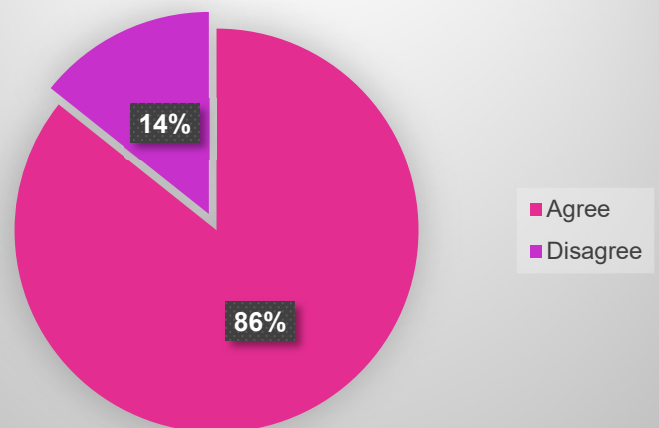
Most people who took part in this question said the new proposals would allow people to have more housing stability and security. People thought if a person is seeking professional help to reform their debts/finances and you can provide evidence of this, you should be offered another chance on the housing register.

### Participants told us:

“Seems fair and reasonable”

“Yes, I agree but if someone has caused deliberate damage to a council house, they should not be allowed to get another for a certain amount of time”

### People facing financial difficulties



■ Agree  
■ Disagree

## 2.5 REFUSING A HOME

### Refusing a home

**Current policy:** If you refuse a property this will be considered as part of the review of any priority banding that you have and could result in you losing your priority band.

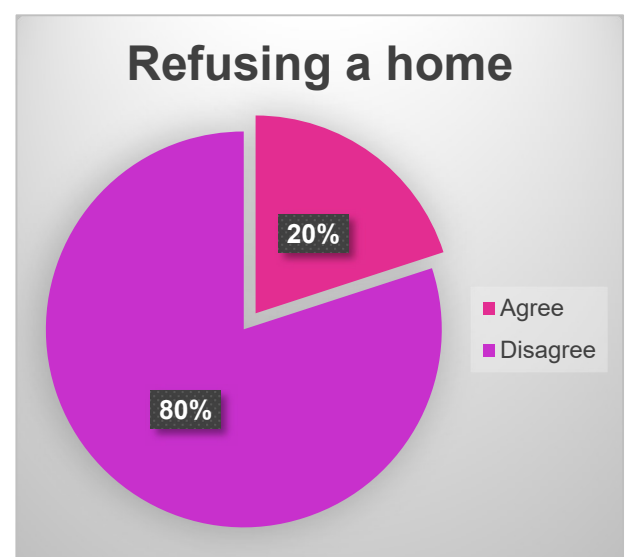
**Proposed change:** In addition to the current policy, if you refuse three suitable homes you will not be able to bid for properties for 12 months.

**Why we are proposing this change:** Council housing is in high demand. Refusing a suitable property costs the council time and money. It could also mean someone else will need to wait longer before they are offered a home. The rule won't apply if the property you refused is not suitable for your needs. For example, if it has steps that you can't climb.

### Discussions and findings

- **20 People responded**
  - **16 Disagree**
  - **4 Agree**

Many of the people who responded to this question said this would not support people who are vulnerable, in need of social housing and have no other choice. This creating more homelessness and a backlog in supported accommodation, how would this effect an applicant who bids for 6 months and unable to find a home due to limited housing stock.



### Participants told us:

Council housing is in high demand, therefore, just because the Council deems properties as 'suitable' for tenant does not mean the tenant will agree. For example, a vulnerable member of the community being forced to take a one-bedroom flat as they have already refused two previous properties. The proposed property maybe located in an area of high crime or antisocial behaviour. There is a current cost of living crisis, stagnant wages and a mental health epidemic and these proposed changes would further exasperate the mental health of Newcastle City Council tenants and the community.

"I have some concerns around this item in the policy change 'refusing a property'. My professional experience of supporting my patients as they sought a new tenancy was that the process did not always capture very well their housing needs, leaving them in the situation of feeling they had no alternative other than to refuse offers of properties which did not meet their actual needs.

## 2.6 GOOD TENANT STATUS

### Good Tenant Status

**Current policy:** Council tenants can achieve 'Good Tenant Status' if they maintain their home to a certain standard and don't breach their tenancy agreement. Tenants who achieve this can be awarded Band B: Urgent Priority if they want to move home.

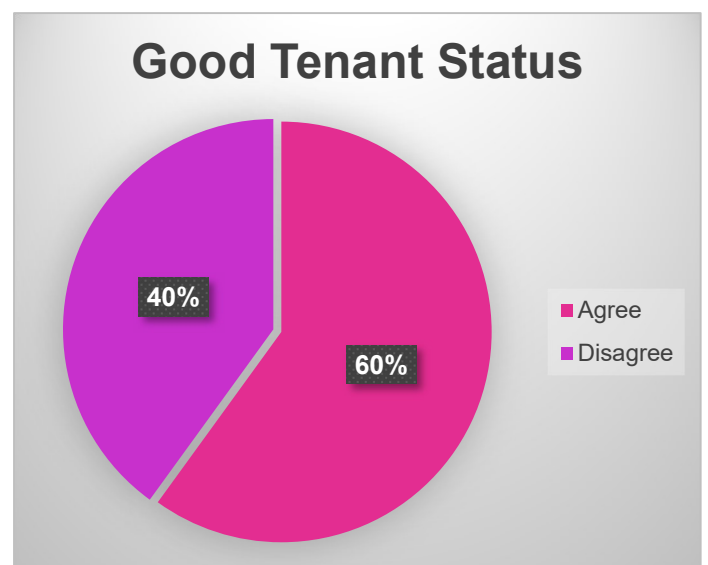
**Proposed change:** Change the policy so tenants who achieve Good Tenant Status who want to move will be awarded Band C: Moderate Need. The award will be for six months, the same as other Band C applicants.

**Why we are proposing this change:** Changing this rule will let us help people who need to move home really quickly. For example, if you need to move for a medical reason or because you are fleeing domestic abuse.

### Discussions and findings

- 10 People responded
  - 6 Agree
  - 4 Disagree

Participants told us they understand the need to award good behaviour and the changes clarifies administration and enhances discretionary powers. However, existing good behaviour tenants would find it difficult to move to a new home as it would not be priority. New build properties should be offered to existing good tenants.



### Participants told us:

“Consideration for other tenants that have lived in their homes for a long time”

“Please do background checks before allocating houses/flats to people. I have been living in a council flat for nearly 8 years now and had issues with neighbours who were causing problems for others such as making noise and anti-social behaviour”

## 2.7 REQUESTING A REVIEW

### Requesting a review

**Current policy:** If you appeal a decision, the first stage is for the officer who made the decision to look at it again.

**Proposed change:** When we receive an appeal a more senior office will review the original decision.

**Why we are proposing this change:** Removing the first stage will make the review process shorter and quicker for customers who are waiting for the decision. This proposed change is based on customer feedback.

### Discussions and findings

- **6 People responded**
  - **4 Agree**
  - **2 Disagree**

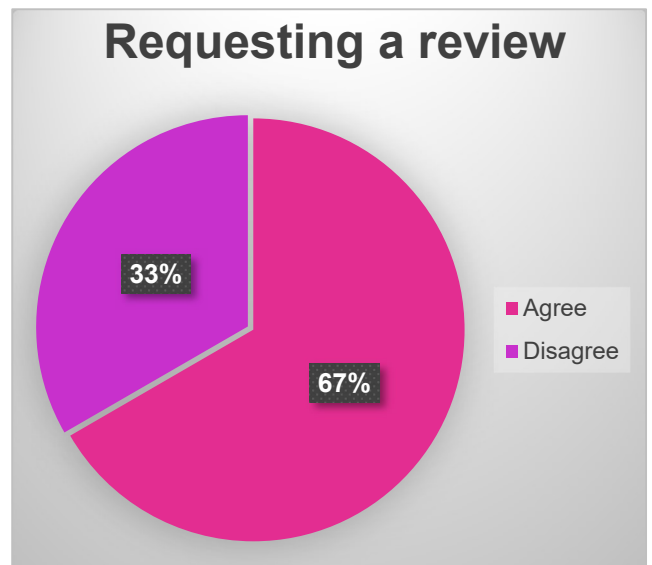
Those who responded to this question believe the proposed changes to the review system may help to speed up the process and could help to reduce stress and anxiety for people when waiting for a decision.

### Participants told us:

“This is a welcome change”

“Something needs to change, I've been waiting on the housing list for almost a year, also I got stuck in the lift where I live, and the service charge is £16 per week which is absolutely disgraceful.

I've asked the council to move me as I am extremely anxious about using the lifts now but have had no help, it's like im a prisoner in this block of flats”



## 2.8 REDUCED PRIORITY

### Reduced priority

**Current policy:** A 'local connection' means you live, work or have family in the city. If you don't have a local connection to Newcastle, you will automatically be awarded Band D: General Needs.

**Proposed change:** People who don't have a local connection to Newcastle will have their housing needs assessed. If they qualify for Bands A, B or C they will be awarded a new 'Reduced Priority' band.

**Why we are proposing this change:** We have reviewed our legal duties to people who have a housing need. We must award some level of priority to applicants with specific housing needs even if they don't have a local connection to Newcastle. The 'Reduced Priority' banding will allow us to meet this legal duty and give a people with a local connection higher priority.

### Discussions and findings

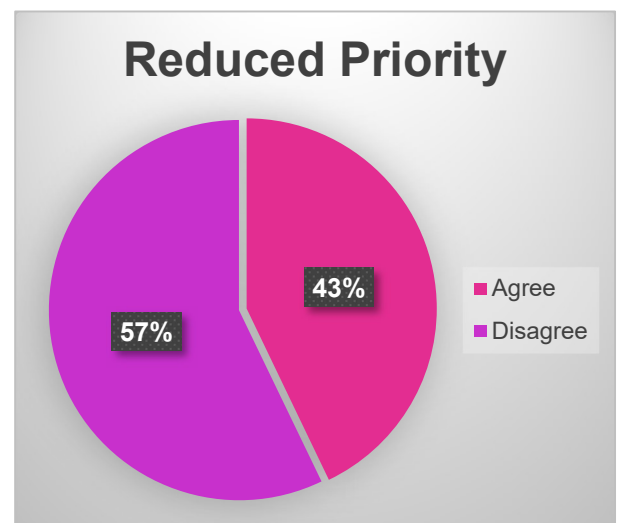
- **7 People responded**
  - **4 Disagree**
  - **3 Agree**

People responding to this proposal told us, due to lack of support in the past with very long waiting times in finding a home, said this would not benefit anyone. Comments were also made about the difficulty parents have in applying for a home when they have shared custody of their children.

### Participants told us:

"I'm a parent that recently split from my partner. Due to my working hours, we decided that our children would stay with their dad. I couldn't apply for a council house even though my children stay at my house almost every weekend"

"I'm a single man living in a 3 bedroomed semi on my own in Dinnington, for a very long time. I've wanted to move into a 2-bedroom bungalow on Beach Avenue which has a moderate garden. I am classified as disabled living on benefits. If your policies change, I have better opportunities"



## 2.9 HOMELESSNESS

### Homelessness

**Current policy:** People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness can be awarded one of four bands. The council's Housing Advice Centre assesses these applicants and awards the band.

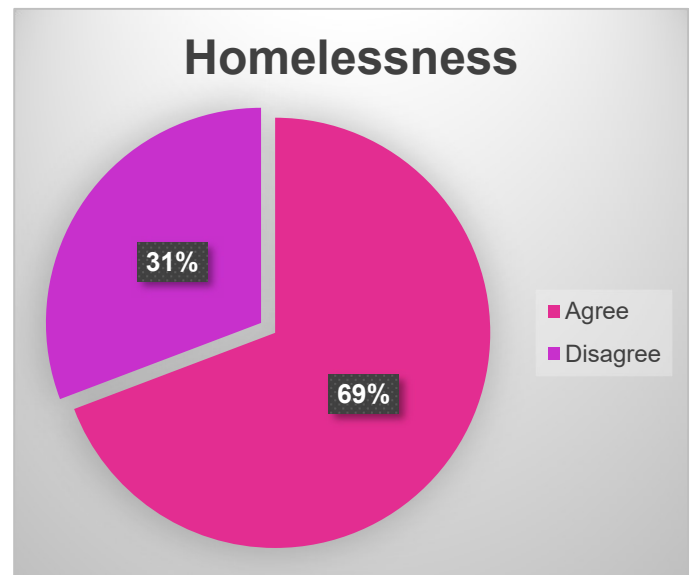
**Proposed change:** Introduce a new additional Band B: Urgent award and amend the existing Band C: Medium award. People at risk of homelessness would be awarded Band B: Urgent earlier.

**Why we are proposing this change:** These changes will make how we meet our legal obligations, as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, clearer and improve the way applicants are re-housed. This will reduce the risk of people in crisis needing to be housed in emergency accommodation.

### Discussions and findings

- **13 People responded**
  - **9 Agree**
  - **4 Disagree**

The majority told us this will better support homeless people and give them a voice to be heard in the system, whilst benefitting people who have a high need for housing. They also told us Sheltered Accommodation is being utilised to house people who are homeless, and this is changing the way people are allocated properties.



### Participants told us:

"I'm not sure it's true the way you shortlist people as I have been bidding for a full year with a small child. Due to homelessness"

"This makes sense as long as needs are genuinely taken into consideration and 'heard'. For example, if a vulnerable person or refugee who has experienced trauma is offered housing where they know there are social problems which would make them at risk, they must be heard. If someone is not heard, they are a risk of becoming homeless or huge mental health decline"



## 2.10 SUCCESSIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND DISCRETIONARY TENANCIES

### Successions, assignments and discretionary tenancies

**Current policy:** Spouses, civil partners, cohabitants and certain family members can inherit a council tenancy in certain circumstances. This is called succession. This applies to children under 16 and people who would not normally be able to join the housing register due to their behaviour. This can lead to complex legal issues.

**Proposed change:** For tenancies that started after 1 April 2012 only spouses, civil partners and cohabitants will have an automatic right to succeed. Other family members can benefit from a 'Discretionary Tenancy' if they meet certain conditions. Succession rights for tenancies that began before 1 April 2012 won't change.

**Why we are proposing this change:** Major legislative changes to succession were introduced in the Localism Act 2011 which need to be considered in our Successions Policy which has not been updated since 2010. The proposed changes will prevent the complex legal issue that can arise if a child under 16 inherits a tenancy. We will also be able to consider the behaviour of family members, in the same way as any other applicant for social housing, before awarding them a tenancy. The majority of family members will still be awarded a tenancy and allowed to remain in their home.

### Discussions and findings

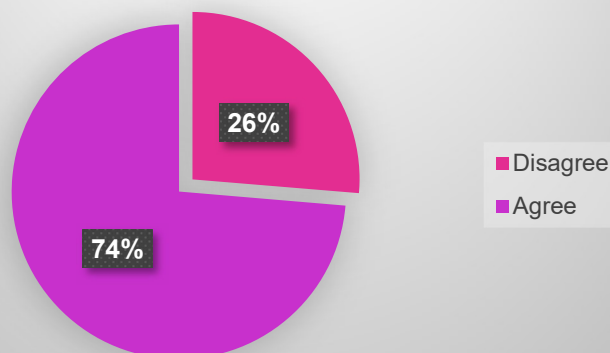
- **22 People responded**
  - **14 Agree**
  - **8 Disagree**

Many participants said that family members should have the right to succeed a tenancy and remain in their home. Concerns were raised about children under 16 and the rights of the child.

#### Participants told us:

"I believe the successions policy must change. I am physically disabled live in a high rise flat and waiting to change my current location to more suitable accommodation. However, I have had no luck due to ground floor flats / bungalows goes to successions"

### Successions, assignments, discretionary tenancies



"There should be a right to succession for family who have lived in the property"

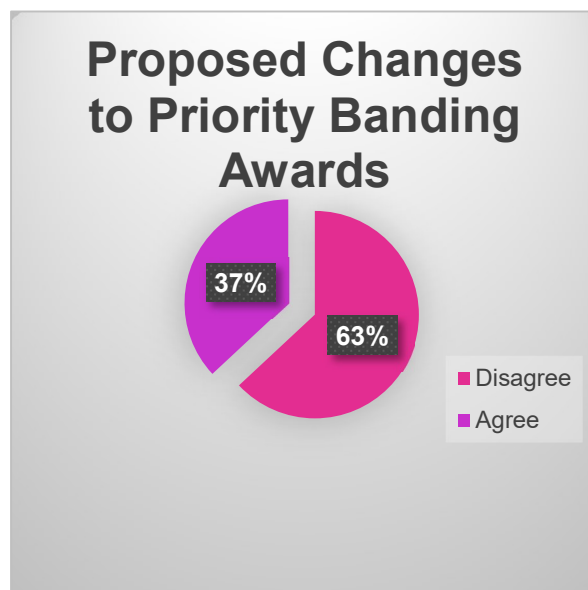
### 3 PROPOSED CHANGES TO PRIORITY BANDING AWARDS

#### Discussions and findings

- 46 People responded
  - 29 Disagree
  - 17 Agree

Most people **disagree** with the changes to proposed priority bands as those who have responded, feel the banding system is unfair and does not support those people who are most in need for example:

- Vulnerable people with disabilities
- Those who have been waiting for years for a home
- The homeless
- Homes that are overcrowded
- The long-term effects this has on peoples mental and physical health



“I have been bidding for well over 5 years and getting nowhere. I had to appeal twice before the council looked at my application and upgraded my band from D to B.

This was done because I pay my rent on-time and not because of the issues I have had with my neighbour downstairs intimidating my 7-year-old or the fact he is under CYPs and needs a home where he feels safe and calm. I have had 2 cases with the safe living team and have been advised to keep a diary in case they open a third.

I have been told that I will be at the bottom of band B even though I have already been on the list for over 5 years. I have written to my MP about this situation”

“I think you need to look at personal circumstances regarding children’s disabilities when banding, as some families are in crisis and are not given help they are entitled to by law”

#### 4 GENERAL HOUSING NEEDS

This band will replace current Band D. People who do not qualify for Bands A to D will be awarded this band.

One participant told us: *“I currently come under category D which is apparently not a desperate situation, yet I have been sleeping on a sofa for now 5 months I work for Newcastle City Council have to travel numerous miles to get to work yet every bid I make never hear back so I think your policies need to be changed”.*

Another participant told us: *“there are no bands that relate to financial difficulty/affordability as a result of the Welfare Reforms (Ben Cap). We have worked with a number of residents who have rent arrears due to this and are not able to move to more affordable accommodation because of the rent arrears so are trapped in an unaffordable property”.*

## Section 4

# Equality Act

Overall, **63% agree** the proposals meet with the Equality's Act, however **37% disagree** as they believe there are gaps and further reasoning and thought is required for the following types of circumstances:

- People who are not in good health and have a priority need due to terminal illnesses should be considered with the utmost priority.
- Consideration given to people who have protected characteristics such as autism and who require time to adjust to their surroundings.
- Awareness of disabled children sharing a bedroom and the effects it has on them.
- How the proposed changes could reduce the fairness of succession to some people eg: if they are in non-standard partnering relationships eg: same sex, transgender or polyamorous partnerships which have not been recognised by a ceremony or in law, but which are considered by the participants to be equal to standard marriage.

**“Only thing unfair is that support workers will re-home or gain tenancies for their clients without the properties even being listed or in some cases empty”**

## Description and overview of responses for the Equalities Act

### Summary of customer opinions on all proposals

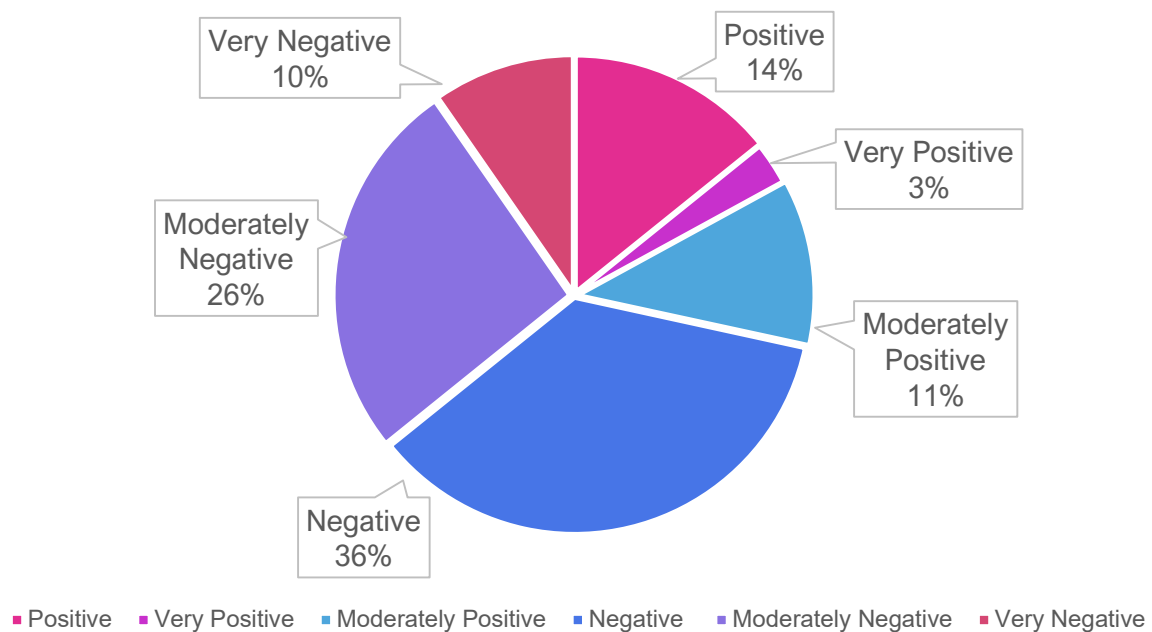
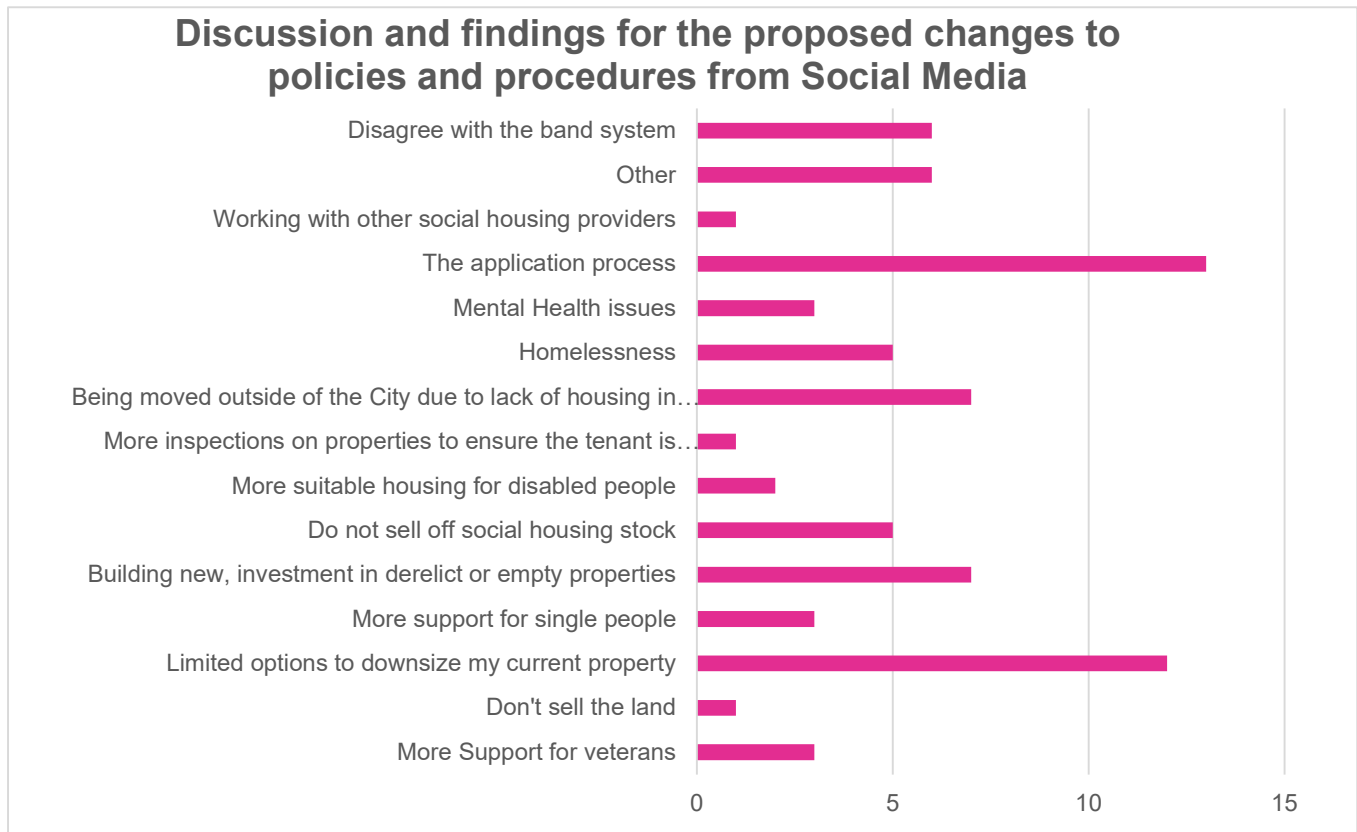


Chart was generated by NVIVO Software differentiating between positive and negative comments from the consultation

# Section 5

## Social Media

### Comments received via social media



People on social media made comments which were not based on the survey questions. Those using the social media platforms generated their own discussions after NCC shared promotional information about the online survey and drop-in events.

Most people who commented via social media **disagreed** with the proposed changes to the policy. The current application process continues to create frustration with people trying to apply for a 'council house'. **"It's not fair when you're up at midnight waiting for new properties. Something has to be done about it. My daughter is on her own with two babies, has mental health issues and can get nowhere (a suitable property) with them"**. Another person said, **"I've been on the housing list for 3 years and 6 months and still no further forward with moving, the whole allocation process needs to be changed"**.

Lack of available properties and lack of investment in new housing stock is another issue of concern. Many comments such as **"people need to downsize for much needed properties for families"** and in contrast people commented **"I was willing to give my 3-bedroom house up for a bungalow but was told I would be put in a high rise"**.

# Section 6

## Case studies and face to face drop-ins

Drop ins were planned cross the city and were well attended by residents and professionals.

In general, the drop ins provided any opportunity for people to share in detail their views regarding the proposed changes to the Allocations and Letting Policy.

### Case Study 1: Drop-In

#### Good Tenant Status



Drop in at West End Library/Community Hub

#### 1. Setting the scene

- A number of residents spoke to us about anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood.
- These behaviours impacted on children.
- People are too frightened to sleep at night due to neighbours anti-social behaviour.

#### 2. Barriers

- Recording the ASD behaviour as the tenant behaving inappropriately often moves out of the property for a few days and YHN close the case.
- YHN officers failing to attend meetings at the properties on the correct day and time.
- Residents felt they had complained so many times that YHN aren't taking this problem seriously.

#### 5. Solution

- 'Value your good, hard working tenants'.
- 'The council needs to take in hand tenants issues and ASK YHN what they are doing about it'.
- Understand circumstances are relative to the situation.

#### 4 Resident activity

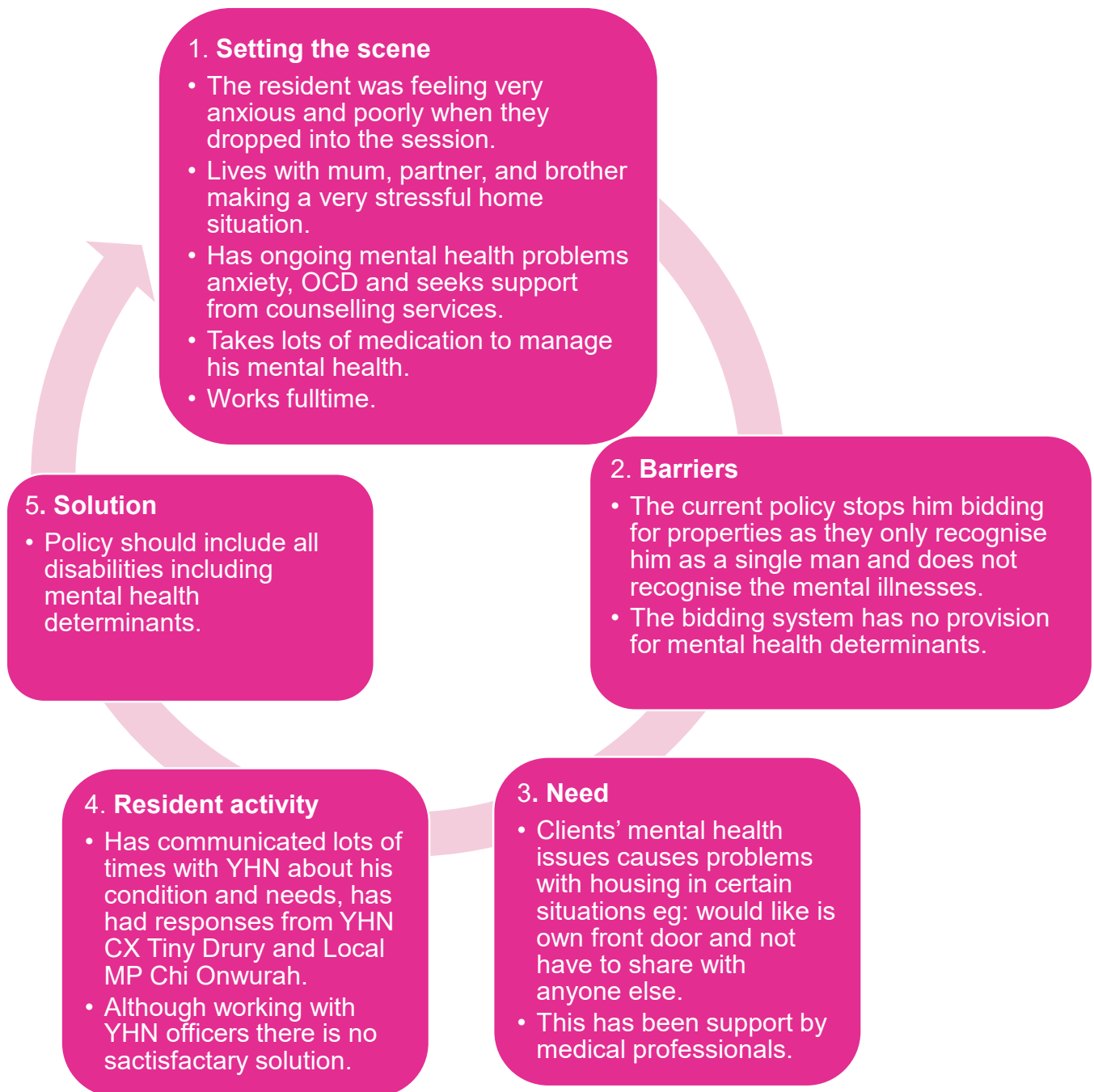
- Has communicated with YHN about the situation.
- Has taken time off work to meet with YHN Officers who failed to attend the meeting.

#### 3. Need

- YHN to consider duty of care to children and vulnerable adults.
- 'I want YHN officers to take my situation seriously and listen to my concerns'.

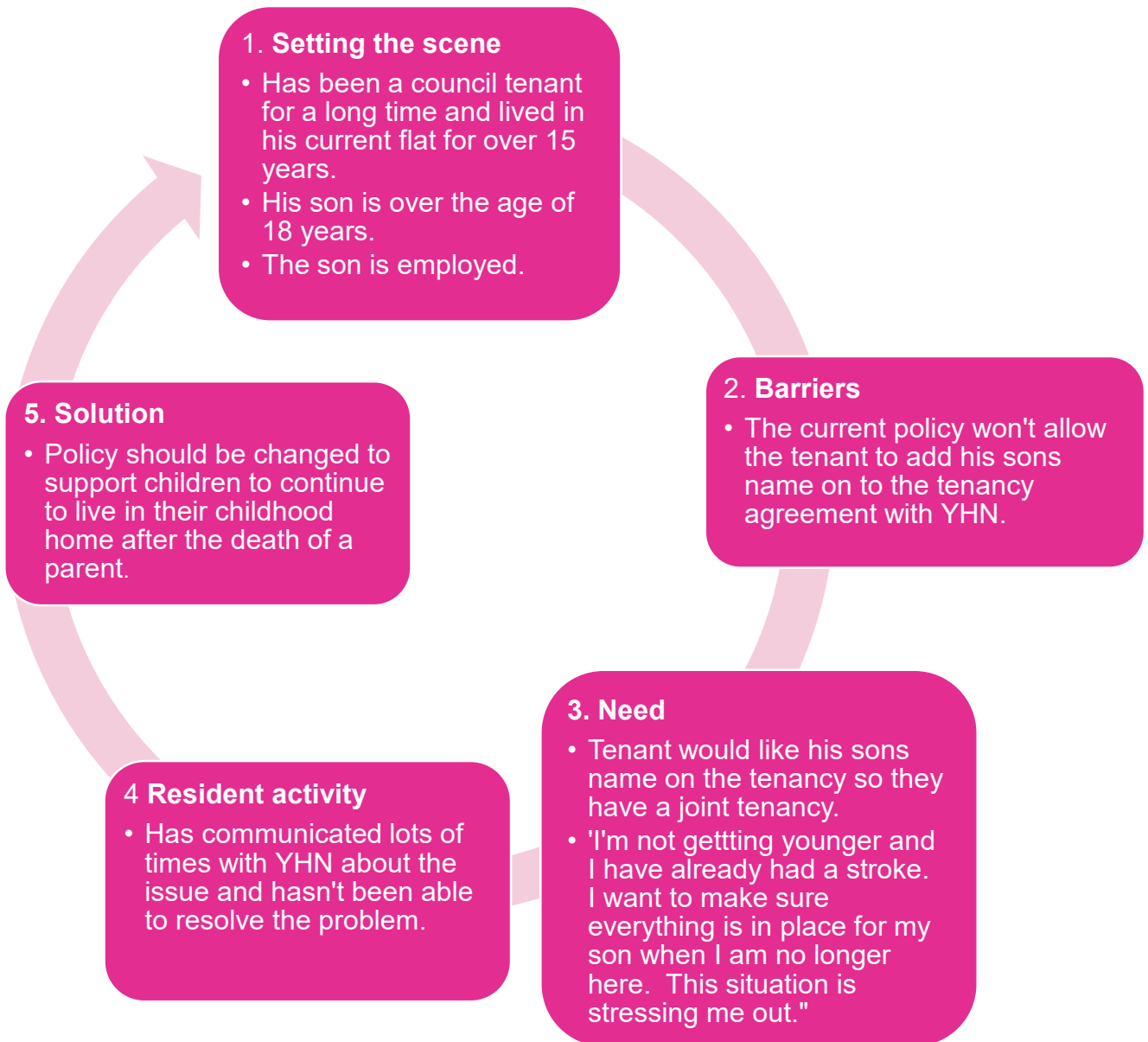
## Case Study 2: Drop In

### Inequalities: Mental Health



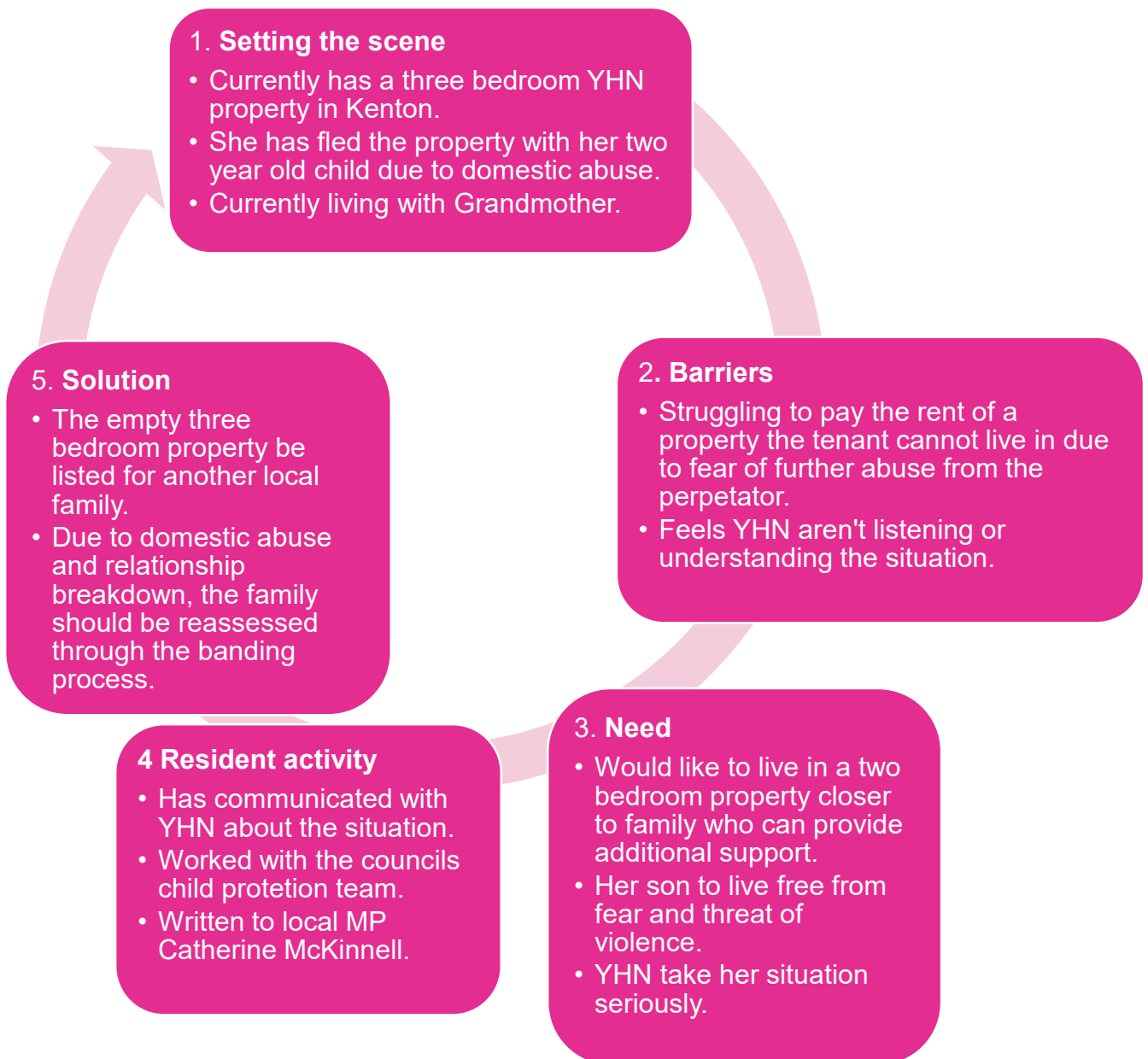
## Case Study 3: Drop In

### Succession, assignments, and discretionary tenancies



## Case Study 4: Drop In

### Homelessness: Domestic Abuse





## Section 7

# Social Housing in Newcastle - Comments

Most people responding to the survey, used this opportunity to tell us about general concerns, views and issues regarding their experience of social housing in Newcastle. This information does not respond directly to the consultation, however, important to understand customer feedback. We received a total of **171** comments about the following categories:

- \* Affordability checks \*
- \* Domestic violence \*
- \* Equality \*
- \* Mental/physical health \*
- \* New tenants \*
- \* Religion \*
- \* Selective licensing \*
- \* bidding for properties, housing list \*
- \* empty properties \*
- \* general comments \*
- \* miscellaneous \*
- \* property exchange \*
- \* rent increases \*
- \* sub-letting \*



Many people said they were frustrated at the lack of progress or communication within the following areas:

- Reporting problems with antisocial behaviour from neighbours
- Unable to get their needs met in terms of appropriate accommodation
- Lack of communication:
  - Regarding any properties becoming available
  - Hearing back from YHN officers about reports regarding concerns or problems
- Time spent on waiting lists
- Lack of investment in empty properties

## DATA AND COMMENTS RAISED AROUND SOCIAL HOUSING

### The application process (bidding for properties)

**24%** of the comments said they have or are on the waiting list and have been for a very long time without any success (8 years). The system is difficult, complicated and time consuming with few results, often affecting people's mental health and wellbeing at a difficult time in their life when searching for a home. Eligibility, limits peoples housing options causing problems as social housing is in very high demand. One customer told us that ***“they are in desperate need of a property due to domestic violence from an ex-partner and who won't take no for an answer and damaging my parents' house, the customer was advised to keep bidding every week until they get a property, even though there are lots of empty properties”***.

### Mental health issues (physical disabilities)

**33%** of respondents commented on how the policy is not representative of those who suffer with mental and physical health issues. One person told us ***“I am unable to afford the new costs so will end up homeless, by then it will be too late for my autistic 3-year-old who needs time to adjust to new surroundings and not just sofa surfing”***. Reference was also raised regarding 'bedroom allocation criteria' and how currently the system does not support an 'adult carer' who is providing care to another adult who cannot manage without their support due to illness, frailty, physical disability, mental health or drug and alcohol problems.

### Allocations and Lettings - Supplementary Comments

Whilst this consultation has been about how the Council allocate and let their properties, **38%** of respondents have used this opportunity to tell us how they feel about social housing, as well as other important and relevant issues and concerns. This includes topic areas such as: selective licensing, sub-letting, property exchange, rent increases etc, these comments are available in [appendix 5](#)

One person said about paying rent ***“I find it unsatisfactory that people living in council flats are unfairly being asked to pay weekly unlike others that are paid monthly”*** another person told us about how they are living in a property that is in very high demand in social housing ***“I am living in a bungalow that I don't need any more and someone, somewhere is in desperate need of this property, but nobody will help me”***.

One person told us about the property exchange issue: ***“it makes no sense; I've requested a property exchange from a small flat to a house and there is an elderly man in a house which is unsuitable for him as he needs adaptations which they refuse to do for him?”***

## Section 8

# Conclusion and Recommendations

### CONCLUSION

This was a tenant, residents and the wider public stakeholder consultation undertaken on a series of recommended changes to the NCC Allocations and Lettings policy. The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that residents were engaged on changes and amendments to the policy.

The allocations and lettings consultation recognises areas in which Newcastle City Council are making progress towards the required changes to meet the needs of their customers.

People didn't always answer all the questions within the questionnaire. More often the responses we received indicated that individuals had a particular view or lived experience relevant to some aspects of the proposed policy changes. For example, the successions element of the questionnaire, people told us they agreed with the changes, and this would make the process fairer. Our case study 3 outlines challenges residents face when they are unable to include family members on tenancies.

In contrast participants disagreed with changes to policy regarding the refusing a home element. Many felt the proposed change was unfair as the housing needs of an application were not always taken into consideration. People want the house where they live to be a home and therefore needs to be in a place where they feel safe, comfortable and have their needs met. Waiting lists are too long and the application process too complicated. Residents told us they feel that problems with neighbours aren't always taken seriously which impacts mental health, anxiety, and quality of living. The proposed changes for requesting a review of tenancy/application participants said were a 'welcome change'. Living in the right place, in the most appropriate house will reduce people's anxiety and improve quality of life.

Throughout the consultation people told us they felt strongly about who should be able to access social housing. They told us that social housing provision should be available for those living below the poverty line, with little or no assets and who are at risk of becoming homeless (case study 4). People said that **"care and consideration into individual circumstances when people are moving into assisted living or sheltered accommodation, especially when social housing is in high demand.** Special provision provided by the council should include the health and wellbeing of individuals especially older people who need specialist care and support. Often when people feel vulnerable for whatever reason, they want to live close to people they know or have a local connection. This helps people to build networks of help and support making them less reliant on public services.

To conclude there was a low level of participation within this consultation however those who engaged with the exercise provided insight to their experience and daily issues regarding social housing.

### LESSONS LEARNT

- Rethink the format of the survey questions for future consultations
- Consideration must be given to timelines when planning citywide consultations to ensure all aspects are given time to complete the process.

## Recommendations

1.

- Allocation and letting's policy should be representative of all people especially those with physical and mental disabilities. Care should be given when changing the policy to include needs for those who require additional support such as carers or specialist equipment.

2.

- The views and concerns of customers must be at the centre of the policy and proposed changes if a greater level of customer satisfaction is to be achieved.

3

- Continue to build on best practice to improve the customers experience and expectation when applying for social housing. Make it a quicker and easier process.

4.

- More emphasis is required when housing people with mental health issues to ensure fairness, equality and satisfaction.

5.

- Staff development for officers to help them support tenants with mental health issues and other protected characteristics. This will help remove barriers for those trying to access social housing and will meet the needs of the applicant.

6.

- Report to be distributed to NCC departments and appropriate working groups.

7.

- More communication by developing opportunities for tenants and customers to have informal discussions, share issues, concerns, and ideas with FHU and YHN officers.

8.

- Continue to protect the rights of the most vulnerable customers by ensuring staff have the right tools, knowledge, training, and expertise to provide a consistent and effective service for customers.

# Appendices 9

## APPENDIX 1

### Methodology

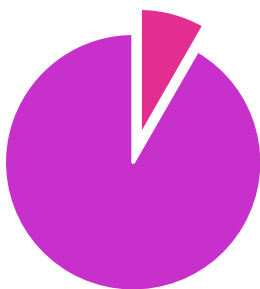
The engagement was requested by FHU to help identify customers who may have an interest or investment to the proposed changes to Newcastle City Council allocation and lettings policy. There is a need to include the views and opinions from residents in how the policy is changed. This links to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standards the Newcastle City Council comply with.

All information needed to participate in the engagement activity was posted at Newcastle City Council website [www.newcastle.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk) and on Let's Talk Newcastle online : <https://www.letstalknewcastle.co.uk>.

### Social Media Engagement

- NCC Website
- Your Homes Newcastle Website
- Facebook
- Twitter

#### Social Media engagement



■ NewcastleCityCouncil (Twitter)

#### Appendix 9 Social Media responses

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants, a clear approach to complaints and a wide range of opportunities for them to have influence and be involved.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-involvement-and-empowerment-standard>

#### What did we do to engage residents about the proposed changes to the Allocations and Letting policy?

- ✓ Designed an online survey.
- ✓ Contacted via emailed ??? tenants, leaseholders and housing support organisations sharing a link to the online survey.
- ✓ Organised face to face drops ins at West End Library, Kenton Library, East End Library and City Centre Library.
- ✓ Had a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter.
- ✓ Worked in partnership with YHN Customer Insight and Engagement Team.
- ✓ Organised a Let's Talk platform.
- ✓ Paper copies of the survey in different formats were available.

# COPY OF THE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY



## Allocations and Lettings Consultation Survey 2022

### Introduction – your views on social housing in Newcastle

We are proposing to make some changes to our policies on how we allocate social housing in Newcastle, including how we deal with successions and assignments of existing tenancies. To help us ensure our policies meet people's needs, we would like to hear your views and opinions about getting social housing in Newcastle, which you can give us by completing this short form.

**Consultation dates run from 20 September 2022 – 6 November 2022**

**We are also hosting 4 drop-in events, please note details listed below:**

- Mon 10/10/2022, 1-5pm at West End Library, Condercum Road, NE4 9JH
- Thur 13/10/2022, 2-6pm at Kenton Library, Hillside Avenue, NE3 3QJ
- Mon 17/10/2022, 1-4pm at East End Library, 83 Shields Road, NE6 1DL
- Thur 20/10/2022, 1-4pm City Library, 33 New Bridge Street, NE1 8AX

### What happens next?

The consultation will be open from 20 September to 6 November 2022. When the consultation closes, we will analyse the feedback provided and consider whether we proceed with the proposed changes or not. We will share the results of the consultation with you on our website: [www.newcastle.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk) and on Let's Talk Newcastle Online: <https://www.letstalknewcastle.co.uk/>

**If you require information about this consultation in a different format (such as large print) or you have questions about this, please get in touch with Newcastle Independent Tenants' Voice at: [nitv@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:nitv@newcastle.gov.uk)**

#### 1. Are you... please choose one:

- A current tenant of YHN / Newcastle City Council
- A leaseholder of YHN / Newcastle City Council
- A current tenant of a housing association or other social housing landlord, for example, Home Housing
- An applicant on Tyne and Wear Homes who can bid for properties
- Currently in the process of applying to Tyne and Wear Homes
- A resident of Newcastle upon Tyne
- An organization
- Other

#### 2. What is your postcode?

#### 3. If you are an organisation, are you responding on behalf of:

- The organization
- An individual resident or tenant
- A group of resident or tenants

4. What is your organisation's name and address?
5. Please let us know if you have any comments about the changes we are proposing to the Allocations and Lettings policy?
6. The Equality Act 2010 tells us we need to think about changes we make could be unfair to people with protected characteristics for example: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Please tell us if you think any of our proposals could be unfair to people because of their protected characteristics?
7. Have you applied for council housing in the last five years?
- Yes
- No
8. What was good about your experience of applying?
9. What could be improved in the application process?
10. If you answered question seven, please let us know if any of the following applied to you when you applied for council housing?
- I was aged 16 – 25
- I was residing in supported accommodation in Newcastle
- I was a current council tenant
- I was a member or former member of the Armed Forces
- I was a former partner or bereaved spouse of a member of the Armed Forces
- I have a protected characteristic such as: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

### Equality and diversity monitoring

Newcastle City Council is committed to treating everyone fairly. This includes not discriminating against people with protected characteristics. (A "protected characteristic" is an aspect of a person's identity that makes them who they are, such as age, gender, and so forth.) To do this, we need to build a picture of people who respond to our consultations. You can help us do this by answering the questions below. This section of the form is voluntary. It will be kept confidential and only used for monitoring purposes, and you cannot be identified from it.

#### 11. What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please tell us about this):

---

#### 12. Is your gender the same as your sex registered at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

#### 13. What was your age group at your last birthday?

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64

- 65 to 75
- 75 or over

**14. Do you have a long-term health condition?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**15. What is your ethnic group or background? Please choose one of the following:**

**Asian or Asian British**

- |   |                          |           |                          |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Bangladeshi   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Indian    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Chinese   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Another Asian or Asian British background (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |                          |
- 

**Black African, Black Caribbean, or Black British**

- |   |                          |           |                          |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| African   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Another Black or Black British background (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |                          |
- 

**Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**

- |  |                          |                           |                          |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| White and Black African                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| White and Asian  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                           |                          |
| Another Mixed or Multiple background (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |                           |                          |
- 

**White**

- |  |                          |          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| British                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | English  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Northern Irish                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Scottish | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Welsh                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Irish    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gypsy or Irish Traveller                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Roma     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Another White background (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |                          |
- 

**Another ethnic group**

- |  |                          |                   |                          |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Arab                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Another ethnic group (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |                   |                          |
- 

**16. What is your religion or belief?**

- |                         |                          |                   |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Buddhist                | <input type="checkbox"/> | Christian         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hindu                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Jewish            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Muslim                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sikh              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No religion or belief   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |                   |                          |
- 

**17. What is your sexual orientation?**

- |                         |                          |                          |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bisexual                | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gay                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lesbian                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Straight or heterosexual | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prefer not to say       | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| Other (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
- 

**Thank you for giving us your views.**



## APPENDIX 2

### Who got involved?

3. If you are an organisation, are you responding on behalf of:

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> The organisation	2
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> An individual resident or tenant	0
<span style="color: green;">●</span> A group of residents or tenants	1
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Other	1



7. Have you applied for council housing in the last 5 year?

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Yes	160
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> No	153



## APPENDIX 3 Equality and Diversity

11. What is your sex?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Female	209
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Male	88
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Prefer not to say	13
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Other	1



12. Is your gender the same as your sex registered at birth?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

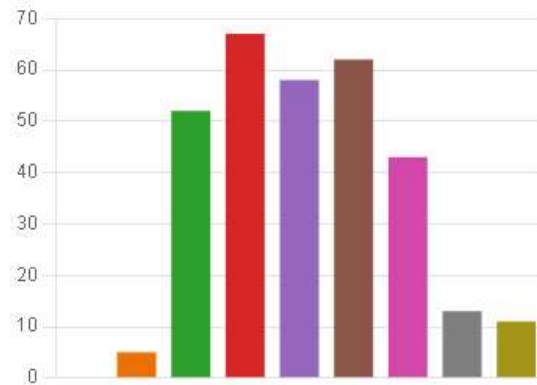
<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Yes	291
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> No	6
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Prefer not to say	12



### 13. What was your age group at your last birthday?

[More Details](#)

Under 16	0
16 to 24	5
25-34	52
35-44	67
45-54	58
55-64	62
65-74	43
75 or over	13
Prefer not to say	11



### 14. Do you have a long-term health condition?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	150
No	138
Prefer not to say	20

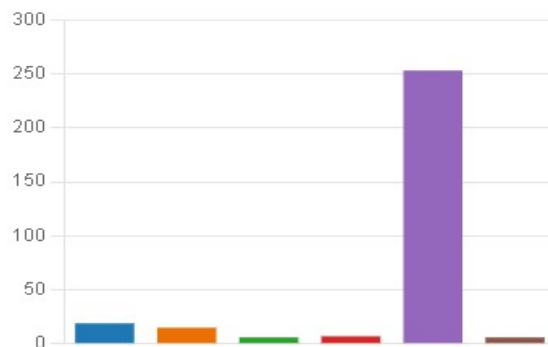


### 15. What is your ethnic group or background? Please choose one of the following

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

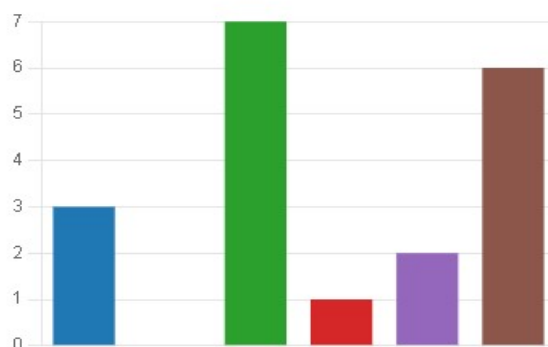
Asian or Asian British	19
Black, African, Caribbean or Blac...	15
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	6
Other ethnic group	7
White	253
Other	6



### 16. Please choose one of the following

[More Details](#)

Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
Indian	7
Pakistani	1
Prefer not to say	2
Other	6



17. Please choose one of the following

[More Details](#)

● African	13
● Caribbean	2
● Prefer not to say	0
● Other	0



18. Please choose one of the following

[More Details](#)

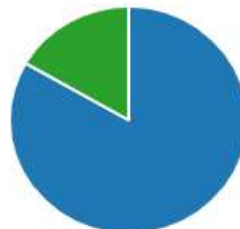
● White and Black African	1
● White and Black Caribbean	0
● White and Asian	3
● Prefer not to say	2
● Other	0



19. Please choose one of the following

[More Details](#)

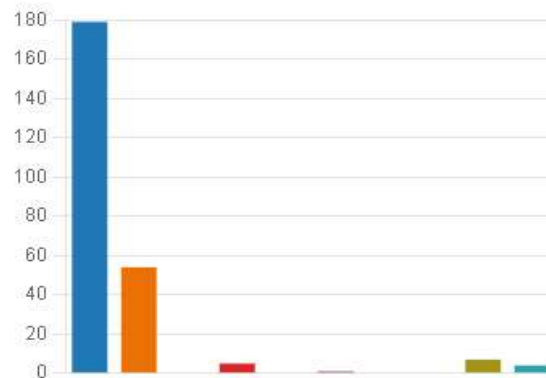
● Arab	5
● Prefer not to say	0
● Other	1



20. Please choose one of the following

[More Details](#)

● British	179
● English	54
● Northern Irish	0
● Scottish	5
● Welsh	0
● Irish	1
● Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
● Roma	0
● Prefer not to say	7
● Other	4

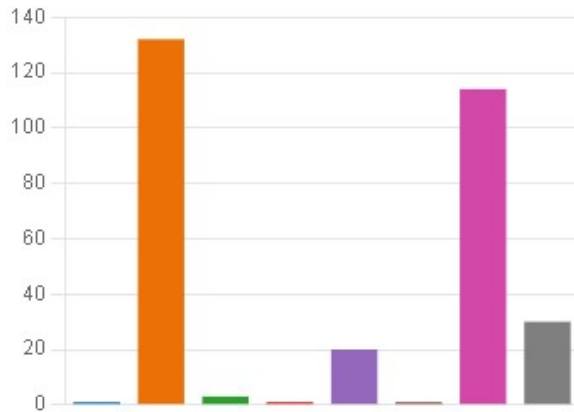


## 21. What is your religion or belief?

More Details

Insights

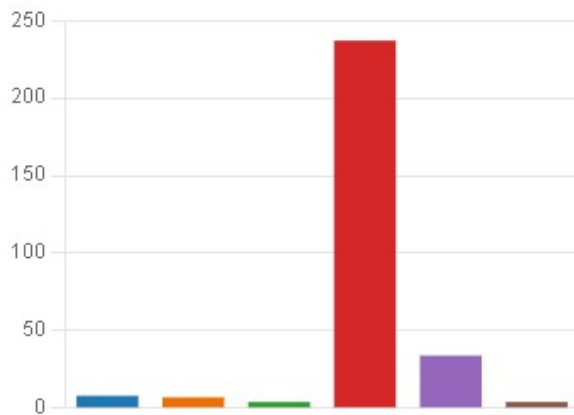
Buddhist	1
Christian	132
Hindu	3
Jewish	1
Muslim	20
Sikh	1
No religion or belief	114
Prefer not to say	30



## 22. What is your sexual orientation?

More Details

Bisexual	8
Gay	7
Lesbian	4
Straight or heterosexual	237
Prefer not to say	34
Other	4



## APPENDIX 4

A [spreadsheet](#) of all the survey responses received online

Completion ID	Email	Name	Are you... (please choose one)?	What is your postcode?	If you are an organisation, are you responding on behalf of?	What is your organisation name and address?	Please let us know if you have any comments about the changes we are proposing to the Allocation and Lettings policy?	Have you applied for council housing in the last 5 years?	What was good about your experience in the application process?	What could be improved in the application process?	If you answered question three, please let us know if any of the following apply to you when you applied for council housing?	What is your sex?	What is your gender the same as your sex registered at birth?	What was your age group at your last birthday?	Do you have a long-term health condition?	What is your ethnic group or background?	Please choose one of the following	Please choose one of the following	Please choose one of the following	Please choose one of the following	Please choose one of the following	What is your religion or belief?	What is your sexual orientation?	Are you... please choose one?	
*****	anonymo us		ne20b			I think that they are all excellent and the people who worked on this should be given a bonus, promotion and extra holiday.	not applicable	Yes	Not good	a lot	I was aged 16-25 member, former member of the Armed Forces.	Female	Yes	25-34	No	White					English	Buddhist	Straight or heterosexual	tenant of York New Castle City Council	
*****	anonymo us		NE1					Yes	test	test		Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	45-54	Yes	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups			White and Asian			Muslim	Prefer not to say	A resident of York New Castle City Council	
*****	anonymo us		NE15 7LR			Nothing except people who own their ex council house should not be allocated another council house for them to rent their own house.		No				Female	Yes	55-64	Yes	White					British	No religion or belief	Straight or heterosexual	tenant of York New Castle City Council	
*****	anonymo us		NU16 6GJ			Your changes don't help me to get back to gatedhead area to be near family, so my health is bad	Note to user	Yes	Next was good was a round about to try and get back	could help people more with needs and work with other council to get people in the area	I was a current council tenant	Female	Yes	45-54	Yes	White						British	Christian	Prefer not to say	A current tenant of York New Castle City Council

## APPENDIX 5

A [spreadsheet](#) listing all the comments received after coding

Allocation and Lettings Report									
Hierarchical Name	Code Type	Description	Folder Location	Coverage	Number of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded by Initials	Modified on	Coded Text
Codes\NW questions\2.1 - Maximum Income	Code	Files	6.32%	20	1	27		16/11/2022 16:23	Seems fair and reasonable
Codes\NW questions\2.1 - Maximum Income	Code	Files	6.32%	20	2	27		16/11/2022 17:02	Personally I think that once again the most vulnerable people are not being listed to. Whoever has got 100000€ in assets -2.2-can afford to rent privately without impacting on the council expenses, as well as people who earn 50000€ per year-2.1
Codes\NW questions\2.1 - Maximum Income	Code	Files	6.32%	20	3	27		17/11/2022 10:47	I do not agree with the proposed change for income (if you earn over £50,000) I believe that this will make the housing situation even worse than what it already is now.
Codes\NW questions\2.1 - Maximum Income	Code	Files	6.32%	20	4	27		17/11/2022 12:44	I disagree with the 2.1 maximum income change. If people are high earners with high outgoings they need to manage their funds better not take up social housing that poorer people need.
Codes\NW questions\2.1 - Maximum Income	Code	Files	6.32%	20	5	27		17/11/2022 12:54	I worry about the change that means you can get a council home if you have more money than most people who live in social housing may ever have. It leaves the flood gates open for more nefarious tactics by YHN. I looks like a way for council\YHN employees, who now feel the pinch to get in amongst the great unwashed until times get better. Also, how can you let a person with a million in the bank rent social housing? After years of keeping areas in need, in
		6.32%	20	5					need you now propose someone who has the ready assets to buy a council home get one cheaply to rent, yet the people who rent them now struggle day to day? I live in walker, I'm disabled& disabilities, and then a flash neighbour moves next door with a car on the drive and a car on the street but because I have disabilities and can't hold down a job, and have to use a walking stick, and can't afford £5 a day bus fares, then you want to allow moneyb
		6.32%	20	5					ags maigrin), to just waltz next door with his Audi and orange wife and kids just because NDW's money doesn't go as far and a temporary move from the quayside to walker will help them for a while, but the rest of us will still be in the same boat, well it's not right and looks like a doorway for the editors of YHN or the council to start cherry picking homes. It's like this: Say I'm the Duke of Northumberland, and I'm old and to save even more money I get in the housing
		6.32%	20	5					list just to get in a home sheltered housing after living it up? Or I'm a homeowner and rent my home out and then move into a council property? Dubious.

## APPENDIX 6

[Report](#) of all the responses received regarding the Equalities Act question in the survey

The Equality Act 2010 tells us we need to think about changes we make could be unfair to people with protected characteristics for example age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or b...
not applicable
Note to sure as above,i can't find the changes....
I haven't been told of any changes this is the first I've heard about it. But this is just a survey it doesn't say what the changes are
Again do not know what you are proposing
All these proposals need to be checked out thoroughly
Yes its On the contrary. It removes obstacles to the administrative process.
Seems fair I am happy that proposals are perfectly fair.

## APPENDIX 7

Summary [report](#) of all the coded Equality Act comments

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
I think you need to be aware of impact when it comes to disabled children sharing bedrooms and the effect it has on them			3	27		22/11/2022 14:40
I had an assessment for a two bedroom bungalow and granted such when my assessment time ran out I reapplied with Dr's letter etc but have had to fight for an allocation for a two bed bungalow.but I have not been given this but not given a relevant explanation. I Hope that in future disabled people like myself are given correct consideration and the people who need such bungalows are given them and not what u know but who you know consideration.			4	27		22/11/2022 14:42
Not that I have read , it is only the band of need which looks as if the lower the band will be waiting years, regardless of age, colour, sexuality, religion or beliefs, for a home in the area they want to live in.			5	27		22/11/2022 14:50
Gay single men should be allowed a 2/3 bedroom house			6	27		22/11/2022 14:59

## **APPENDIX 8**

[Copy of a staff](#) briefing on the Allocations and Lettings consultation and a list of frequently asked questions

APPENDIX 9 [Social Media Responses](#) as page 29