



## 1. Choice Based Lettings (CBL) - Legislation

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009 and Social Housing Allocation (Amendment) Regulations 2016 authorised and obliged Local Authorities to include for Choice Based Letting as part of its Adopted Allocations Scheme. A Housing Authority that has made provision for choice-based letting in its allocation scheme may designate as a bid dwelling any dwelling covered by the Act.

*Housing for All - 2. Pathway to Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion* refers to progressing the standardisation of the CBL systems in place across Local Authorities.

## 2. CBL – DCC Allocations Scheme

*Extract from Adopted Allocations Policy 2018:*

The Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2009 gives Local Authorities powers to include a system of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) in their Allocation Scheme and can be particularly successful in areas with units, which prove difficult to let.

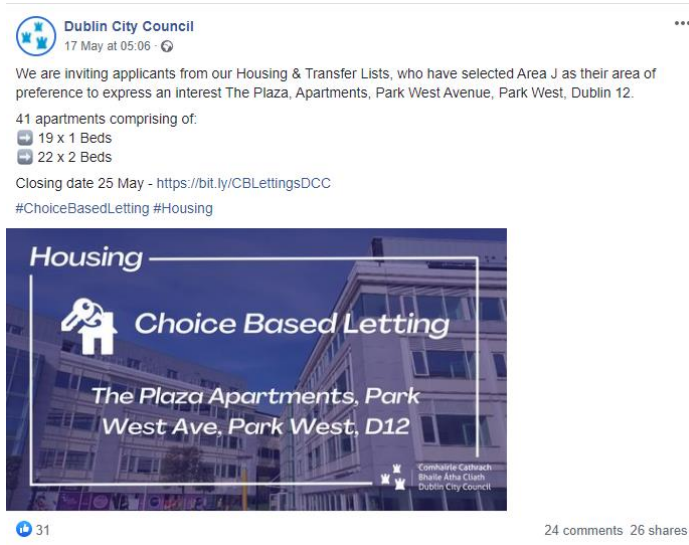
- CBL is a different approach to letting homes, which allows tenants and prospective tenants to bid for the available designated properties in which they are interested;
- Expressions of interest are invited and applicants are asked to register their interest with the Allocations Section/ Area Offices. There is a timeframe for applicants to register their interest;
- Where there are 2 or more bids for the same property, the applicant with the highest Priority Status in accordance with the Allocations Scheme will be offered the property;
- The Allocations Officer may designate properties for CBL;
- If a number of applicants express an interest in a property, the final offer will be to the applicant deemed eligible in accordance with the order of Priority set out in the Allocations Scheme;
- The order of selection of candidates is according to the Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- In the case where a social housing applicant refuses an offer of a CBL property, that applicant will not be entitled to make a further application under CBL for 12 months.

### 3. Communications

Dublin City Council, in recognising the need to keep tenants and prospective tenants informed of any changes to the allocation of properties, sent a detailed letter to 27,978 applicants which gave an overview of how the process operates, how it would be advertised and what support was available to applicants that may have an issue with digital literacy. This generated an increase in phone calls to both the area offices and allocations office with people showing a general interest in the scheme.

#### *When properties becomes available:*

- They will be advertised in the local Area Office, on the Dublin City Council Website, social media accounts and sent to the City Councillors, see recent example below;



- Going forward, properties will be advertised on a Friday afternoon so that there is consistency and importantly people will get used to checking on a specific day;
- There is a specific template for the property advertisement which will provide as much information as possible so prospective tenants can make an informed decision.

### 4. CBL Applicants with Specific Disadvantages

DCC recognises that there is a need for support to be available to help people navigate the system and to provide advice and support. The nature of this support will vary according to the circumstances of the individual but may range from helping overcome limited literacy, through facilitating application by the provision of access to the internet.

If an applicant has an issue with low/no literacy or digital literacy, support is available from staff both in the central and local offices, local libraries and support workers in homeless services. There are further supports provided by community based services, Citizen Information and advocacy organisations.

We are working with the Transformation Section to review access and information for our customers, identifying gaps and trialling solutions. As part of this, it is proposed to create two dedicated CBL support spaces in the Allocations Public Space, where people can access the website with assistance as needed.

DCC is in the process of redeveloping its Housing IT system. We are seeking to include an option for automatic selection of candidates for Choice Based lettings. This would allow a candidate to be automatically included as a bid, where the letting meets the parameters of their housing need and area of choice.

## 5. Selection of Properties

Choice-Based Letting is designed to offer more choice and involvement for applicant households in selecting a new home. DCC is increasing the number of properties designated for inclusion as Choice Based Lettings, the following are the designation of properties which are not allocated using the CBL system:

- Available properties in developments which are specifically designated for allocation to the older persons;
- Available properties which are adapted to be suitable for persons with a physical or medical need;
- Available properties which are required for urgent allocation to Dublin City Council tenants arising from specified exceptional circumstances, including displacement by fire, flood or any other emergency, development, redevelopment or regeneration of an area by Dublin City Council.

## 6. Experience so far

Choice Based Lettings is a different approach to the allocation of social housing which is designed to place choice at the heart of our allocations scheme and more involvement for applicant households in selecting a new home.

Choice Based Lettings releases applicants from having to refuse properties when they are not interested in a particular area/complex/estate within their area of choice.

Under traditional lettings, applicants who refuse two offers will have their application postponed on the waiting list for a period of 12 months and that period will not count for the purposes of their time on the waiting list. Choice Based Lettings allows for applicants to apply only for properties they are interested in. This reduces the number of refusals per property and the void re-letting period is much shorter. As outlined in the table below, the refusal rate for allocations under CBL in 2021 demonstrates a significantly lower refusal rate, compared to regular lettings.

Our experience so far has found that this method of choice lettings results in much greater efficiency in allocation of stock resulting in a reduction in the number of vacant properties and vacancy periods. Choice Based Letting has operated successfully so far in Dublin City Council with 183 households having accepted offers during 2021 and 2022.

2021	Made	Accepted	Refused	% Offers Refused
DCC Offers	1385	1027	358	25.80%
Nominations	1404	998	406	28.90%
Choice Based Lettings	132	122	10	7.57%

### *Monitoring*

There is a need to monitor who is bidding or more importantly who is not, so that action can be taken to ensure that the reasons for this are investigated. Regular reviews of specific CBL advertisements will take place to ensure that people at the top of the list don't get passed over for properties they may have accepted if offered.

## 7. Feedback and Transparency

The system should be simple and transparent so that ideally applicants can get a sense of the position of the successful applicant for the most recent house/flat let in this road/complex. This might not be suitable for some lists within Band 1, which would identify the household's needs, but lettings to Bands 2 and 3 could have the position of the successful published on the site.

## 8. CBL –Future Development

As DCC's Housing IT system is redeveloped over the coming months, it will allow for increased use of CBLs and will ease the burden of applying, as applicants will be able to save details and access more information. The below link from SDCC gives a demonstration of how to navigate and use the system from a customer perspective <https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/housing/housing-online/>.

The key principle of Choice Based Lettings is that it is customer centred, in that the initiative to apply for a property is taken by the applicant and provides the applicant with a range of information on the property and the opportunity to bid for one in their chosen area. DCC is fully cognisant of the need to make certain that this system does not in any way exclude vulnerable households from applying for a property and will ensure that there are sufficient supports available and proper monitoring mechanisms in place to safeguard against this.