

Report to the Housing Management Sub-Committee at meeting held 6th July 2011

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1.0 Subject – homehunt NES Survey Outcome Report

2.0 Background Summary

Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Cooperative have been operating a choice based lettings system, homehunt NES, since June 2006. It was agreed that following the first homehunt Satisfaction Survey in 2008 that a similar satisfaction survey be carried out every three years. This would allow any areas of concern with the allocations system to be highlighted and solutions found.

The survey was sent to 10% of all registered applicants, all those housed through homehunt NES from April 2010 to February 2011 and agencies who are contacted fortnightly by homehunt NES.

3.0 Link to Business Plan

1a) to provide, maintain and manage properties to customers' satisfaction and expectations in a sustainable way

1b) to monitor and continually improve the service

1e) to meet identified housing need

4.0 Methodology

The aim of this exercise was to carry out an audit on access to the Co-operative's housing, the service provided to those applying for housing and the quality of service. Three survey groups were identified: one to applicants on the Registration List; one to members housed using homehunt NES during 2010/11 and one to agencies – those organisations linked to the provision of affordable housing.

The same survey questions sent in 2008 were used again, with some minor changes or additions being made.

homehunt NES provided a list of a total of 715 applicants from the Registration List which was 10% of all applicants in February 2011 with a fair representation of each Priority Pass and those with no Priority Pass. However, on examination of this list, it was found that duplicate applicants had been used as some applicants had qualified for more than one Pass (although one Pass is used only on the system when they apply for properties), which reduced this list to 632 applicants. The Housing Officer therefore took a further 83 random applicants from the database to ensure that 10% of all registered applicants were still used. A comparison was run once again to ensure that there were no duplicate applicants used. The following breakdown was therefore used to ensure a fair representation:

Priority Pass	Total	%
Gold	67	9%
Silver	171	24%
Bronze	132	18%
No Pass	262	37%
Additional Applicants	83	12%
Total	715 (= 10% of all applicants)	100%

A check was also carried out to see that a representative sample of ethnic minorities (9%) and those suffering a disability (7%) were chosen.

It was decided to use a professional survey internet site (www.surveymonkey.com) to allow those who have internet access to easily complete the survey online, to save postage and stationary costs and in order for Tenants First to easily input and collate the results. Out of 715 applicants, we had 254 (36%) email addresses to email the survey link to, with the other 461 (64%) applicants all receiving postal surveys.

391 applicants had been re-housed by Tenants First Housing Co-operative and Castlehill Housing Association from April 10 to February 11 and all were sent a postal survey as it was not easy to obtain email addresses which could be a consideration for the next survey if a system such as surveymonkey is used again.

107 agencies, who receive the fortnightly available properties advert by email, were sent the email link to the survey, which saved some considerable postage, stationary and time.

As it was important to maximise the response rate to the survey and to motivate a high return, a prize draw of £100 was offered to those completing the survey.

	Response Rate Number 2011	Response Rate % 2011	Response Rate Number 2008	Response Rate % in 2008
Applicants	158 (94 by mail) (64 by web link)	22%	171	17%
Housed	88	23%	148	40%
Agencies	15	14%	18	15%

The response rate was good: 22% of applicants, 23% of those housed responded and 14% from agencies responded. The number of applicants responded from the previous survey in 2008 increased from 17% to 22% which could be attributed to the use of SurveyMonkey. There was a decrease in those who were re-housed responding from the previous survey. SurveyMonkey was not used for this category as previously advised in this

report. There was a very slight drop in the number of agencies who responded.

5.0 The Results

Of the applicants on the Registration List the following age range responded:

Age Range		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 25	5%	8
25-35	16%	23
36-54	37%	53
55-60	9%	13
61 or over	33%	47

Of this group, the following ethnicity information was gathered:

Your Ethnicity		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
White Scottish	80%	113
White English	4%	6
White Welsh	0%	0
White Northern Irish	0%	0
White British	4%	5
White Irish	0%	0
Gypsy/Traveller	0%	0
Polish	6%	9
Other white background (please specify below)	4%	6
Any mixed background (please specify below)	0%	0
Pakistani	0%	0
Indian	1%	1
Bangladeshi	0%	0
Chinese	0%	0
Other Asian Background (please specify below)	0%	0
African	1%	1
Caribbean	0%	0
Black	0%	0
Other Black background (please specify below)	0%	0
Arab	0%	0
Other background (please specify below)	0%	0
Other (please specify)		6

Number	Other (please specify)
1	Portuguese
2	Portuguese
3	Lithuanian
4	Romanian
5	Portuguese
6	Lithuanian

Priority Passes were awarded for applicants as the following:

Were you awarded a Priority Pass?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	61%	93
No	39%	59

Of the housed respondents a range of ages responded with the majority being 40% of those 61 or over:

My age is (please leave blank if declining to answer)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 25	6%	5
25-35	16%	14
36-54	25%	22
55-60	13%	11
61 or over	40%	35

The following ethnicity information was gathered:

Your Ethnicity		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
White Scottish	87%	72
White English	2%	2
White Welsh	0%	0
White Northern Irish	0%	0
White British	4%	3
White Irish	1%	1
Gypsy/Traveller	0%	0
Polish	5%	4
Other white background (please specify below)	0%	0
Any mixed background (please specify below)	0%	0
Pakistani	0%	0
Indian	0%	0
Bangladeshi	0%	0
Chinese	0%	0
Other Asian Background (please specify below)	0%	0
African	1%	1
Caribbean	0%	0
Black	0%	0
Other Black background (please specify below)	0%	0
Arab	0%	0
Other background (please specify below)	0%	0
Other (please specify)		0

Priority Passes were awarded to this re-housed group as follows:

Were you awarded a Priority Pass?		
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Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	80%	69
No	20%	17

5.1 Registering with Homehunt NES

How did you initially contact homehunt@ NES?		
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed
Phone	36%	39%
In person at office	24%	14%
Internet	28%	37%
Through support worker	2%	6%
Letter	10%	4%
Other (please specify)		

Did you find it easy to register with homehunt NES?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	99%	98%	91%
No	1%	2%	9%

It is positive that the vast majority find it easy to register with homehunt® NES. There were three comments from agencies which expressed concern about vulnerable or elderly applicants perhaps not finding the system easy to use due to the choice based lettings approach. One agency also commented that the print on forms should be larger.

How quickly did you get your registration card?		
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed
5 or less working days	32%	33%
6 to 10 working days	55%	59%
More than 10 working days	13%	8%

It is positive that the majority of applicants receive their Registration Cards quickly which will allow them to immediately apply for any advertised properties within the two week advertising period. Consideration could perhaps be given to reduce this even further and have the majority of applicants receiving their Registration Card within 5 or less working days. This would then allow them to quickly apply for Priority Passes.

5.2 Use of Homehunt NES phone system:

Applicants:

If you contacted homehunt® NES by phone did you have difficulty getting through?		
Answer Options	Response % 2011	Response % 2008
Never	63%	59%
Sometimes	33%	38%
Always	4%	3%

Re-housed:

If you contacted homehunt® NES by phone did you have difficulty getting through?		
Answer Options	Response % 2011	Response % 2008
Never	66%	62%
Sometimes	32%	34%
Always	2%	4%

The results in 2011 show a slight improvement of people never having difficulty in getting through on the phone and the figure for those who always have difficulty has also improved slightly. The figure for those who sometimes have difficulty in getting through has worsened very slightly.

Agencies

If you contacted homehunt® NES by phone did you have difficulty getting through?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Never	36%
Sometimes	64%
Always	0.0%

Of those agencies who responded, a high number of 64% stated that they sometimes had difficulty getting through to homehunt® NES by phone.

Did the recorded information on the homehunt® NES phone system give you the information you required?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	59%	70%	91%
No	7%	7%	9%
Didn't use phone	34%	23%	0.0%

Of those who had difficulty with the phone system, some gave the following comments:

- "Automated info is not the same as talking to someone in person"
- "When you need to speak to a person the press 1/2 option don't always apply and waste time and money for the person phoning"

- "It would have been nicer if I could have discussed issues with staff rather than receive information from a machine"
- "Wished to make an enquiry on behalf of a client, so was unsure which option would be best in that I am not the applicant"

Whilst there were some negative comments, on the whole the recorded information seems to give people the information they require. It would appear that some people would simply prefer talking to an actual person. The automated recording of the properties available is necessary as it would be very time consuming for someone to have to talk to every applicant who wishes to apply for a property by telephone. However, applicants do have an option of talking to a staff member should they have any queries.

5.3 Use of the Homehunt NES Guidance booklet

Did you use the homehunt@ NES guidance booklet? (Sent with your Priority Pass pack).			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	76%	85%	46%
No	24%	15%	54%

The majority of respondents had used the Guidance Booklet but a significant percentage did not. This is an increase since 2008 of applicants (22%) and agencies (28%) and a decrease of 1% for those housed.

Of those using the Guidance booklet 5% of applicants and 1% of those housed felt it did not answer all their questions which is an improvement from the 2008 survey (previously 16% of applicants and 2% of housed) which means that the changes made to the booklet have helped understanding.

Some applicants made the following comments about the Guidance booklet:

- "Would like to have read more on sheltered and very sheltered housing"
- "Bit confusing what category we fitted into"

5.4 Priority passes

Were you awarded a Priority Pass?		
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed
Yes	61%	80%
No	39%	20%

If yes, what kind of Pass were you awarded?		
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed
Bronze	33%	10%
Silver	56%	55%

Gold	11%	35%
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Did you understand how Priority Passes are awarded?		
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed
Yes	76%	93%
No	24%	7%

24% of applicants do not understand how Priority Passes were awarded which is a very slight decrease from 2008 of 1%. The following comments from applicants were made:

- “I’m 86 years of age and it was not explained to me”
- “I think it is unfair that people are awarded them and then taken away from them”
- “Not sure how desperate circumstances need to be to obtain a gold pass as I felt I should qualify for one”
- “I have been living with my violent husband for 2 years trying to get re-housed away from him and was only given bronze my friend however split up from her husband was given gold and now has been re-housed how is this fair?”
- “Didn’t know they exist”
- “I did not ask all about them”
- “I still do not understand. I thought it was points you got.”
- “Very confusing”
- “That Gold always has priority and found that you can wait forever as I still am to be re-housed, if anything lower than Gold pass awarded. It feels like I have no chance of move.
- “It was a bit confusing”

Re-housed people seem to have much more of an understanding of how Priority Passes are awarded. The following comments were made from those housed:

- “Not until i was put on the homeless list, then I was awarded a Priority Pass and understood”
- “Had to read the booklet a few times before I understood how they were awarded”
- “Because each time I applied for a pass I was turned down, although I was homeless then suddenly over the phone was informed I was entitled to Gold pass”

Do you think the Priority Pass system is fair?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	75%	91%	89%
No	25%	9%	11%

25% of applicants do not think that the Priority Pass system is fair which was the same percentage in 2008. The following comments from applicants were made:

- "The rates of private rent are atrocious and we just fell under the priority pass banner when i got my cost of living through the other year. I did feel kind of cheated really. My rent is still no cheaper and we cannot afford a 2 bedroom privately. We would love a 2 bedroom to start a family but that would cost us on average £700 a month privately in Aberdeen which is unobtainable on an average salary! I feel i pay my taxes and get no benefit at all from them whilst others sponge of the system and get all they need i.e houses"
- "Yes and no. Does not take into account full circumstances"
- "i feel it is not fair hard working people like me are desperate to get somewhere for my child and me and have no priority yet foreign people seem to get homes at drop of a hat"
- "Made no difference to us as housing we applied for and never offered usually went to people with no priority pass"
- "Not sure how desperate circumstances need to be to obtain a gold pass as I felt I should qualify for one"
- "didn't think it was fair on my situation"
- "i feel everyone should be able to apply for all types of houses regardless of their age"
- "Just because my daughter and I had to stay with my parents in Angus, we should still have been considered for properties in Aberdeenshire"
- "not got one even though i am disabled"
- "I am not sure, depends how many applicants you have, but with silver card I haven't got any offers yet"
- "I don't understand why someone with a drug or alcohol problem should get priority over someone with a some sort of disability"
- "It doesn't appear that all facts are taken into consideration when passes are applied for"
- "Yes, but i think also it should be taken into account length of time on waiting list"
- "A person with more than one housing difficulty (ie overcrowding & health problems) will only get priority for one of those problems. I think the points system is fairer as it gives a more complete picture of the applicant's needs"
- "Always go to top awarded. Unfair system"
- "The priority pass I don't think works as I have not been offered any houses at present"

Of those stating that the Priority Pass system is not fair, 62% of these applicants were awarded a Priority Pass. Perhaps this response was due to the applicant not being awarded the Priority Pass level they had hoped to get. There also appear to be some misconceptions with people feeling that e.g. that someone who is from another country or has a drug issue may be re-housed before them.

A much higher majority of those who were re-housed felt that the Priority Pass system is fair which is perhaps to be expected. There were a few negative comments however:

- "Only those with a gold pass have a good chance of getting a house"
- "It is fairish but sometimes people fall between certain categories and extra allowances have to be made."
- "I would have liked a visit from a Housing Officer to give guidance to my needs and advise."
- "I lived in a top floor flat, 2 bedroom with 2 girls age 3 & 8 and was expecting a boy. Had no room for a baby or space for new child's clothes/bed and was awarded a bronze, thought i was in good reason for a silver, with also carrying toddler and new baby up 5 floors."
- "Yes if looked at individually but not in protocol"
- "Because I was sleeping in my car and it took almost three year for a pass to be granted, while others I know who abused system were granted freely."
- "It depends on the info you include in form. For instance, I have medical conditions you can't physically see or understand. Someone with disability you can see and understand would be given priority. System is open to abuse."

5.2 Bidding for vacant properties

Have you bid for/noted an interest in any properties since registering with homehunt@NES?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes	70%
No	30%

As noted in the table above a high 30% of applicants have not bid for any properties since registering. We asked why this was and the following comments were given:

- "Nothing suitable"
- "have not seen the home I want"
- "Don't know how to do this as I'm unable to use the internet. My daughter is helping me today"
- "Hardly any properties come up in Aberdeen City Centre"
- "nothing i liked"
- "Yes I have but it's pointless unless u have a gold pass"
- "My interest is in Dalvenie Gardens, and any move is on assessment of my health and disabilities"
- "Every 3 bedroom property, no response"
- "But not for a long period of time. I have problems with accessing information at present"
- "Suitable property that i would like has not become available"
- "Process of selling my home in Manchester"
- "Told we were adequately housed no chance"
- "Did not find the right one for me and my family"
- "My health still permits me to be independent in my own home. No care required despite age - coming 88 yrs"
- "I wish to remain in my own home as long as possible"
- "Never received information or pass"
- "Got no feedback"

- "I do not, I live in small house with 2 son in one room, homehunt never even give me a house, I am very angry for that"
- "None in the area required"
- "I am not sure how it works. I would like more information"
- "No pressing urgency to obtain retirement accommodation"
- "I have lived in Newtonhill for 55yrs and hope i get into Newtonvale (hopefully into a cottage type home)"
- "Because decided to purchase retirement flat at Inchmarlo at least for a time"
- "Nothing interested me"
- "Not to sure how to go about bidding for a property"
- "Nothing suited me"
- "I don't understand"
- "Not needed at present time"
- "the houses or flats are too expensive"

From the above comments it would appear that some are from elderly applicants who have registered but are not applying for properties until they are ready to do so but feel more comfortable being registered. Other comments are clearly unhappy with there either being not enough properties available or with a lack of response from homehunt® NES. It would be very time consuming for homehunt® NES to advise all applicants who have bid for a property that they have not been successful in this time.

Which option do you use to find out about properties that are available? (some ticked more than one response)		
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed
Press & Journal	52%	46%
Landlord's office (in person/by phone)	3%	5%
homehunt® NES phone line	11%	15%
Social worker/support worker	1%	5%
Internet	62%	53%
Family/friends	8%	15%

The internet and Press & Journal are by far the highest used source of finding out how properties are available.

Bidding by phone:

If you bid for/noted an interest in properties by phone, was the process easy to follow?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	86%	95%	100%
No	14%	2%	0%
N/A	0%	3%	0%

All the groups surveyed showed an increase of those finding the process of bidding on the phone easy to follow from the previous survey. (78% of applicants, 92% of those housed and 75% of agencies in 2008). One comment included: "Although I found it easy it would be lovely to register with an "actual" body taking the message. I have a fear that no-one got my message on the answering phone system".

Bidding via the internet:

Have you ever used the homehunt® NES website to bid for/noted an interest in a property?

Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	52%	56%	21%
No	31%	25%	79%
Don't have access	17%	19%	0%

The figure for those who have used the internet to bid has increased from the previous survey (34% of applicants and 35% of those housed), although this has decreased for agencies (35% of agencies).

If you bid for/noted an interest in properties through the homehunt® NES website, did you find it easy to use?

Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	91%	98%	100%
No	9%	2%	0%

The figures for those who found the website easy to bid has increased greatly from the previous survey. There were comments provided by respondents as follows:

- "However, properties to bid for have been going on Internet site later in time every second Tues"
- "but i really think there should be notification stating that you have bid and if bid has been unsuccessful i think the people who bid and was unsuccessful should be notified instead"

homehunt® NES usually try to put the properties on the website at the same time every two weeks. Delays in doing this, are usually IT related and hopefully when the system changes, this will help this issue for applicants. The new website based system will also provide applicants with a notification advising that they have placed a bid.

Allocation History

There was a greater increase in those who knew about the allocation history newsletter – 42% of applicants (18% in 2008) and 60% of those housed (30% in 2008). Of those who did know, few felt it changed their bidding pattern. Many comments were given from applicants and those re-housed:

- "Im probably never gonna get a house from you anyway. We earn to much to be considered for them. Its not really a fair system at all. But i'll keep trying"
- "because I'm not a priority case, the chance of getting a house are very small or none".
- "i am unlikely to get a house through homehunt as i do not have a priority pass"
- "Very large volumes of bids would deter me from bidding from a particular area"

- "I bid for all properties suit my choices, but never get anything. So how I can alter my future bidding"
- "I apply for any property that is suitable for my needs in a suitable area"
- "Although I will keep trying, i feel very negative about my prospects as i have bid for a number of properties over 2 years unsuccessfully. I'm very stressed about my current home"
- "If lots of people have applied for a property in a certain area I would be less likely to apply for this area again because I don't have a priority pass, so feel like I don't have a chance"
- "I am just happy to bid for what might be suitable for myself and family"
- "It makes it very clear to understand the process"
- "Just bid for properties we were interested in"
- "Because I thought it would still be worth trying for properties that were not available because you never know your luck"
- "It taught me that some area within the city are highly sought after so I could apply to places people don't really like much"
- "Didn't find it applied to what we were looking for"
- "Information provided clarity"
- "To choose the right size of house ie in no of bedrooms to accomodate myself and family"
- "I felt that as a "priority" system was used then the allocations made had a greater need than me"
- "It let us know where the high sought after areas were so we could bid for other areas"
- "Looked for the property with less interest in them"

There is clearly a concern regarding the lack of available properties. Some people also feel that they are bidding for everything that is suitable for them. There is a general feeling of hopelessness from some applicants that they will never be re-housed and that those with a high Pass will be re-housed.

Choice

Did you feel that you had a "choice" when using homehunt® NES to find a property?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	77%	91%	92%
No	23%	9%	8%

A very positive response was received from applicants and those housed who feel they have a "choice". (In 2008, 76% and 87% respectively). Clearly those who have been re-housed have had a more positive experience.

From the comments made it is noted that "choice" depends on the numbers of vacancies. Many people feel that unless they have a high Priority Pass then they have "no chance" of being re-housed, or as there are so many applicants for the same property.

Applicants commented the following regarding choice:

- "not enough properties. often only 1 a week suitable".
- "most are one beds i need a two or three with a new baby on way and with so many people bidding i have no chance"
- "The number of properties does not meet the demand for properties in Aberdeen."
- "Not enough properties available"
- "too few vacancies"
- "I have bid once on a property simply because there is not enough properties within Aberdeen so i suppose the "choice" is limited."
- "I need a decent house at a reasonable price, but I'm not a priority the "choice" doesn't exist."
- "very few properties rarely come up for the area i require"
- "am limited to one bed properties as have no children even though I can pay for the rent and would appreciate extra room"
- "No not really as there never really seems to be a lot in the aberdeen/shire area"
- "No cause unless u have a gold pass it's pointless"
- "Because i had to stay with my parents in Angus."
- "i keep getting ignored when i apply through internet"
- "very little choice"
- "I don't feel there is any real chance of being offered a property with as many 200+ applicants for some vacancies."
- "Because age holds us back and feel that it is hard to give too much personal details"
- "Not many properties around Portsoy, Banff or Cullen where I am looking to move to."
- "We were interested in a larger house but again told we were adequately housed."
- "No as I have been waiting for nearly two years to move on health grounds"
- "I don't really understand how to go about doing that and find out about properties."
- "It seems to be very limited."
- "Mainly sheltered housing"

Once again, there is the feeling that demand is higher than availability, making some applicants despondent with the system.

Those re-housed had the following to say regarding choice:

- "I got a 2 bedroom but ideally wanted a 1 bedroom"
- "But am disappointed about the state of repair of kitchen/length of time it will be replaced. Lets the property down greatly."
- "Property bedsit/very good/but crowded / one room/ had to get rid of my dog - a new small cottage, is that too much to ask for."
- "Well worth the four year wait!"
- "I am happy with my exchange into a flat but I am not happy I was not told about the property flooding last year and I have to keep my heating up as it is cold."
- "Very expensive"

- "I feel very fortunate in choosing and being offered my current property."
- "Property classed as 2 person when very much a 1 person. However, glad to have it as would've been homeless otherwise."

Of those who have been housed 95% are happy with their choice of property.

How long do you intend to stay in your current home?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Less than one year	3%
Between one & five years	4%
More than five years	71%
Undecided	22%

As shown in the table above, 71% of those re-housed wish to stay in their home for more than five years which is an improvement from 55% who stated this in 2008.

Exchange register

We asked applicants, re-housed people and agencies if they were aware of the new apply4homes mutual exchange website that Tenants First Housing Co-operative and Castlehill Housing Association now participate in:

Are you aware that Tenants First Housing Co-operative and Castlehill Housing Association participate in apply4homes house exchange which is an online mutual exchange board (www.houseexchange.org.uk)?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	26%	45%	36%
No	74%	55%	64%

It is not concerning that there is a low response of those who are aware of apply4homes as this service only commenced earlier this year. However, as this question was asked in the survey, this will have highlighted the website. There has also been a very high response in people applying to apply4homes for mutual exchanges since it has recently started.

Staff Contact

Are you aware which landlords are advertising their properties through homehunt® NES?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	58%	81%	64%
No	42%	19%	36%

Those re-housed were much more aware of which landlords are part of homehunt® NES although perhaps the fact that they have been re-housed and therefore have been contacted by one of the partners attributes to this.

Are you happy with the contact you have had with homehunt® NES staff?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies

Yes	88%	98%	100%
No	12%	2%	0%

These results are very similar to the 2008 survey. It is very positive that the majority of people feel that they are happy with the contact they have had with homehunt NES staff. The following comments, both good and bad were made:

- "because you just apply for a property . and wait then new propertys come available thats the only way you know you were not successful"
- "to me they seem to move the goalposts to suit their own needs"
- "Have had very little contact with them"
- "i think notification should be given if you place a bid for a property and the bid has been unsuccessful".
- "never get a satisfactory answer"
- " was in office few times, but useless. I didnt get answers to my questions. Ladies said I must to contact by letter".
- "No contact, only by letter"
- ""Staff give the stock answer and send out another form to fill in".
- "Never received any positive feedback or advice from staff".
- "Never had contact since I registered with homehunt".
- "Excellent so far".
- "No contact since registering almost 4 years ago"
- "We have not had any contact"
- "Didn't know anything about this"
- "Very much, they are very helpful"
- "Very bad, never give me an answer since 1 year. Still waiting, with my two sons in one small room, very, very bad, bad service"
- "Keep applying no success"
- "I had changed my details with homehunt over a year ago to find out that the details had not been changed when I wrote a letter and called and had to give the information again 6 months later".
- "Because they don't care".
- "Never had any contact except when first registered".

Did you ask homehunt@ NES staff about other housing options in Aberdeen city/ Aberdeenshire / Moray while phoning homehunt@ NES?			
Answer Options	Response % Applicants	Response % Housed	Response % Agencies
Yes	22%	21%	23%
No	78%	79%	77%

The majority of people do not ask staff about further housing options but of those who did, around 75% of each group felt that staff were able to help.

5.3 General Comments

All groups were asked for general comments at the end of the questionnaire.

Of the applicants who responded there were many negative comments were made, mostly due to the lack of properties or the feeling that a high Priority Pass is needed if they are to be housed. There is also a suggestion from some that only those from an ethnic minority are re-housed by the

Housing providers in homehunt® NES. Here are some examples of negative comments:

“I think that the system should be slightly fairer for allocations and not just prioritise Gold passes as other people's problems and real and distressing too”.

“I think unless you are unemployed with a problem family and not from the area you apply for then you will be housed. Otherwise forget it, you have no chance”.

“It's a scam and I was disgusted with the way we were treated. I am white Scottish so come at the bottom of the pile. If i was a different race, I'm sure I would have been housed”.

“I think that the system should be slightly fairer for allocations and not just prioritise Gold passes as other people's problems and real and distressing too”.

There was a smaller number of positive comments such as:

“Homehunt offers a very good service. I have heard Castlehill & Tenants First also offer good service to their tenants. This is the main factor why I wish to be housed with homehunt over any other housing e.g Council”.

Two comments suggested being able to see the interior of a property on the internet.

Another comment suggested that it would be handy if there was a computer in a central location (similar to the old homehunt office in George Street) so that applicants who do not have a computer could access to apply for advertised properties.

Many comments were from elderly applicants who gain comfort from being registered so that when they wish to apply in the future they can do so.

Of those housed, the vast majority of comments were very positive. Most of these comments related to the service provided by staff members of either homehunt NES or the landlords or how pleased they are with their home. There were two negative comments regarding repair issues.

Of the agencies, there was only one comment made which was as follows: “I have had clients registered with Homehunt but I ask other professionals who understand the system to assist them. All my clients registered with homehunt have eventually been housed by ACC, as those that do not have families to assist and have to rely on professionals are disadvantaged by this system (I feel)”.

6.0 Conclusion

Overall, homehunt NES appears to provide a very good service for its applicants with most being satisfied with this. However, three years on from

the first survey, it is clear that many people are despondent with the lack of properties available and the number of applicants for each property. This could be due to the choice based lettings approach being very open and transparent.

The use of the internet survey provider, www.surveymonkey.com was found to be useful in terms of efficiency for applicants and agencies, and saving time and resources for staff. Surveymonkey translates the answers from the questions into various formats such as excel which can be saved for future reference and can provide graphs of tables. If this or another similar system is to be used again for the next survey, in order to save even more costs, it would be worthwhile compiling email addresses for those housed to allow them to also receive the survey by email.

