

Choice Based Letting System

26th May 2017

Choice Based Letting

- Choice Based Letting is the advertisement of '**Bid**' dwellings by Housing Authorities that allows qualified social housing support applicants to express an interest in that '**Bid**' property
- CBL = Choice Based Letting
- Properties will therefore need designation by CE Order
- **Sections 6 - 11** of the Social Housing Allocations Regulations 2011 gives a Housing Authority power to introduce Choice Based Letting Schemes in its Allocation Scheme

Properties covered

Extract -Social Housing Supports are as outlined by Section 19 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as follows:

- **Dwellings provided by a Housing Authority**
- *Dwellings provided by an approved body – for Phase II.*
- In time, Rental Accommodation Availability Agreements? RAS, Social

Method of Assessment/Allocation

- Allocation Scheme (Priorities of housing need) - Section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and Social Housing Allocation Regulations 2011 – Allocation Scheme still operates but dealing with the list of those who have expressed interest
- Social housing assessment as normal - to determine whether there is a housing need.
- Profile Page on CBL – shows HH composition, time on list, address – useful for Applicants to check their details are up to date

Method of Assessment/Allocation

- Applicants can choose up to 3 Areas of Choice (now Northside, City Centre and Southside (used to be 30 areas of choice) – broader range to choose from
- If applicants are eligible: income criteria; no legal interest in a property; if they are adequately housed; if they are not legally entitled to reside in the country

Main Priorities of housing need are:

- Whether institution, emergency accommodation, overcrowded, medical/disability, involuntary sharing, particular household circumstances

Before CBL

- Property Ready to Let **then**
- Housing Maintenance emailed Housing Allocations
- Time Based Allocations Scheme
- Prospective tenant File is generated
- Area Office conducts Garda checks and interviews the applicant – vetting procedure – best practice recommended here
- If applicant passes the vetting process, the Property is Offered/viewed
- Applicant accepts/refuses - may defer after 2 refusals

After CBL

- Property ready to let date notified (target date)
- Housing Maintenance emails details for CBL to Housing Allocations
- Property will be advertised on cbl.corkcity.ie
- Applicants place expression of interest
- Time Based Allocations Scheme - list produced from CBL system
- File generated & Area Office conducts Garda checks and interviews applicant
- If applicant passes the vetting process, the Property is offered
- CBL Refusal?? Reasons – may defer after 1 refusal

CBL System

- Originally CCC considered CBL due to its high refusal rate and difficulty in letting 'hard to let' properties.
- Following analysis, other possible benefits arose:
- More transparency around supply /availability
- Informs applicant of the properties available beforehand and develops their involvement
- Promotes choice by placing the applicant at the centre of the lettings process
- More awareness and ownership regarding housing demand pressures
- More emphasis on the advisory and supportive role of staff in the social housing support system
- Gives scope to advertise types of dwellings with descriptions

Preparatory work

- Update reports to Housing & Community Functional Committee and Strategic Policy Committee
- Focus Group & Consultations – System Requirements document developed
- User Acceptance Testing
- CBL Applicant, CBL Councillor view & CBL Administrator – an AHB View shortly.

Preparatory work

- The CBL website is cbl.corkcity.ie
- The amended Allocation Scheme was presented to Council on 12th October 2015
- All Applicants were informed by post of the website and how to login when the Allocation Scheme was amended and the CBL website was ready
- CBL commenced in Cork City Council on 4th November 2015
- Applicants Express an Interest in the advertised property i.e. Make a Bid

CBL System

- All qualified social housing support applicants have access to the system including transfer applicants
- All Cork City Councillors have 'read only' access to the system and only see advertised properties
- The system interacts with iHouse
- Phase II – Approved Housing Bodies will have 'read only' access to the system
- AHB properties can be advertised

CBL System

- 'Bid' dwellings are uploaded to the CBL website on a weekly basis
- All Expressions of Interest from qualified social housing support applicants are downloaded each week
- An allocation is made using the same process as the needs based system except that only those who have made an expression of interest on the CBL website will be considered

Experiences

- The refusal rate has lowered - Refusal rates have dropped from ranges of 35 % – 60% to 5 % – 20%
- When the volume of properties increases, CBL proves beneficial as less time is spent on files that are refused
- Same work in a refusal as an acceptance
- The Vetting process is crucial to the success of CBL i.e. results of an interview and garda check which may lead to a deferral or withdrawal of an offer on Estate Management grounds
- Recommend this as best practice

Experiences

- Reduces staff time in matching properties to applicants
- Length of time from property ready to property occupied has reduced – average 5 weeks
- Main reasons for refusal in CBL is that the applicant did not familiarise themselves with the area – refusal occurs at the viewing
- Therefore, map facility and area view may not be utilised in these cases
- Getting a ‘feel’ for the area still occurs at the viewing

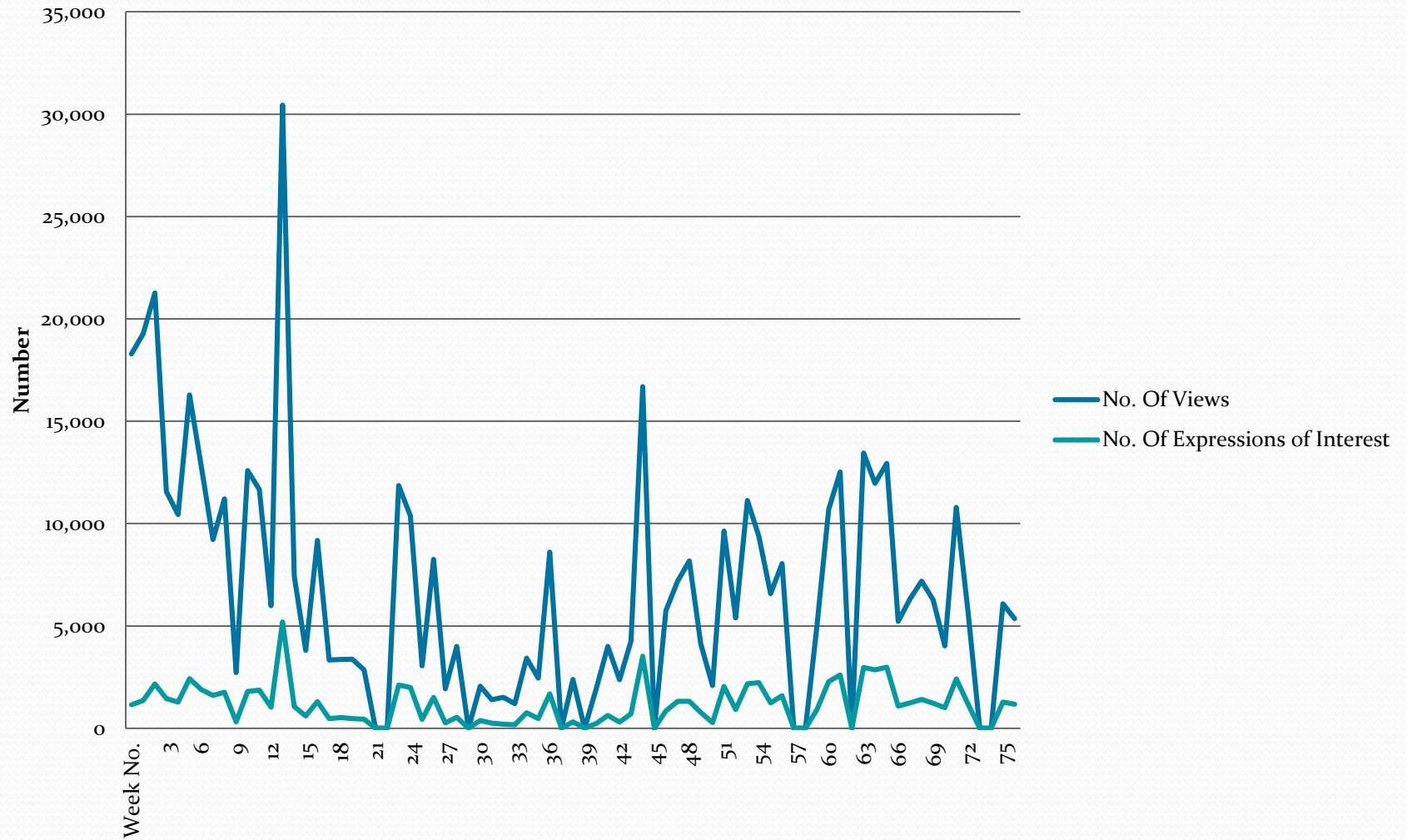
Experiences

- Elderly dwellings – exempted to date
- However, considering advertising them on CBL as refusal rates on properties set aside for older applicants is increasing
- Excluded Specially Adapted/Moderately Adapted properties
- May still allocate outside of CBL e.g. particular HH circumstances
- Build profile of demand and average waiting time for areas

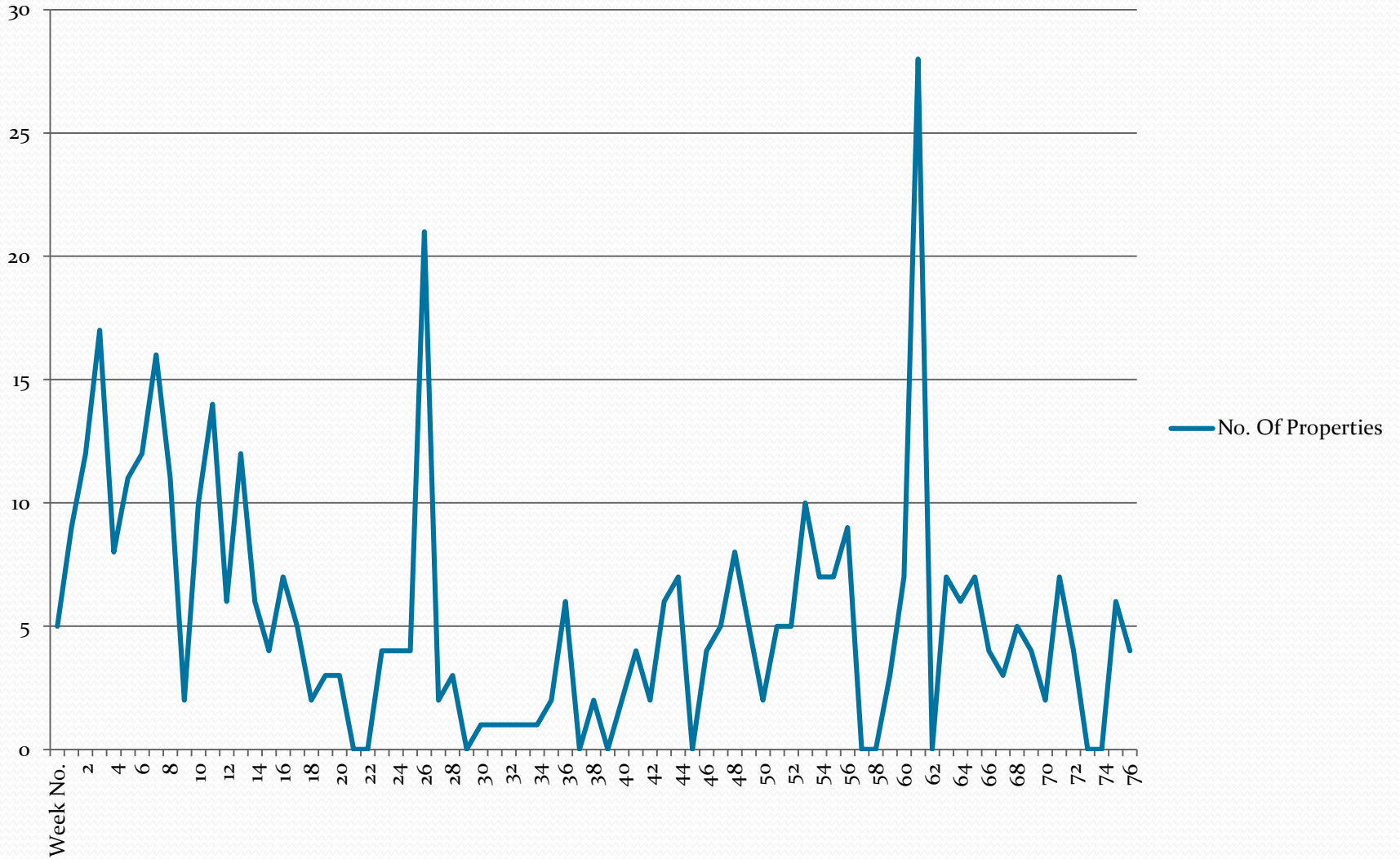
Statistics

- From 4th November 2015 to 9th May 2017 (77 weeks), 413 properties advertised on Choice Based Letting
- 88,153 Expressions of Interest
- 213 expressions of interest on average per property – varies by property type and area
- Login Rate of 40% - 45 % - monthly over Quarter 1 2017 – includes *applicants and transfer applicants*
- End of Year Report for 2016 – 316 properties with 61,495 Expressions of interest – 194 expressions of interest on average per property
- Breakdown in tabular format showing property area, type, range of expression of interest 50 – 100 etc

Activity



No. Of Properties



Sample Data Collection

Week No.	Dates	No. Of Properties	No. Of Views	No. Of Expressions of Interest
1	04/11/2015 – 10/11/2015	5	18,289	1,151
2	11/11/2015 – 17/11/2015	9	19,273	1,365
3	18/11/2015 – 24/11/2015	12	21,271	2,162
4	25/11/2015 – 01/12/2015	17	11,560	1,446
5	02/12/2015 – 08/12/2015	8	10,441	1,286
6	09/12/2015 – 15/12/2015	11	16,284	2,427
7	16/12/2015 – 22/12/2015	12	12,792	1,890
8	06/01/2016 – 12/01/2016	16	9,223	1,608
9	13/01/2016 – 19/01/2016	11	11,213	1,763
10	20/01/2016 – 26/01/2016	2	2,729	312
11	27/01/2016 – 02/02/2016	10	12,593	1,800
12	03/02/2016 – 09/02/2016	14	11,670	1,863

In Conclusion

- Most allocations through CBL
- Strong business processes i.e. vetting needed
- Will still need some allocations outside CBL
- Refusal Rates lower
- Expansion of Choice increases
- More Applicant activity – *requires staying the course*
- Applicant Knowledge of demand builds

Future developments:

- Quarterly Reports
- Enhanced Reporting
- Online Surveys
- Photographs