

APPENDIX C

Tenancy Strategy Consultation November '12 – February 2013 Face to face interviews

Bedford Court

Resident 1 (mother plus 1)

"I'm very happy with 5 years – I won't need the same kind of property forever. It seems very reasonable because my circumstances might change"

Resident 2 (couple)

"I'm happy with that approach – it sounds absolutely fine"

Resident 3 (couple plus teenager)

"It seems like a good idea. I've had 7 children & my circumstances have changed lots". When asked about how 5 years was as a duration – "it's not too long and it's not too short, and from my point of view I'm not tied to a property"

Resident 4 (mother & child)

"It would be fairer I suppose for people sitting on the waiting list. Bit concerned about the areas people would be asked to be moved to – I would want to stay near my family. I wouldn't want to move out of the area"

Resident 5 (single person)

Commented that he would like to see more information on the proposals (directed him to website). Said that he thought it would be very useful to tackle under-occupation and he gave a couple of examples of single people living in 3 and 4 bedroom council houses. He said "I'm aware of a circumstance where someone is in a 3 bedroom house and won't move". He added "But I'm not keen on moving people into the private sector".

Resident 6 (couple)

Sceptical of the proposals but could see that it would be useful for under-occupation. Gave examples of people they knew under-occupying. Commented that there were long waiting lists and people under-occupying wasn't fair.

Resident 7 (single person)

Disagreed with the proposals as she said she was looking for permanent accommodation and wanted to be able to buy her council house. She said "I've been homeless and I want my next place to be settled and to buy it".

Women's Refuges - in north & south of the district

Focus groups in each refuge – 3 participants in one, 5 in the other

Where tenant is asked to move because of under-occupation

- Mixed feelings on under occupation, can see that if a person is significantly under occupying then it's good to free up the accommodation for a family, but on the whole preference for people to be allowed to stay put – especially if they are old. There should be encouragement and it should be a choice to move.

- Strong feelings where the tenants are older and the home has been a family home 'I grew up in that house, I'd hate to see my mum have to move into a flat'.
- Might be some situations where the circumstances justify the person having to downsize – ie example of a family that got a bigger house because they were foster carers, and when they stopped fostering they should have moved back into a smaller house – but it should be on individual circumstances.

Other general thoughts

All residents expressed concern with 5 year tenancies, citing the lack of security and stability – 'there will be the worry that you might have to move', concerns about home making in that situation, about settling children into schools that they might have to leave. Although residents agreed that that having to move wouldn't be as bad if it was in the same area, and didn't cause children to need to change schools, but 'even just moving is hard'.

Disagree with asking people to move because their finances have improved. 'I'll have got a job after 5 years and they'll say 'get out', described as 'punishing people for improving their circumstances' and 'not fair'. Residents suggested making sure it's over a period, not a snapshot of improved income.

Concern about effect on people moving into private rent in marginal circumstances – previous experience of high rents, 'I've never been so broke', difficulties raising deposits, benefit caps and thresholds, feeling that you are much more vulnerable to ending up 'in a loop' if you are in private rent and you lose your job, and ending up homeless and in a hostel again. Will outgoings be taken into account – ie number of children, single parenthood, debts. More sympathetic to people moving out if their circumstances have improved such that they are very comfortably off.

People who are really ill shouldn't be expected to move.

Particular circumstances of people coming out of a refuge into a tenancy – someone in this situation has often already had to move their children to a different area. 'I've promised my daughter, "this is where we're going to live now".' Children in that situation shouldn't have to face upheaval again after 5 years.

There was concern that you could end up living closer to the person you have fled from; people who have already had to start a new life with their children, in a different area, shouldn't have to face the possibility of moving to a new area again.

Job Clubs

The 14 people interviewed at job club were a mix of social housing tenants, private tenants and owner-occupiers.

Most interviewees broadly agreed with the draft Tenancy Strategy, provided there was somewhere suitable for tenants to move to, and that finances had been assessed fairly. 'People shouldn't sit on family houses after their children have moved out'.

Widespread agreement with the use of 5 year tenancies to tackle anti-social behaviour, 'You are lucky to get a council place, you should look after it', alongside concern about

tackling existing nuisance neighbours – ‘It needs shaking up’, ‘It won’t be fair if you’re not doing something about my nuisance neighbour’.

People who agreed on principle with freeing up family houses reflected that it would be preferable if people didn’t have to move against their wishes, ‘Too much of a big stick’, with more emphasis on positive incentives.

Some interviewees were concerned about the difficulties of implementing the Strategy in a way which fairly took account of individual’s circumstances – ‘How far away is too far (to move)?’, ‘What if they can’t afford the removal costs’, ‘Older people get used to their neighbours’.