

How will the Kent CBL Partnership work?

- 1.1.1 At its simplest CBL is a system to match empty properties to prospective tenants. It does not change the way in which the level of need is assessed i.e. the level of priority assigned to each applicant, similarly it does not change the lettings policy of any landlord and schemes like local or sensitive lettings can be accommodated within a CBL system. Landlords will also have the right to exclude properties if urgent needs such as management transfers are required or they are needed to facilitate a decant programme.
- 1.1.2 It is hoped that over a period of time that the ways in which housing need is assessed across the country will be harmonized but this is not essential for CBL, for example: common allocations schemes.
- 1.1.3 Negotiations will be required with our RSL partners to deal with existing nomination agreements where housing developments have been funded through public finance. Rather than terminate these agreements it is proposed to enter into an arrangement with RSL partners whereby all vacant social housing will be let through the CBL process but should CBL not exist at some time in the future the current nomination agreements will survive.
- 1.1.4 Up to 10% of lettings will be available to promote mobility between different local authority areas. The project board will review and monitor mobility arrangements to ensure that the scheme operates equitably and not to the detriment to any one area. Details of how the mobility arrangements will work still have to be worked up but improved mobility is a key government requirement for CBL.
- 1.1.5 Safeguards will be built in initially to protect the interests of different local authorities and to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the housing needs of each area. After two years of operation the Board will review the operation of the mobility provisions with a view to recommend to increase opportunities for moving between local authority areas.
- 1.1.6 A central processing house (provided by a contracted provider) will develop and manage the ICT links with landlords and housing needs systems to facilitate the advertising and bidding process.
- 1.1.7 In each bidding/lettings cycle, each landlord will upload to the centrally managed data warehouse, details of empty properties available for letting. The operator will translate this data into the various advertising

media and make them available to potential bidders within clearly defined timescales.

- 1.1.8 The operator will process bids made for each empty property and provide the landlord with a shortlist based on the priority level of the bidders. However, for district housing authorities who are not stock holding the operator will provide the strategic housing service with the shortlist of bidders, who will then in turn provide the nomination to the landlord from this list. This would enable this authority to manage homelessness, ensure we make best use of the stock.
- 1.1.9 There will be a fortnightly advertising and bidding cycle. Empty properties will be advertised through a paper based free sheet and on the Internet. Technology will be used to make it easy for prospective tenants to bid and to help keep down operating costs. Bidding will be available by automated telephone systems, text messaging and via the Internet. Feedback will be available to service users on the outcome of previous adverts.
- 1.1.10 Shared ownership and key worker accommodation can also be advertised through the CBL scheme, Moat Housing Limited, as the zone agent for Kent, will be invited to join the Board to discuss this further.
- 1.1.11 The Kent CBL scheme would also seek to build upon the work that councils and RSLs are doing with private landlords to improve conditions and access to this sector. A number of councils within the partnership, including this authority, already work closely with the National Federation of Residential Landlords, an umbrella group for independent landlords. The project board will seek to involve the federation to develop proposals to integrate lettings in the private sector into the scheme.
- 1.1.12 The kind of initiatives the project board might seek to pursue include:
 - provide incentives for landlords that are part of an accreditation schemes to participate in the scheme, (e.g. lettings services to landlords prepared to accept tenants from high banding groups; discounted advertising fees, deposit holding services etc); and
 - target rent deposit and rent guarantees provided by councils to help households at risk of becoming homeless, at properties let through the choice based lettings schemes.