



**Giving the 'all clear': housing staff experience of the rehousing process in Transformational Regeneration Areas**

Ade Kearns and Laura Darling

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## Contents

Chapter	Title	Page
1	Background	3
2	Study aims, objectives and methods	5
3	Deciding on clearance and informing tenants	6
4	Tenant reactions, preferences and expectations	15
5	Meeting tenants' requirements	26
6	Supply and allocation of accommodation for rehousing	34
7	Moving tenants and clearing properties	50
8	Conclusion	56
	References	61
	Appendix: Interview topic guide	63

### Acknowledgements:

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## Chapter 1 Background

This chapter sets the context for the study and reports the situation in the three study areas at the time of the housing staff interviews.

Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) is currently in the process of rehousing tenants from over 20,000<sup>1</sup> GHA properties as part of a 15-year demolition and clearance programme. This programme started at stock transfer in 2003 and forms part of GHA's wider regeneration plans. It is closely linked to re-provisioning plans, and aims to support the Glasgow City Council (GCC) Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and the GHA Asset Management Strategy. At the time of this study, mid-2011, over 13,000 properties had been demolished city-wide<sup>2</sup>.

GoWell has been studying the process of regeneration in three of the city's Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs) since 2005: Red Road and Sighthill in the north of the city; and Shawbridge in the south. This has involved conducting interview surveys with residents living in the TRAs, as well as surveys of those who have moved out through clearance. Reports on the experiences and quality of life of these two groups have been published over the past two years<sup>3-4</sup>.

In relation to the 'Remainers' (those continuing to live in the TRAs) we found that intentions to move home had strengthened over time, but not just for demolition reasons. Meanwhile, satisfaction with their homes had declined among Remainers, while satisfaction with their neighbourhoods remained unchanged.

Among the 'Outmovers' (those who had relocated to other areas due to clearance), we found higher levels of residential satisfaction and a stronger sense of community, post-move, compared with the experiences of Remainers. Outmovers reported reasonably high levels of choice about the movement process (in terms of the areas and properties they moved to), but also significant levels of problems with regard to being kept informed about when and where they would move, as well as with high levels of movement costs.

Having gathered survey evidence about the outcomes of relocation, we wished to understand what lay behind these findings by investigating the clearance process itself. How was clearance carried out by GHA as an organisation and by housing staff working for Local Housing Organisations managing the areas and housing stock to be cleared?

The three areas we are studying were designated as part of the second (Shawbridge and Sighthill) and third (Red Road) phases of the city's TRA programme across eight areas. The eight TRAs were formally identified by GHA in December 2006, although they had been selected as areas needing regeneration a year earlier<sup>5</sup>. During 2006, 'indicative' masterplans for each area were produced by consultants after community consultation processes. The TRA approach was adopted in principle by Glasgow

City Council in March 2007, although work on the areas had already commenced by then<sup>6</sup>.

At the time of this study (second half of 2011), the following circumstances pertained to demolition and clearance in our three TRA study areas:

- Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the dwellings due to be demolished in each of the three areas had been cleared by mid-2011.
- Within the three TRA sites themselves, the intended replacement new build dwellings had been largely completed only in the case of Red Road (though even in this case, three-quarters of the replacement dwellings were to be built elsewhere), while no new build had yet been completed on site in the case of Sighthill and Shawbridge (the first phase of new build in Shawbridge was completed in March 2012).

Since the study reported here took place, there have been two major developments in relation to Glasgow's TRAs and to one of our study areas in particular. In March 2012, legal agreements between GHA, GCC and the Scottish Government were completed to enable the establishment of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to oversee the TRA programme<sup>7</sup>. Crucially, the agreements facilitated the recycling of capital receipts from land disposals within the TRAs to be recycled across the programme. Together with the establishment of the SPV itself, this financial arrangement has enabled the SPV to produce three-yearly budgets and operational plans for the programme, with a view to accelerating progress across the TRAs, beyond the Early Action Programme of three TRAs (none of which are in our study).

In September 2012, GCC identified one of our study areas, Sighthill, as the potential site for an Athletes Village as part of its bid to host the 2018 Youth Olympics. In the event, the bid was unsuccessful, although the City Council undertook that the regeneration process in Sighthill would 'go ahead earlier than planned regardless...'<sup>8</sup>. This has involved producing a new masterplan for the area that confirms an intention to demolish all the existing tower blocks on the estate.

This report is one of a pair from our study of the clearance process. An accompanying report from interviews with relocated tenants is also available on the GoWell website, entitled: *'Getting a move on': tenant experiences of the rehousing process in Transformational Regeneration Areas.*<sup>9</sup>

## **Chapter 2 Study aims, objectives and methods**

This chapter states the aims, objectives and methods of the study. Further information is provided in an appendix.

### **Study aims and objectives**

The principal aim of this study was to understand how the process of clearing occupants from regeneration areas, in preparation for demolition (mostly, but not entirely from multi-storey flats), worked in practice.

The subsidiary objectives of this aim were to understand the following:

- How is the clearance process intended to work, and what balance is struck between meeting occupants' needs and securing demolition and regeneration objectives?
- Does the process of clearance vary between regeneration areas, and is there scope for housing staff to exercise discretion and offer flexibility?
- What factors serve to make clearance more difficult to achieve?
- What factors are key to a successful, smooth clearance process?

### **Study methods**

The study comprised in-depth interviews with both housing staff and with tenants who had been relocated. This report covers the staff experience of clearance. There is an accompanying report on the findings from the tenant interviews. All interviews were conducted in the period June to November 2011.

Nine housing staff were interviewed, three in each of the TRAs included within the GoWell Programme: Red Road, Sighthill and Shawbridge. In each case, an interview was conducted with the Housing Operations Manager who had strategic responsibility for overseeing clearance in the area; plus a joint interview with two Housing Officers responsible for clearance in the area on a day-to-day basis. Interviews took place in local housing offices. The topic guide used for the interviews is given in an appendix to this report.

Relevant documents on policy and practice were also reviewed, including GHA policy statements and policy reviews, and local rehousing strategies and clearance reports.

### Chapter 3 Deciding on clearance and informing tenants

This chapter sets out the formal process for decision-making about the demolition of properties and reports on the local housing officers' understanding and interpretation of these processes.

#### The formal process

The formal process for making decisions about clearance and demolition is illustrated in Table 1. This involves a mixture of communication with individual residents as well as consultation with the community at either end of the process. The decision to demolish is made jointly by the Local Housing Organisation (LHO) which manages the stock on behalf of and with, the owner of the buildings, Glasgow Housing Association (GHA). A recommendation to demolish is approved for governance purposes by GHA's Board, and previously its Business Transformation and Regeneration Committee.

Table 1. The formal process of deciding on clearance and informing residents.

Community consultation / public meetings / newsletters
↓
Regeneration masterplans
↓
LHO committee report & decision (including business plan input) (Indicative plan pre-Board decision and finalised /approved after)
↓
Indicative LHO rehousing strategy (incorporating GHA and RSL rehousing plans)
↓
GHA Board approval
↓
Approval of LHO rehousing strategy / activation of rehousing / demolition process (delegated authority)
↓
One to one tenant interviews to discuss rehousing requirements / options
↓
GHA demolition programming
↓
Further letters and newsletters to tenants
↓
Public meetings
↓
Delivery of rehousing and demolition processes

## **Community consultation**

Staff reported that attendance at community meetings about regeneration – including demolition, retention and new build – was generally low. Where public meetings had been held, staff said that they were either *“poorly attended – you get good attendance if you’re discussing kitchens and bathrooms, but not demolitions”* (Housing Staff 1) or *“well attended, but by those who are already active in the area and know about the proposals anyway”* (Housing Staff 5). This seemed to be the case across all study areas.

Accordingly, a variety of consultation methods were used including public meetings, newsletters and communication with residents’ groups. Residents were therefore considered to be aware of regeneration proposals and the possibility of demolitions taking place. But despite the variety of communication methods used by the housing organisations, knowledge was often obtained indirectly, and staff perceived there to be problems of misinformation and ill-informed rumours circulating within the communities.

## **Masterplans**

The aim for Glasgow’s TRAs was “to deliver master planned area regeneration, which is designed to create new, mixed, sustainable communities which contribute to Glasgow’s ongoing renewal”<sup>10</sup>. Consultants were appointed to work with the communities to produce initial masterplans for the areas with options, including a ‘preferred’ option for the extent of demolition and/or retention of the existing blocks. In all three cases, the masterplans recommended demolition of all the multi-storey blocks within the estates.

The role of masterplans varied between the three study areas in both the extent to which they addressed the wider regeneration of the areas and the extent to which staff referred to them and saw them as determining plans for the area.

In one area, a clear masterplan was referred to which covered the wider regeneration of the area, including creating more mixed and stable communities, and attracting funding to the area. The demolitions in this study area seem most closely linked to future regeneration plans, and staff referred frequently to the future plans for the area based on this.

In the other study areas, staff were either unaware of any plans for the area or seemed to see them as irrelevant to future regeneration. They felt that there was a lack of clarity on what was happening after clearance and demolition, that clearances were happening in isolation, and that this made it more difficult when both rehousing tenants and when speaking to tenants about the need to move out. Staff did not

have the information on future plans to give to tenants to help explain the need for demolition and rehousing. It is worth noting that the masterplans were produced five years prior to the interviews conducted for this study, although if they had become less relevant over time, nothing appeared to have replaced them that staff could refer to.

Housing Staff 1 said that there was *“demolition planned without any plans to redevelop the area”* and that it *“wasn’t clear how the regeneration plans linked with demolition and rehousing”*. However, this was not the case for all staff, with Housing Staff 7 reporting that *“work was going well”* and they have a *“good relationship with GHA regeneration team”*.

Thus, clearance and demolitions had been moving forward, but regeneration plans were not seen to have kept pace with this. It was not clear to staff that demolition decisions were made according to redevelopment requirements, nor that ‘reprovisioning’ housing had been developed to fit with a wider masterplan for the area. In actual fact, the original masterplans for the areas partly fell victim to the economic downturn which made their market-led form of redevelopment undeliverable.

The masterplans were a means by which to ensure, firstly, that regeneration achieved its goal of being comprehensive, mixed and sustainable, and, secondly, that demolition was closely tied to redevelopment in purpose and timing. But this became difficult for a number of reasons, related to the economic downturn and also planning processes and partnership working. Housing staff found the somewhat uncertain redevelopment context to be a slightly more difficult situation in which to carry out clearance and rehousing.

### **The decision to demolish**

The decision to carry out clearance and to demolish the blocks was made through the LHO Committees. They worked with residents to bring forward plans for the GHA stock in the areas through a Committee Report. Sometimes this was based on the work carried out on the masterplans, but at other times it was based on LHO discussions with residents alone.

GHA policy and clearance committee reports suggest that the decision to demolish is based on a consideration of the viability of the stock, looking at demand, rental income, improvement and maintenance costs and so on. However, many local housing staff suggested that the decision was less objective and involved a greater role for residents. Staff said that discussions were held with the community on the idea of demolition, and on which blocks if any should be demolished or retained. The result was that the community suggested blocks for demolition which they perceived to have the most social problems, often based on their views of the existing tenants



and not on the housing itself. A business case was then made to support this using evidence on demand, rental income, improvement and maintenance costs and so on. This, then, was the view of local housing staff as to how decisions about demolition were arrived at. However, GHA centrally confirmed that the most important factors influencing demolition decisions were the Housing Future Assessment (HFA) process, including community consultation, and the approval of a rehousing strategy along with the governance around that process.

However, in one study area staff suggested that a more objective approach had been taken. While open days were held and the community were strongly in favour of demolition, the decision was influenced largely by the work carried out with consultants, the resulting masterplan, and on the stock conditions survey which estimated improvement costs of £50k-£90k per unit. This meant that they *“were not viable, so the decision was taken to demolish”*. (Housing Staff 9)

Staff in two of the study areas expressed serious concerns over the length of time the process took. In one area, there was no agreement across the community on whether the stock should be retained or demolished which resulted in protracted discussions with different groups within the community. While this led to lengthy delays in the process, it was not just in this area that staff expressed concerns over timescales. This was mentioned as one of the major difficulties staff encountered with the clearance process. Housing Staff 1 said that *“the decision to demolish can take two to three years to make”*, while *“justifying the decision to demolish to the organisation”* is a major concern. Housing Staff 4 said that there was *“too much consultation”* and that *“quicker decisions”* were needed on demolitions.

The decision to demolish a block can take time due to the need for several things: an HFA opinion on the future of the block; a co-ordinated phasing of the clearance and demolition within GHA’s business plan; and the development of a rehousing strategy for the present occupants of the block. Staff’s main concerns about the time taken to decide on demolition were:

- The fact tenants are living in poor housing conditions for a long time waiting on the decision to be taken. Housing Staff 4 said that while there was *“long debate amongst a small number of people, the rest were still living in terrible conditions, even though the money was there to spend”*.
- Delays in being designated an ‘active clearance’ meant that tenants could miss out on opportunities for rehousing that come up, and in particular, new build opportunities.
- The impact of uncertainty on tenants’ wellbeing, when they know that demolitions are a possibility but have to wait for a decision to be made. Tenants can also feel

frustrated, as their perception is often that a decision to demolish has been taken but they are not being told about it (even if this is not the case).

Once agreement is reached with the community on proposals, the case for demolition is made in a report to the LHO Committee. After this has been approved, a report goes to the GHA board (formerly it went to the Business Transformation and Regeneration Committee) for their approval, alongside a rehousing strategy with approval by the Director of Housing. At this stage the area will formally receive 'active clearance' designation and clearance can begin.

## **Rehousing strategy**

Prior to approval to begin clearance and demolitions, a rehousing strategy should be written by the LHO and approved firstly by the LHO Committee and then GHA at Executive Director and Area Director level. The delegated authority approval of the rehousing strategy is the catalyst for active clearance to commence.

GHA's guidance on rehousing strategies sets out what should be covered. The strategy should be written in consultation with residents and other registered social landlords (RSLs) in the area. It should be based on a social study of the area and should provide details of how the LHO will meet the rehousing needs of residents. It should include a detailed examination of demand and supply, including both core stock and new build reprovisioning. It should include information on both tenants' rehousing needs (e.g. apartment size) and tenants' preferences (e.g. areas).

However, it is clear from the housing staff interviews that rehousing strategies have not operated quite in this way. In all of the areas covered, detailed information on tenant preferences is only established after the clearance is approved through tenant rehousing interviews. Thus, the earlier, approved rehousing strategy is required to be reviewed and updated.

In the three study areas, the rehousing strategies were also the documents used to seek approval to begin clearance and demolition. While the strategies are different in each area, they are based on the same template. Housing Staff 1 said that "*generally it's the same document tweaked for each area*". The strategies do contain some basic information on demand and supply in most areas. One strategy states that "*turnover and new build can meet the demands for rehousing in area*", although no details are given. In another area, the strategy was "*based on public meetings, then what residents wanted in terms of rehousing – to stay in the area, move elsewhere etc*" (Housing Staff 1).

The rehousing strategy for one study area however states that there is no information on housing demand available (perhaps a reference to tenant preferences rather than demand) and that this will be done through the clearance interview process, a clear move away from doing this prior to approval.

Staff in the three study areas did not raise the lack of demand and supply information in the rehousing strategies as an issue. However, it is likely to have an impact on the links between clearance and rehousing, as there is a lack of co-ordination of clearance timing and new build developments<sup>a</sup>. It is also likely to have an impact on the co-ordination of clearances city-wide, an issue raised by several of the staff as slowing down rehousing.

It had been assumed that both rehousing timing and multiple clearances would be co-ordinated through Rehousing Strategies. However, the reality is very complex with a series of inter-dependent assessments and decisions: the demolition phasing, rehousing timing, and available new build sites across the city are closely linked and dependent on each other, making the assessment of the situation at any one time, in any one place, a difficult judgement.

## **Phasing**

Once the clearance has been approved by the GHA Business Transformation and Regeneration Committee, the phasing of demolitions is decided centrally by GHA, in liaison with the LHO, and taking account of GHA Business Plan and capacity issues (financial and contractor considerations). This is based on a range of management information such as “*turnover, income and the location of demolition properties*”. (Housing Staff 2). The phasing of demolitions in any one area thus depends upon such factors as: the capacity of demolition contractors; the housing needs and preferences of tenants in the blocks; the speed of rehousing and availability of new build housing in the immediate or nearby area.

## **Letters to tenants and arranging interviews**

Once the properties have been given ‘active clearance’ designation and phasing has been agreed, letters are sent to residents to inform them that they are in an active clearance area. The letter states that their block is being cleared for demolition and invites them to an interview to discuss their rehousing options. The letter is the first formal confirmation of the demolitions, although tenants will most likely already know about the forthcoming demolition by that time.

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<sup>a</sup> In 2007, Communities Scotland (now the Scottish Housing Regulator) said that “*GHA has not shown that its planning has effectively linked its new housing programme with its demolitions programme*”.

The letter informs tenants that their property is to be cleared for demolition and that they will be invited to an interview to discuss their rehousing options. The letter will either give them a date and time to attend a rehousing interview, or will tell them that they will be invited to attend an interview in the next few weeks. The tenant is asked to let the Housing Officers know if they cannot make the time they have been given. The interviews are either held in the local offices or in the flats themselves.

Staff reported that the system of giving set dates and times for rehousing interviews worked well. The majority of residents attended the interviews as arranged or contacted the office to arrange an alternate time where this did not suit them.

However, there were a minority of tenants in all three areas who did not attend the interviews. While some just needed further reminders, most tenants not attending fell into two groups: those who did not want to move home and therefore ignored the letter, and those who had support needs (such as addiction problems). Of those tenants who didn't turn up for the interview, *"some got in touch and did it at a later date. Some had language difficulties so we got an interpreter. Some just didn't want to move"* (Housing Staff 5).

When a tenant did not attend their interview, efforts were made by both the Housing Officers and concierges to contact the tenant and ensure that an interview took place. This could usually be done quite quickly and did not delay the process or take up too much additional staff time.

Staff also reported that there was a significant number of tenants who abandoned their tenancies before the interviews could take place. This was discovered when Housing Officers or concierges tried to contact them about missing their interviews. As all tenants of at least one year standing would have received home loss and disturbance payments on ending their tenancy (see section 14.1), those abandoning their homes were losing out on these payments and staff assumed that they had not understood the clearance process. As Housing Staff 6 said, *"it doesn't make senses as they would have got a payment to leave!"*.

The process was very similar in the three study areas, as were the outcomes. The main variations were:

- The extent to which public meetings and other methods were used, in addition to the letters.
- Whether the letters invited the tenant to an interview or whether this was done in the following weeks.
- Whether the interviews were held in the local office or in the flats.

These differences did not seem to affect the outcomes in informing residents and ensuring attendance at the interviews.

## Summary

- Regular communication with residents through several different channels is appropriate in clearance situations; otherwise, rumour, speculation and misinformation can dominate.
- The lack of a firm masterplan in all areas was seen as a disadvantage to housing staff conducting clearance, as it weakened the link between clearance and redevelopment. This in turn made the rationale for decisions on demolition unclear, made clearance harder to justify to tenants, and reduced the availability of new build housing to those being moved. This difficulty has been exacerbated by the economic downturn which has raised the need to revisit earlier plans, which in turn has made the situation somewhat uncertain in the view of local housing staff.
- It is not straightforward to say why particular blocks are being demolished or retained. Three types of considerations are involved, each of which might lead to different conclusions: the requirements of an agreed masterplan for the area; management criteria and stock viability in terms of factors such as level of demand, rental income, costs of improvement and ongoing maintenance; and community consultation and representations. Some staff felt that community input to such decisions was more subjective and often based on views about the occupants of the blocks (good or bad), rather than for management or strategic reasons.
- Staff were concerned that in some cases, decisions about demolition took too long to make and that this raised issues of equity, since delay can disadvantage and be to the detriment of current occupants.
- Rehousing strategies have not proved an effective means of determining residents' rehousing needs prior to clearance, as a lot depends upon tenant preferences which are only identified after the clearance decision has been taken. Neither have rehousing strategies functioned in the way originally intended as the link between clearances and re-provisioning. This can have a city-wide impact on the co-ordination of these activities and reduce the housing options for clearance tenants, particularly in the earlier phases of clearance.

- The practical reality of demolition, clearance, and rehousing represents a complex set of interdependencies, especially in circumstances where: clearance is a city-wide programme involving many communities at once; reprovisioning is being provided by multiple RSLs rather than by a single organisation; demolition has to be phased to fit in with the requirements of both the GHA business plan and the capacity of demolition contractors; and the amount and timing of the availability of land for new build by GHA or others is emerging, rather than known for definite beforehand. This represents a juggling act which inhibits the ability of documents such as the masterplan and rehousing strategy to be as influential on the process as expected. However, both documents set out the initial intentions and direction of travel for implementing regeneration, as well as the broad areas where it is intended to rehouse tenants.
- Some proactive work may be required to prior-identify any tenants with support needs in order to ensure that they understand what is happening and that they attend for interview about their relocation.

## Chapter 4 Tenant reactions, preferences and expectations

This chapter reports housing staff experiences of tenant reactions to news about demolition, and their overview of tenants' preferences and expectations of rehousing.

### Tenant interviews

Tenants were asked to attend an interview with a housing officer, during which the following things were covered:

- Tenants could express their feelings about demolition and the need to move.
- Tenants were provided with information on the clearance process, including:
  - Likely timescales.
  - The stated limit of three reasonable offers of rehousing.
  - The payments they would be entitled to.
- Tenants' housing needs and preferences – e.g. in terms of house sizes, types and locations – were discussed and tenants were given assistance to complete a rehousing application form.
- Housing options were discussed, including whether to seek rehousing in new build housing or existing core stock, and whether to stay with GHA or move to housing with another RSL.

### Positive reactions to demolition

Staff reported that most tenants they had spoken to were positive about the proposal to demolish the multi-storey flats. While this was true across a wide range of resident groups, younger tenants and tenants who had not been in their tenancy for a long period were generally seen as being keener to take the opportunity to move to a new home or new area.

The main factors identified by staff as influencing a positive reaction to demolition were:

***Problems in existing home and area:*** Most tenants were living in very poor quality housing and staff said that many tenants were desperate to move. This related to both the physical state of the housing and the problems of antisocial behaviour within the blocks. Similarly, tenants often said that they felt unsafe or unhappy in the surrounding areas and wanted to leave.

**Opportunity to move to a better property or area:** Many tenants saw the demolitions as a great opportunity to move to a better property than they were in or, in some cases, to a better area. Staff said that often tenants would not have qualified for rehousing under the normal allocation system, so this gave them the chance of a move that they would never have had otherwise. Housing Staff 2 also noted that “A lot of tenants are very happy with the opportunity to move to a new build house” and that this was a strong factor for many tenants. Those with this opportunity seemed more likely to be pleased with the proposals than others.

**Home loss and disturbance payments:** The final factor mentioned by staff was the payments made for home loss and disturbance. Staff said that these were particularly welcomed by tenants, and increased the likelihood of them being satisfied with the proposals.

### **Negative reactions to demolition**

Staff identified three groups of tenants who were more likely to react negatively to the proposal to demolish the blocks and relocate the occupants: older tenants; long-term tenants; and ethnic minority residents. It should be noted that, while those tenants who were dissatisfied tended to fall into these groups, this did not mean that everyone who had lived in their property for a long period was unhappy with the decision.

Staff said that the reactions of the two former groups were different, with older tenants being “*resigned to the move*” (Housing Staff 2) and “*more apprehensive, but they haven’t moaned, they’ve just got on with things*” (Housing Staff 5). Staff said older tenants often said once they moved that “*they wished they’d done it years ago*” (Housing Staff 6). The younger tenants were seen by staff as more likely to complain about the decision if they were unhappy, “*having more of a ‘me culture’, wanting this and that to move*” (Housing Staff 5).

Staff identified three main factors influencing dissatisfaction with demolition among some tenants:

**Attachment to the home:** For tenants of all ages who have lived in the property for a long time, there is often a strong attachment to their home or area. Many tenants mention that they grew up in the area or brought up their children in the house and therefore they have an emotional attachment to it based on memories.

**Upheaval:** For some of the older tenants, the thought of the upheaval of moving, and sometimes the expense, is the reason they want to stay.

**Settled in the area:** For all three groups, but particularly minority ethnic groups, the reasons were often based on having friends in the blocks and feeling settled there. Staff said that minority ethnic groups often felt safe in the areas as they were so



mixed, and were concerned about moving to other areas where they thought they would stand out more. This was particularly the case in the two north Glasgow study areas, but was less so in Shawbridge.

## **Housing needs and preferences**

The application form records both a tenant's needs and their preferences. The tenant's needs are the criteria used to determine what housing they are entitled to under GHA's allocations policy. The main determining factor is usually household size and composition, as this would determine what size of property they would require. Also covered are areas such as medical requirements which could determine which floor they could be allocated. This information is factual and therefore the Housing Officers are simply recording the information from the tenant.

Tenant preferences include:

- Tenure and landlord.
- House type and size.
- New build or core stock.
- Other requirements.
- Areas.

### ***Tenure and landlord:***

In each of the study areas there was a small number of tenants who decided to organise their own rehousing. This usually meant moving from the social rented sector by using the home loss and disturbance payments to secure a private let. Housing Staff 2 said that *"Not all of them want to be rehoused – they use the money to take a private let"*.

A previous GHA study had found that tenants wanted to remain GHA tenants and *"had little interest in other landlords or tenures"*<sup>1</sup>. However, staff said that this did not appear to be the case in the study areas. Tenants were happy to change landlords if this would mean being offered a new build property or an area they wanted. Housing Staff 3 said that *"a lot of tenants wanted to stay with GHA, but were happy to move to other RSLs if it meant they could get new build"*. Initial delays with GHA's own new build programme has meant a stronger reliance on the re-provisioning programme of new build housing provided by other RSLs. For example, this was the case in the Shawbridge TRA, where a number of tenants were offered the choice of new build housing in nearby RSL developments in the absence of GHA new build being delivered in time.

## ***House size***

The main determinant of need is household size. Tenants were rehoused in properties that met the size requirements of their household at the time, not in the size of property they were currently occupying. This means that tenants were often rehoused into larger properties than they currently occupied.

While GHA social surveys<sup>1</sup> suggest that most households in clearance areas require smaller properties, staff in all areas mentioned a high level of need for larger units and delays to the process waiting for this size of property. The GCC local housing strategy also identifies a need for larger family housing. There are two possible explanations for staff in all three study areas mentioning the lack of larger units.

First, there could be a concentration of larger families in certain clearance areas. This could be due to the size of the stock meaning it has a high percentage of large households, or the fact that there are a high number of refugee households. Staff said that “*refugee households in particular often need larger units*” (Housing Staff 2), having been housed in smaller properties and then having had more children or other family members arriving.

Second, the smaller number of larger units city-wide and the low turnover in these could mean that, while the number of clearance households requiring large units is small, the impact on clearance could be significant if they all take a long time to rehouse. The Housing Officers would therefore be more aware of these as they would be remaining in blocks for a longer period.

## ***House type***

As would perhaps be expected, staff said that most tenants ideally wanted to move to a house with a front and back door and “*lots want a garden*” (Housing Staff 3). Many tenants also considered local services (such as transport, shops and schools) to be very important too, and part of their desire to remain in the area. The potential trade-off between lower density housing and reduced local services did not seem to have been considered, and while this could have been raised in the course of discussions on regeneration and masterplanning, as we know, most tenants did not attend consultation events or take part in discussions on the redevelopment of the area. In any case, as noted above and in the accompanying tenant interview report, some people moved to another area to access new build housing not yet available in their original location.

Some tenants wanted to remain in multistorey flats, and were willing to move to other parts of the city to be able to do this. Staff mentioned tenants who had moved from the north of the city to the south so that they could remain in a multistorey, and

others moved to unimproved stock in Sighthill to do this. This tended to be older tenants or younger tenants who had lived most of their lives in multistorey flats.

While a few tenants had positive reasons for wanting to stay in multistorey flats, (mainly those who enjoyed the view and didn't want to lose this), most seemed to want to stay because of safety fears about other house types. This was due to being on high levels and because of the support available from the concierges. It seemed to be viewed by some as a very low-level form of supported / sheltered accommodation. Housing Staff 5 said that some tenants "*want a multi with a concierge. They've often been in a multi all their life, so they don't want to be on the ground floor, they feel safer higher up. And if they have a good landing, it's very secure with burglar-proof doors etc.*"

### ***New build or core stock***

Housing Staff discuss the options of moving to existing stock or new build with tenants. In all three areas staff said that, while new build would be their first choice of house type, tenants usually based their decision on two other factors: length of time they would have to wait for new build, and, most importantly, the area the housing was in.

Where the wait for new build was significantly longer than that for core stock, most tenants did not want to wait. In one area, tenants moving to new build had two moves – the first to unimproved existing multistorey flats (to allow their properties to be demolished) and the second to the new build property once it was completed. (In fact, within our study areas, there are two instances where the new build took place on the footprint of demolished buildings). While some tenants felt that this was worth doing to secure a new build property, many wanted one move and to be settled in their new home. Housing Staff 8 said that "*They were all were given the choice of either rehousing to existing core stock or 'decant' to a multi and wait for new build in the area. As New Build wasn't there and it would mean two moves, there was less interest*".

Most tenants saw the area as being the most important aspect of the move, not whether the property was existing or new. This may have been helped by the fact that all existing properties they were offered were refurbished to a minimum of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and so were of a higher standard than their existing homes. However, in one area where there were no new or improved properties in the immediate area, some tenants chose to move to unimproved flats to remain in the same area. Housing Staff 6 said that "*At first there was high demand for new build, but when they realised where it would be, a lot changed their minds. And when they saw what they were getting with refurbished flats they were happy with that*". This seemed to hold true whether the tenant wanted to remain in the area they were in, or wanted to move elsewhere in the city, mirroring findings in GCC's

2007 report on demand<sup>11</sup> which suggested that “households would often prioritise area over house type and quality”.

### **Other requirements**

The application form allows tenants to add additional information on specific preferences they may have. ***This can include streets they would not move to, floor levels they would accept (e.g. not ground floor, or not above second floor), and requests to be housed near to family or neighbours.*** Staff said that issues such as remaining in an area because of schools or work do not need to be listed in this part of the form, as these areas are covered by the selection of preferred areas (see below).

When an allocation is being made, the Housing Officer will look on the allocation system at the tenants who are highest up on the list. They will check the additional notes and will not make an offer if the tenant’s preferences do not match the vacant property. Therefore, a tenant may limit their offers by stating preferences for particular streets or floor levels on the form.

Staff said that it was very unusual for tenants to ask to be rehoused near neighbours or family. Where this does happen, it is often where family members are providing support or caring for others, e.g. in one area a mother and daughter had asked to be housed together. Staff said that, while this was not possible in existing stock, it could sometimes be done in new build developments. However, even then it was not always possible as each tenant would have to qualify for the new build, and the right size and type of housing would have to be next to each other. However, Housing Staff 9 emphasised that “allocations are not based on this” and Housing Staff 6 said that “we can’t promise this, but we can see what comes up”. However, some areas seemed more likely to look at these requests than others. Housing Staff 3 said that “this has been possible to arrange with new build properties. We worked with the RSL building the housing, and could use plans to allocate housing to ‘fit people in’. This can’t usually be done with existing stock though”.

### **Areas:**

While house type and quality, and whether it is newly-built or not, all play a part in tenants’ preferences, the main factor is usually the area. Housing Staff 6 said that “Area, not house type, is the main factor. Tenants will turn down new build in other areas”.

This is backed up by findings in a recent GCC report on demand<sup>11</sup> which states that:

*“In choosing housing, area location and ‘quality’ were key considerations... Most indicated that they would be willing to accept a property that was in poor physical condition if it was in the ‘right’ area.”*

The application form allows tenants to choose up to six geographical areas they would like to be considered for housing in. They can put as many or as few areas as they like. Staff discuss this with the tenants and offer them advice.

### **Selecting areas and advice from staff:**

When deciding on which areas to list, there are a number of factors which staff inform residents about so that they can take them into account.

**Number of areas listed:** listing a high number of areas means that there will be a wider pool of vacant properties becoming available for the tenant to be considered for. The tenant would therefore have a better chance of getting an offer quickly. However, if these offers were in areas the tenant was not interested in, it could mean them receiving their obligatory three offers without finding one they were happy with. The tenant should therefore only list areas they would be willing to move to.

**Popularity of areas:** listing more popular areas means that the turnover is likely to be low, so fewer vacant properties will become available. It also means that, where properties do become available, there is likely to be high demand from other tenants, so it is likely that only those with a long GHA tenancy or medical priority would qualify. This could mean a longer wait for tenants before housing becomes available or, in some areas, mean that no offers would come up.

**Supply of housing in the area:** certain sub-areas in Glasgow no longer have GHA stock following Second Stage Transfers (SSTs), while others have a very limited supply of housing. Listing these areas would mean little chance of a vacant property becoming available.

**House types and sizes in the area:** some areas will not have the type of housing or the size of housing that the tenant requires. For example, there may be no larger properties, or very few ground floor properties in some areas. Listing these areas would mean that suitable vacant properties for the tenant were unlikely to become available.

The advice given on which preferences a tenant should list relies heavily on Housing Officers having a good knowledge of the existing housing stock, turnover and new build timings in both their own area and others. Staff raised the lack of information on stock in different areas (size, house types, turnover, new build) as an issue and said that it limited their ability to advise tenants. It was suggested that an information sheet containing details for each area would be useful.

Housing Staff 3 also said that “*the choice-based letting system being used in the West is really useful because you can see what housing’s coming up*”. Homechoice was a pilot choice-based lettings scheme operated by GHA in the west of Glasgow since 2009. A positive evaluation<sup>12</sup> led GHA to extend the scheme across the whole city, now called Homefinder. This new system makes more information available to both staff and tenants about available properties across the city, and tenants can express interest in particular properties based on the information provided.

### ***Tenants’ area preferences:***

In most cases people wanted to stay in either the immediate area or in the wider local area. While no figures were available, staff said that the split was similar in all areas, as follows:

- 30% wanted to stay in the immediate area
- 40% wanted to stay in the wider local area
- 30% wanted to move elsewhere in the city.

**‘Territorial’ nature of areas:** Staff often commented on people being very ‘territorial’ and not wanting to move away from where they were born. Linked to this, they also commented on how small tenants saw their areas as being, so a move a few streets away could be seen by tenants as moving to a new area. Housing Staff 1 said that “*people are very territorial, they see their area as very small. Also, they will generally always stay in the north, south, east or west of the city*”.

**Positive reasons for staying in local area:** The reasons given by tenants for wanting to stay in the same area were a mix of positive and negative. Some tenants had social links to the area (family, schools, friends, church, clubs) and others had work links (working locally or somewhere with good transport links). All three areas were seen as offering good links to the city-centre and amenities. Housing Staff 5

said *“they want to stay in the area for all different reasons: relatives, habit, neighbours, older people have home helps and doctors they don’t want to change...”*.

**Negative reasons for staying in local area:** However, some wanted to stay because they felt they would be seen as “outsiders” in other areas, or because they thought other areas might be unsafe. It appeared that people would often stay in the area as a “better the devil you know” approach.

As this information was anecdotal, it is not possible to measure if people wanted to stay nearby for positive or negative reasons, but staff mentioned both in equal number and gave the impression the split was even.

**Refugees:** Refugee families often wanted to remain in the Sighthill or Red Road areas, or move there from Shawbridge. Housing Staff 9 said that *“many wanted (to go) back to Sighthill”*. Staff said that this is because they feel settled there, and because there are large numbers of refugees and international students which gives them a feeling of security. It was also suggested that the local Scottish community is more welcoming than in other areas due to work that has been carried out in recent years.

**Previous homelessness:** Those housed through homelessness legislation are more likely to want to move area than others. This is because they often want to move to areas closer to friends or family, and don’t have the same connections to the area. Housing Staff 8 said that *“Those housed through homelessness legislation often wanted to move to other areas for family reasons etc”*.

### **Tenant expectations**

When attending the interview, staff reported that the expectations of tenants were often unrealistic initially. This could be in terms of the area they wanted to be housed in, or the type of housing they expected to be offered. Staff felt that this was because tenants thought clearance would give them the option of any GHA property, when in reality they still had to be housed through the normal allocations system. This meant that, although they had clearance priority, they still had to qualify for the size of property and those with longer lengths of tenancies and medical need had higher priority than those with shorter tenancies (see below).

However, in most cases, after the Housing Officers explained the offers they were likely to receive (based on their points and on the turnover and stock in different areas) tenants were realistic with the areas and house types they selected on the application form (and ultimately accepted offers for). Housing Staff 3 observed that *“Residents are generally quite realistic in their expectations, although most start with higher expectations (often not understanding that they still have to be housed through the allocations policy)”*.

### ***Unrealistic expectations:***

Those who have high demands initially *“realise after six to 12 months that the properties or areas they want are not becoming available and are more realistic, especially as they don’t want to be left in the blocks at the end”* (Housing Staff 2). Housing Staff 5 emphasised the impact of being one of the remaining tenants in a blocks, saying that *“eventually aspirations subside when they become the last half dozen in the block”*.

### ***Refugees:***

Staff in some areas felt that refugees often had higher expectations and were more demanding than other tenants. They thought that this was because they were often *“professionals who were highly educated and had owned property before coming to the UK, so they expect more”*. (Housing Staff 5) However, this view was not shared by all staff, with Housing Staff 4 feeling that *“aspirations are too low, especially among asylum seekers. They seem very grateful and courteous, so are maybe not expecting better housing. Also, there seems to be a fear of the unknown for them”*.

### **Summary**

- The majority response to news of clearance and demolition was positive, mainly due to the opportunity provided to move to a better home and area. Younger tenants and those with shorter tenancies were the most positive group.
- Older tenants and longer-term tenants (though younger) were more likely to react negatively to the news of clearance. However, after moving, older tenants were said to have *“wished they had moved earlier”*.
- Staff reported that ethnic minority tenants were concerned about moving to areas with less diversity of resident. They felt more settled and safer in their existing areas, with large numbers of foreign-born residents. In general, it



seemed that staff found it less easy to understand the expectations and behaviours of refugee tenants, with some staff feeling refugees had higher than usual expectations of the forthcoming move, and others lower expectations.

- The strongest preference expressed by tenants in clearance situations was for the area of future residence. Generally, the quality of the area mattered more than the quality of the dwelling. The majority of tenants (around 70%) wanted to stay in the same neighbourhood or in the local area, for a mixture of positive (social and work links) and negative (feeling an “outsider” elsewhere) reasons. Most also wanted to move to a house with a front and back door, and many wanted a garden.
- Staff advised tenants about how their choice of areas might limit their offers of rehousing – if too few in number, popular, with low supply of GHA stock, or with few suitable properties. It is not clear how such advice influences tenant preferences as expressed on their rehousing application form.
- However, housing staff also admitted that they lacked sufficient knowledge of housing sizes, types, turnover and new supply in different areas of the city, so that they were not as well informed as they could be to advise tenants. However, where rehousing is via re-provisioning new build, by GHA or other RSLs, the dwelling mix should be aligned with requirements from particular clearance areas, and details of the new dwellings should be available to rehousing staff.
- Tenants’ preferences for living locally, and in lower density housing if possible, seemed to be readily accepted by staff. There was little questioning of whether relocation to other areas might be better for some tenants, for example, in terms of access of facilities and services. The idea of using relocation to expand people’s horizons in a variety of ways did not seem to be something given much consideration in the clearance process.
- Staff reported that many tenants had unrealistic expectations about their ability to access any available GHA property due to their clearance status, until staff made them realise that they still had to qualify for suitable properties, and that long-term tenants and those with medical needs would have higher priority. We cannot tell whether or not tenants rehousing expectations were unduly raised by staff during discussions about regeneration and the need for clearance at an earlier stage of the process.

## **Chapter 5 Meeting tenants' requirements**

This chapter reports on where and how housing staff found it easy or difficult to meet tenant requirements within the rehousing process.

### **Ability to meet tenants' needs and preferences**

All of the staff interviewed felt that, overall, clearances were going very well. They felt that they were "*doing a good job*" and "*meeting aspirations*" (Housing Staff 4) and that the process in place worked well.

In this section we consider housing staff's ability to meet their tenants' requirements in respect of:

- Areas/location.
- House size.
- House type.
- Other, non-statutory considerations.

### **Legal requirement for 'reasonable offers'**

When rehousing tenants from demolition blocks, there are legal requirements that the offers of accommodation should meet. These are covered in Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This states that the offers must be reasonably suitable to the needs of the tenant and the tenant's family, and sets out criteria that should be taken into account.

These criteria are as follows:

- Location: the proximity of the accommodation to the place of work (including school or college) of the tenant and of members of the tenant's family, compared with the tenant's existing accommodation.
- Size: the extent of the accommodation required by the tenant and the tenant's family.
- House type and condition: the character of the accommodation compared with the tenant's existing accommodation.
- Terms: the terms on which the accommodation is offered compared with the terms of the tenant's existing tenancy, e.g. if any furniture was provided by the landlord under the existing tenancy.
- Special needs: any special needs of the tenant or the tenant's family.

## **Areas / location**

In rehousing people into particular areas, two considerations are the legal requirements and the tenants' preferences. When offering rehousing, the proximity of the housing to a child's school or to a tenant's place of work (compared with that of their existing housing) should be taken into account. Further, tenants will have noted up to six areas they are interested in on their application, and will sometimes have listed sub-areas or streets that they would or would not consider. When being housed through the allocation system into existing stock, offers will only come up in areas tenants have listed on their form. This should ensure that tenants are only housed in areas they have selected. When being housed into new build, tenants are asked to express an interest in the development before being nominated, so again they should only be offered housing in locations they have chosen.

Staff said that the location of offers was not usually a problem, with tenants generally being offered rehousing in the areas they wanted. Housing Staff 9 said that "*most get what they wanted in terms of area – I would estimate over 90%*". Staff also said that the non-use of local connection points (see below) did not prevent tenants being rehoused locally who wanted to be.

The exception to this was usually where suitable properties were not available in the area the tenant wanted to be rehoused in. While the reasons for this varied, the main ones were: lack of larger units available; and lack of GHA stock in particular areas.

So, while most tenants can be rehoused into areas they choose, there is a minority who cannot do this due to lack of available stock.

## **House size**

While completing the application form, Housing Officers record the size of housing required by the tenant. They will look at the size and composition of the tenant's household to work out a minimum size requirement, but will allow tenants to be listed for a larger property if that is what they are currently in.

While the legal requirement suggests that households should be offered the size of property they need, staff said that tenants are usually offered a property broadly equivalent to what they are in, with a "*minimum of the size they're in*" (Housing Staff 2) unless they choose to move somewhere smaller. Therefore tenants will sometimes be allocated housing that is bigger than they require.

Lack of larger units was a major concern mentioned by most staff during the interviews. These properties also have low turnover which means they are less likely

to become available. In some cases, households are so large that there will be no properties to meet their needs. In this case the Housing Offices will try to identify two properties that the family can be rehoused to.

Housing staff said that larger families had less choice of areas and a longer waiting time than other tenants. Housing Staff 3 said that *“those who aren’t rehoused in the area usually move further to get the house size they need”*.

Housing Staff 5 said *“a lot of people have a 4apt [3 bedrooms] here, but have had more kids since they were housed and there’s nothing big enough. Asylum seekers often get housed in one bedroom properties initially, but now have several kids. There’s a shortage of larger units city-wide. I don’t think this is being looked at centrally but it needs to be”*. This was a particular problem for refugees who often had larger families or several people living in the one house, although it did not only affect them. Housing Staff 8 said that *“former asylum seekers often have bigger families so they had to go to the wider area because of lack of available housing of the right size in the area”*.

While new developments do contain units of this size, which allows some of the families to move to new build properties, these developments usually contain a mix of house size and types in order to create balanced and sustainable communities. This means that the number of larger units becoming available is relatively small and does not make a huge difference to the city-wide shortage.

The lack of larger units did not seem to be an issue identified in the rehousing strategy documents intended to look at likely housing need prior to clearance being approved. However, as noted above, these do not seem to have functioned in the way they were intended to. Masterplans for the TRAs might also be expected to pick up on the need for larger units, but these are also supposed to take into account the requirements of city planning documents such as the City Plan and Local Development Strategies, so the issue may not only be one for GHA.

There are perhaps two reasons why the extent of need for larger units may not have been accurately identified within GHA rehousing planning processes.

First, the number of households requiring larger properties was actually quite small and therefore perhaps not seen as significant. However, if these are compared with the turnover of larger properties, there is a disparity. So while there was not large number of households numerically, it was large compared with turnover.

Secondly, staff said that many refugee families were initially allocated smaller properties but have since had children or have had relatives arrive to stay with them. Similarly, non-refugee families requiring larger units were often over-occupying at the moment. If housing need calculations were based on existing house size then this demand might not have been picked up or recorded.

The issue can be illustrated through an examination of the rehousing strategy for one of the study areas, where 22% of the dwellings in the blocks to be demolished were four-apartment in size, but only 5% of the LHO's lettings in the past two years were of four- or five-apartment properties. (Of course, there may be underoccupancy of the existing larger units).

### **House type and condition**

Tenants list on the application form the house types they would consider, and whether or not they are interested in new build properties. GHA's policy of rehousing tenants into either improved or new build properties means that all tenants will move into a better standard of home than they currently occupy. This is particularly the case in the study areas where most tenants are moving from poor quality multistorey blocks. Because of this, staff did not see the house type or quality as an issue in most cases, and did not feel that they could not meet tenants' requirements. Housing Staff 1 said that "*they're rehoused in broadly equivalent to what they're in originally, but either refurbished or new build*".

There were two main exceptions to this. First, some tenants wanted to move into another multistorey block as discussed above, and indeed core stock investment has taken place in those multistorey blocks not due to be demolished. While offers of other house types would probably be considered as reasonable in legal terms, staff would record the tenant's preference for a multistorey on their application and this could usually be met due to their relatively low popularity city-wide. However, in many cases, this would result in the tenant having to move area and so the tenant would have to decide between an area and house type preference, staff being unable to meet their wishes for both.

Secondly, some tenants who wished to remain in the immediate area of their existing housing chose to move into unimproved existing stock. This meant that the GHA aim of moving tenants into a new build or improved property could not immediately be met, although sometimes these could be interim moves, and sometimes the stock in question would be due to be improved at a later date. However, where this happened, it was the choice of the individual tenants to move into these blocks, putting their preference for the area above house type and condition.

### ***Existing stock or new build***

While the offer of new build is not covered by statutory requirements, staff said that, for most tenants, new build housing would be their first choice over existing stock. However, as discussed above, this preference was less important to most than the area the housing was in and the length of wait involved.

This meant that staff had fewer difficulties in allocating new build to those interested, as there was less demand than if it had been in other areas or available immediately. However, in some cases this was an issue. As mentioned above, the lack of new build or improved core stock in some areas has meant tenants deciding to move temporarily into unimproved housing to remain in the area.

In another area, the high demand for new build meant that staff had to limit the offers to those with a minimum length of tenancy. Staff said that this caused arguments and resentment in the community, especially from those who had lived in the area a long time, but not in one tenancy, and who therefore, did not qualify. There was particular resentment towards refugees, seen by some as being new to the area but understood to be receiving offers of new housing; this may reflect a lack of understanding of the rehousing process, whereby priority is given to tenants (which could include refugees) having to move from their homes due to demolition.

### **Other, non-statutory requirements**

In addition to the legal considerations which must be taken into account when making offers of rehousing, tenants can state other requirements on their application form. While staff do not have to make offers based on these, in many cases they will try to accommodate them. This is both to make the move as easy for the tenant as possible, and also to increase the likelihood of tenants accepting offers and making the clearance process go as smoothly as possible.

As noted earlier, the other things listed on the form may include specific streets a tenant would be unwilling to move to, storey levels they would be willing to accept (e.g. some may be afraid of being on the ground floor, some may have small children and not want to be on the top floor), and in some cases people they would like to be rehoused near to family members or neighbours.

While the first two will be looked at by the Housing Officer making the allocation, requests to be housed near others is considered at application stage. Staff said that this was very unusual, and when it did come up was normally where a friend or relative helped with care arrangements. It is not usually possible to arrange for those moving to existing housing (as there will not be empty properties becoming vacant together) but can be looked at in a new build development where both tenants qualify.

The extent to which this is done seems to vary between study areas. In one area, Housing Officers 2 and 3 described how they had worked in partnership with the developing RSL and used plans to “fit people in”. However, this can still be difficult as the layout of the development might mean that the right size and types of

accommodation are not beside each other or in the same street. However, in other areas staff said that, while they would look at this, allocations could not be made on this basis and it was unlikely to be possible.

### **Support needs**

Staff in all areas identified tenants with support needs as being the most difficult to rehouse and also some of the most likely to be left in blocks towards the end of clearances. However the types of needs and reasons for this vary greatly. This can include tenants who are drug addicts, have mental health problems, are elderly and in poor physical or mental health, or have language difficulties.

Some of the tenants will have a social worker or health support worker, and this will be included in their file. Where this is the case, staff will contact them, but staff said that *“they are not particularly helpful”* (Housing Staff 5). Where there was not already a support worker in place and the housing staff thought that there should be, the Social Work Department would be contacted. However staff said that they *“did not have a good relationship”*, and that they often *“didn’t seem interested”* (Housing Staff 8). Staff in one area said that they felt there were a lot of tenants living in the community who should be supported, and this made rehousing very difficult. It was thought by staff that there were funding problems in Social Work and that the staff involved were not necessarily the problem.

### **Refugees**

Another issue identified by staff as a problem in one study area was the number of refugees either *“not turning up to view properties”* (Housing Staff 5) or not accepting properties in areas they had said they were interested in. Housing Staff 6 said that it was *“amazing what they refuse – there was a brand new house in Govan, they had asked to be put forward for it because their child had health problems with the damp, then they didn’t go, and didn’t even say why”*. Staff had not managed to get follow up information on this or other cases of tenants not attending viewings, but said that it was a frequent problem.

While not affecting all refugees, it seemed from staff that a significant number were missing opportunities of new build properties or good offers in popular areas. While staff viewed this as problematic from their own perspective, this will also mean that certain tenants are less likely to be rehoused into the better properties or areas. Some staff suggested that this could be linked to language problems and difficulties understanding the process or offers. However, more work needs to be done to establish the reasons for this. Staff said that, when asked, tenants just said that they were not interested in the property.

## Summary

- The staff view was that the vast majority of clearance tenants are rehoused in areas they wished to live in.
- Staff were flexible in allowing tenants to register for larger dwellings than they strictly need, if this is equivalent to the dwelling they are currently in. Given the effects of subsequent welfare reforms which reduce Housing Benefit payments to social sector tenants under-occupying their properties, such a flexible approach might be better limited to working tenants or those aged over 65<sup>13</sup>.
- There was a major concern about the lack of larger units available for rehousing purposes. This was both a supply issue, as well as a planning issue: the need for larger units may not have been adequately identified in rehousing strategies nor adequately planned for in re-provisioning.
- Re-provisioning had often not been sufficient to meet tenants' ideal preference of being rehoused into new build housing in their local area.
- Both the allocations process and housing staff themselves tried to meet tenants' non-statutory requirements. This was easier in the case of preferences for/against particular streets and floor levels, but more difficult in the case of preferences to live beside or near particular family members or neighbours. Meeting such non-statutory requirements depended largely on the housing staff involved, with some making greater efforts than others to accommodate these preferences.
- Rehousing was made more difficult by the number of tenants who had support needs due to dependency issues, mental health problems, poor physical health or language difficulties. Housing staff sought help from social worker case officers, or from the Social Work Department in general, in such circumstances, but generally reported a lack of help forthcoming.
- Staff identified that there was resentment among people if/when refugees received offers of new build housing. This resulted from the use of the criterion: length-of-time-in-current-property, which for some refugees could be longer than other people had lived in the community, although not currently in a clearance block or who had a newer tenancy. While this rule applied equally to all tenants, refugees seemed to be singled out for resident criticism ahead of Scottish tenants, perhaps as they were more visible or because they often required larger properties and so moved to houses. Staff could understand the perceived unfairness of this system.



- There was a recognised problem of some refugees not turning up to view properties they had expressed interest in. The reasons for this problem had yet to be properly investigated.

## Chapter 6 Supply and allocation of accommodation for rehousing

This chapter reports the housing staff's accounts of the process of rehousing tenants through the supply of existing and new dwellings, both owned by GHA and other RSLs. It looks at the local situation and the city-wide context for the supply of alternative accommodation. The chapter also considers the scope for housing staff to use their discretion within the allocations process.

### Rehousing prioritisation

For the allocation of its existing core stock during the period of this study, GHA operated a points-based system with length of tenancy, overcrowding and medical need being the main determining factor for points<sup>b</sup>. However, there are four categories which are given priority ahead of points, in ascending order of priority:

- Special circumstances and management factors (rarely used) (1)
- Medical A (2)
- Clearance (3)
- Homeless (4)

Housing Staff 3 explained that *“You can have extreme medical cases and ‘special cases’ that can come above clearance priority”*. However, generally allocations are made to homeless or clearance cases.

There is an agreement in place with Glasgow City Council (GCC) to allocate 40% of empty properties to homeless cases. This has meant that, when clearance is ongoing, approximately 40% of lets went to homeless cases and 50% went to clearance cases, with some medical cases being housed too. However, in Shawbridge it was decided that clearance should be concentrated on initially, with most lets going to these. This has meant that later, most lets are going to homeless applicants to meet the quota of lets.

Housing Staff 3 explained that *“All clearance tenants are given clearance priority, and further priority is awarded based on length of tenancy and any medical priority they have”*. Thus, rehousing officers may give priority, or particular attention to someone in a clearance situation who has a pressing medical need which is exacerbated by the current physical conditions in their clearance flat.

**GHA improved core stock:** All tenants from demolition areas are given ‘clearance priority’ on the allocation system. This means that, along with homeless and medical priority applicants (and rare ‘exceptional circumstance’ applicants), they are top of the list for any properties that become vacant. The Housing Officer responsible for

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<sup>b</sup> GHA introduced a new allocations policy in April 2013

the vacant property (not the Clearance Housing Officer) looks at the system to determine which tenants should be considered for the allocation. Length of GHA / GCC tenancy is used to determine priority among clearance tenants. For core stock, this means that if there is more than one tenant who qualifies for a property (in terms of household size, area required and so on) the tenant with the longest tenancy in their existing property is given priority. In addition, extra points are given for medical need. Staff saw this as a fair way of making decisions, and said that tenants seemed happy with this approach.

**GHA new build stock:** All GHA new build, plus all RSL reprovioning new build is used exclusively for clearance tenants. A record is kept of all tenants interested in new build housing. The information provided on the housing application form is used to allocate new build GHA housing to clearance tenants. Those qualifying in terms of household size and so on are prioritised based on length of tenancy with additional points for medical need.

**RSL new build stock:** GHA clearance tenants have priority over other applicants in the Glasgow area for new build housing funded through the reprovioning budget (see Section 5). For new build housing provided by other RSLs, the housing application form is used to determine who is interested, and all qualifying tenants are then nominated to the RSL. The RSLs then use their own allocation policies to decide which tenants qualify.

### **Number of offers**

It is GHA policy that clearance tenants should receive up to three reasonable offers of rehousing. If the tenant refuses three offers, they can be taken to court and evicted. It should be noted that, based on the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, where a landlord has made an offer of alternative accommodation the burden of proof that it is not suitable rests on the tenant. Housing Staff 6 said that “*Three reasonable offers are made, and if they refuse them they can be taken to court. Tenants are made aware of this but only one case has gone to court*”.

Despite this, staff interviewed in all three study areas said that they were flexible with the number of offers made. As long as the tenant wasn't being unreasonable, they would let them wait until they received an offer they were happy with. The only exception to this was where the block was close to being empty and therefore it was important for safety and management reasons that the remaining tenants moved quickly. This flexibility was possible due to the lack of time constraints in most of the clearances. Further details on this are discussed below.

Staff also said that offers are usually better than the housing tenants are in at the moment, which helps and makes them much more likely to accept offers. Housing Staff 1 said that *“it’s mixed as to which offer is accepted, but most accept something by the third offer. Generally people are realistic, and usually the offer is better than where they are, which helps”*.

## **Local area**

In line with good practice, GHA do not operate a Rehousing Strategy policy of offering points for “local connection”. However, the allocations system does favour those from the local area in allocations to both existing stock and new build<sup>c</sup>.

In the case of existing stock, staff said that when a vacant property became available, they would generally offer this to clearance tenants from their own area first. While the computerised allocations system should ensure that a property is offered to a qualifying tenant at the top of the list, the Housing Officers have the flexibility to decide between these tenants. If there was no suitable tenant from the local clearance, it would be offered to those from other areas. One Rehousing Strategy says that where there are two priority clearance cases, priority should go any case from the nearest LHO; thereafter, length of tenancy should be looked at.

However, if staff had a tenant looking for rehousing in a different area, they would call that area office to alert them and discuss options.

In all areas, GHA new build stock is offered initially to qualifying tenants from the nearest LHO. If there are still units left, they are offered to those from nearby locations, and then finally they are opened up to tenants from across the city. Housing Staff 8 said that *“new build should be available to all clearance areas (not the local area) but in reality the local areas are offered this first, then it’s extended if required (first to the wider local area, then city-wide)”* according to strategic priorities. There can be positive reasons for offering housing to those from the local area – the Scottish Government Allocations Guidance suggests that *“using points alone for allocations is unlikely to achieve sustainable tenancies and successful communities”* and that RSLs can give *“local connection priority for social cohesion (to give and receive support, working in area), but not for length of time they have lived in the area”*<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>c</sup> The new GHA allocations policy, from April 2013, includes an allocation group for those with a local connection through community activity or social support.

## **Role of the Housing Officer**

While the allocation system is computerised, the Housing Officer making the allocation still has flexibility in who they let the property to.

When a property becomes available, the system will show who is top of the list based on points and priority flags (e.g. homeless, clearance). If it is the turn of a clearance case, the Housing Officer should look at the highest placed clearance case in terms of tenancy length, who also meets the requirements for the property (interest expressed in the areas, requires that apartment size and so on). They will also check the notes to see if there are any reasons they would not accept the property (requirement for certain floor level, not interested in certain streets etc.). Housing Staff 6 said that as much detail as possible was included on the applications forms *“to avoid refusals and match tenants to what they want”*. The detail could even include shape of hall so that previous carpets would fit.

Housing Staff 2 said that allocations were not always made to the person who would be identified as the first priority according to the formal allocations policy. *“It should be the first person on the list, unless the tenant has specified that they wouldn’t be interested, but this doesn’t always happen”*. The Housing Officer will also make the decision based on management considerations. As Housing Officer 5 said, *“it’s not necessarily who’s top of the list, it’s got to fit in with the local lettings plans too”*. For example they might decide not to allocate a property to someone with children if there are already a lot of children in the stair in question, or they might avoid putting antisocial tenants into ‘good’ stairs. While some of this information will come from notes on the file, the allocating officer might also call the tenant’s current Housing Officer to discuss any possible issues with them.

While Housing Officers will want to manage their area as well as they can and avoid ‘difficult’ tenants, staff said that there were rarely situations where Housing Officers avoided housing certain tenants. Housing Staff 9 said that *“everyone will have a tendency to look after their own area, but you need to be realistic and rehouse those who need to be rehoused. If this isn’t happening, the Housing Operations Manager will step in”*.

## **GHA core stock**

While figures were not available at the time of this study on where clearance tenants had been rehoused to, it was suggested that the “vast majority”<sup>1</sup> move into GHA core stock, with a significant minority moving to new build. Staff estimated that the split was approximately 70% / 30%. Although in theory clearance tenants could be rehoused into the existing stock of another RSL, staff said that this rarely took place.

Occasionally, an RSL would contact an LHO to see if they had a suitable tenant for a vacant, existing property.

Second Stage Transfers (SSTs), along with demolitions and sales, have resulted in a large reduction in GHA stock since transfer in 2003. Staff said that this has had a larger impact in some areas than in others. Housing Staff 5 said that “*most SSTs have been in the North, so there’s a huge shortage there*”. Housing Staff 6 suggested that “*it would have been better if there had been nomination agreements in place with SST organisation*” to deal with this issue. These circumstances can make rehousing of tenants extremely difficult, especially as many want to stay in the immediate or surrounding area.

Housing Staff 2 said that “*some areas of the city have no GHA stock now, so there’s no way tenants can be rehoused where they want. There are no nominations agreements in place with other RSLs for their core stock*”.

The relevance and importance of these staff comments about agreements with other organisations varies. In the case of Red Road, rehousing was largely completed before SST happened in the area. In the case of Sighthill, other RSLs have assisted with rehousing.

### **New build supply**

The supply of new build housing for reprovioning comes from two sources: the GCC reprovioning budget for new build by RSLs; and the GHA new build programme funded by Scottish Government and GHA private borrowing. There are a number of factors which have limited the supply of new build properties for clearance tenants in recent years:

***Programming:*** The lack of co-ordination between clearances and reprovioning in the early years of regeneration<sup>15</sup> meant that there was often no new build housing available for let at the time of clearances. Staff said that the lack of regeneration plans for one area meant that there was no new build taking place, even though there was a cleared site. This meant that clearance was more difficult as, in addition to an overall shortage of GHA housing in the wider area, there was no suitable housing to move clearance tenants into in their existing area. In other cases, new build would have awaited the demolition of blocks so that the footprint could be re-used. The result was that some tenants had chosen to move into unimproved blocks to stay locally.

***Uncertainty over new build reprovioning:*** Half of the reprovioning of new build social housing to replace units demolished by GHA is to come from RSLs (3,000

units in total over the period 2003-13) funded through the GCC Development Funding Programme. At least 600 of these 3,000 units were to be provided by the end of 2010, with the majority coming in the period 2011-13, though this plan was predicated on the expectation that a further 3,000 new build units would have been provided through GHA's investment programme by 2010<sup>16</sup>. Half of the re-provisioning programme units are to be provided within or to serve the TRAs as a resource for rehousing purposes. In the year during which our interviews took place, several changes introduced by Scottish Government may have affected the re-provisioning programme by RSLs. First, GCC's Development Funding budget was reduced by 18% on the previous year. Second, the subsidy benchmark (HAG) rate per RSL dwelling unit was reduced to £40k. Third, a competitive bidding process, rather than a housing plan process, was introduced for housing association development funding (subsequently discontinued the following year). GCC reported that as a result of these changes, "housing associations have found it much more difficult to secure development funding"<sup>17</sup>.

In one of our study areas, Housing Staff said that there was a "gentlemen's agreement" in place that funding would be provided for 100-150 new build units in the area. While staff were trying to secure a written confirmation of this agreement, this had not been forthcoming at the time of interview. The staff in the area said that one of their biggest concerns in ensuring successful clearance was "*getting a firm commitment from GCC on the funding of new build for the area*" (Housing Staff 4).

**Private sector supply:** Private sector development, particularly in less popular areas, has been negatively affected by the economic downturn due to the lack of developer interest and availability of lending. In addition to the impact this has on the wider regeneration plans for the areas, this affects clearance tenants in two ways. First, it means that in areas where there was to be cross-subsidy of social housing through private sales, this will be delayed or cancelled. This means a reduction in supply of new build housing for clearance tenants. Secondly, it means that where tenants are being rehoused into new build, the areas are largely being developed as 100% social housing. Tenants have raised this as problematic, since the problems of the wider neighbourhood and concentration of problems is not being dealt with and is continuing in many places.

### **Impact of low new build supply**

Staff estimated that approximately one third of tenants were rehoused into new build properties. Any reduction in this would increase the pressure on existing stock, meaning increased waiting time for tenants, fewer opportunities for new builds, increased pressure on tenants to accept offers in shorter timescales, and increased waiting time for other applicants such as homeless, medical priorities and other applicants on the waiting list.

In certain areas, staff “*rely heavily on new build properties*” (Housing Staff 4) to meet tenants’ wishes to be rehoused in the wider area. Where there is a shortage of GHA stock or low turnover, new build can be the only way of allowing tenants to stay in the same part of the city.

### **Location of new build**

Where new build was going ahead at the time of this study, it was often not in clearance areas. In some cases, the location of available sites may not match the areas where there is a demand for housing. This may partly explain the lack of interest in some new build developments from clearance tenants.

From one perspective, the location of new build housing elsewhere might make sense from a regeneration viewpoint, with many clearances taking place because the stock is in low demand areas. Both GCC and GHA policy documents make clear that the focus of clearance and re-provisioning is on creating mixed, sustainable communities, in areas where there is demand for housing, not in replacing the demolished housing on a like-for-like basis. GHA state that “new build should not be seen as being built to meet needs of demolition and rehousing but as part of a wider improvement in supply city-wide”<sup>1</sup>. However, this can make clearances more difficult for staff in terms of finding suitable accommodation in the required areas (as many tenants do not want to change areas), and for tenants in understanding why their housing has been demolished and they cannot be moved to new housing in the same place. This can be exacerbated when there is no available land for new-build re-provisioning in and around a clearance area at the time of rehousing.

In circumstances where either the master-planning for an area is not well developed or certain, or where the provision of other housing tenures is lacking (for example due to the economic downturn), the resulting developments may not be as mixed as originally intended. In such circumstances, the fact that new build housing is described as ‘re-provisioning’ and allocated on a 100% basis to clearance tenants may run against the aim of creating a sustainable housing mix, or at the very least it can affect the spatial configuration of that mix, if other tenures are provided later. It appeared that in some of our study areas, new build units were described as being developed to meet the needs of clearance cases, not the needs of future tenants and wider regeneration plans. There is a balance to be struck on this issue.

### **New build allocations**

At the rehousing interviews, Housing Officers discuss whether or not tenants are interested in new build properties. Those who are have this noted on their application



form. While most would prefer a new build property, many are not interested if it is not in the area they want to move to, or if it involves an interim move or a significant wait.

While a note of interest in new build is marked on the application form, the computerised allocations system is not used for these allocations. The process for allocating seemed to vary slightly across the three study areas, but generally, when new build housing becomes available, all interested tenants who would qualify are contacted and asked to express an interest. A letter is usually sent out to them, making clear that they are not being offered the housing but are being asked to express an interest. In some areas detailed plans and further information on the housing is sent out to give the tenants a clearer picture of the properties. The letter gives a date that tenants should reply by if interested. Tenants who express an interest in the housing are then nominated to the RSL or, for GHA units, allocated properties based on length of tenancy.

### **Location and timing of new build**

While it might be expected that this housing would be popular among clearance tenants, this is not always the case. As noted above, if the housing is not in an area the tenant wants to live in then they will not accept the offer. Staff in one study area said it had been difficult finding tenants to nominate to a new build development because of this. Housing Staff 1 said that *“We could only fill 30 of the 70 units available. Demolition plans were brought forward to allow people to be rehoused here if they wanted to. We then opened it up to other clearance areas”*.

In some cases, tenants moving to new build property have to make an interim move while waiting on the housing to be completed. This may reflect both a lack of co-ordination between the clearance programme and reprovisioning, but also the complexity of the redevelopment task itself. This initial tenant move in such cases is usually into unimproved stock, often multistorey blocks. While this goes against GHA’s policy of rehousing everyone into a new or improved property, it is seen as acceptable as the tenants will eventually move to new build housing.

The guidance makes clear that this is an interim move, not a decant. There is a legal requirement to rehouse tenants from demolitions to permanent accommodation, and therefore decants cannot be used. This means that tenants will receive their home loss and disturbance payments (see below) at this initial move, but will not receive a further payment when they move into new build. This is because the second move is not forced because of demolition, but a voluntary move by tenants.

## **New build allocations to non-clearance tenants**

When a new housing development becomes available, it is sometimes offered to non-clearance tenants under the following circumstances.

Firstly, housing staff can set up 'chains of moves' – for example, offering a new build to a tenant who is under-occupying a property in order to free up an existing larger property for reallocation.

Secondly, tenants in blocks where demolitions are planned but clearance has not been approved are sometimes offered the opportunity of applying. This is to stop them from missing out on housing due to the timing of clearances. Housing Staff 9 said that *“if a clearance is not active, tenants can still be offered new housing if it becomes available if this will help in the longer-term. This means that they do not miss out on opportunities”*.

Thirdly, an agreement can be made with the developing RSL to allow them to allocate some of the new housing to their tenants in return for some of their core stock, for example *“we can forfeit six new build and get six sheltered core stock instead”* (Housing Staff 4), though this is considered by GHA to be a very unusual occurrence.

## **New build allocations to clearance tenants**

Clearance tenants have priority for all new build funded through the reprovioning programme. As with existing stock, priority among tenants is decided by length of tenancy.

However, in one GHA development a length of tenancy restriction of ten years was implemented for those applying for new builds due to the mismatch between supply and demand at the particular point in time. Staff said that this caused a lot of resentment within the community, especially towards refugees who qualified but had not lived in the community for as long as others. In due course, other new build developments in later phases of the redevelopment would become available.

## **Nominations to RSLs**

All new build housing funded through the GCC reprovioning budget is to be used to rehouse clearance tenants. This is approximately one third of new social housing in Glasgow. Some of this has been developed directly by GHA, but most has been developed by other RSLs in the city with GHA having 100% nomination rights.

The nominations are secured through GCC's conditions of grant for the re-provisioning programme, as well as individual scheme agreements. According to policy documents, 100% of nominations must be offered to GHA for re-provisioning for a ten year period or until clearances have been completed, whichever is the shorter. However, there seemed to be confusion among LHOs about the terms of these agreements. Some staff believed that the agreements were for first lets only, others said that they were for one, five or ten years. It was not clear if the LHOs had not been informed of the conditions, or if the grant conditions varied depending on the development, or if the policy documents were out of date.

Ideally, the LHO will nominate tenants at as early a stage as possible. Depending on the RSL, this can allow nominees to have a say in aspects of the property such as bathroom and kitchen design. It also allows any necessary adaptations to be made (e.g. wet floor bathrooms). However, this process varies depending on the RSL involved. In some cases the LHO is contacted at an early stage. In many cases, however, nominations are only asked for once the development has been completed. This means that, as well as having little notice about the move, tenants cannot be involved in discussions about their new home.

In some areas, there have been problems accessing the new build housing as the developing RSLs had not contacted the LHO looking for nominations. While causing tensions between GHA and the developing organisation, this does not usually mean nominations are missed out on, as sites can be seen by GHA staff and the LHO will then contact the RSL. However, this was raised as being problematic when it came to second lets, as these are not visible and the LHO has no way of knowing when a tenancy has been terminated. GHA documents suggest that LHOs should monitor all nominations quarterly, that returns should be sent to central GHA, and that this will be monitored city-wide. However, staff did not seem to be aware of this system being in place, and in reality it is not employed by GHA.

GHA policy states that all qualifying tenants should be nominated to the RSL new build properties. However, discussions with staff indicated that they put forward the exact number of tenants required (based on length of tenancy, no rent arrears, and no action on antisocial behaviour), thus limiting the ability of receiving RSLs to select tenants using their own allocations policy. One RSL had raised this as an issue as a very high percentage of tenants nominated to it were refugees and they had concerns about creating racial tensions in their area.

It also seemed to be the case that in some instances staff put forward 'good' tenants, based on a more subjective view of who would be suitable for the new properties than stated in policy documents. Referring to the relationship with an RSL, Housing Staff 9 said that "*we found good tenants for them*". Staff also said that, with some RSLs, there was a lack of information on which nominees had been accepted or refused for housing.

The relationship between GHA and other RSLs seems to vary greatly across areas and often relied on good individual relationships between staff in the two organisations. These relationships had a significant impact on rehousing, with the resolution of issues mentioned above (timing of nominations, information on subsequent lets, information on which nominees had been accepted) all relying on working well together.

Housing Staff 3 said that *“we’ve generally got good relationships with RSLs we’re rehousing with – we make them aware of who they are rehousing and any possible issues”*. In another study area, Housing Staff 8 said that they worked with the developing RSL for over a year to ensure the process went well. However, Housing Staff 4 said that the process *“could be painful”* and Housing Staff 5 described an RSL as accepting nominations *“under a bit of duress”*. It is worth noting that we did not obtain the RSLs’ view of their relationships with LHOs as part of this study.

### **Antisocial behaviour and rent arrears**

Where the LHO is taking action against a tenant for rent arrears or antisocial behaviour, their offers of rehousing will be limited. The relevant Guidance Note states that, where legal action has been started for repossession or where an ASBO has been granted and the tenancy converted to a SSST, offers of rehousing will not usually be made. Where there is a need to avoid holding up demolitions, *“the offer should be the closest equivalent in locality and demand terms to meet the legislation”*. The length of tenancy should not be considered.

Where a decree is awarded for rent arrears, this will terminate a tenant’s current tenancy and begin a new one (unless the tenant is evicted). This means that, when being rehoused, their length of tenancy will be based on the new tenancy and will have a negative impact on their rehousing priority.

Staff did not mention any tenants not being rehoused, but did say that arrears and antisocial behaviour had a negative effect on their rehousing options, for example *“those with a history of antisocial behaviour won’t be moved to new build housing”* (Housing Staff 8). GHA policy documents emphasise the fact that only those with formal action being taken against them can have their rehousing opportunities limited. They suggest that staff should ensure any issues are being dealt with through the appropriate legislation prior to beginning clearances.

However discussions in all three study areas suggested that allocations were sometimes made in a more subjective way, with ‘good’ tenants being nominated for new build properties or being allocated better housing or areas. It is not clear whether this approach served to limit the options for other tenants (beyond the policy definition of excluding those with legal action being taken against them), as we did

not study its nature or frequency, but in any case it appeared to be understood and accepted by both staff and tenants.

### **Timing and timescales for clearance**

The timing of clearances is outwith the control of tenants but can have a significant impact on their rehousing options. There are two timing factors: first the phasing of clearances within an area; and secondly the programming of different clearances city-wide.

### **Phasing**

The phasing of clearances can mean that tenants in the same area have greater or fewer opportunities for rehousing than others, for example if one phase coincides with the completion of a new build development, or happens at a time when there are less clearances city-wide.

However, discussions with staff suggest that this is something they try to avoid. For example, where a new build is completed, staff will often ask tenants in phases which have not yet started clearance to express an interest, and they are given the same priority as earlier phases.

### **City-wide programming**

The timing of clearances city-wide was seen as a bigger concern by local staff and was one they found harder to deal with. In some areas, clearances started later than in others and staff felt that their tenants may have missed out on chances of rehousing. Housing Staff 4 said that *“Those getting rehoused earlier had the best opportunities”*.

However, the issue raised by most staff was the number of clearances happening at any one time. Where this happens, tenants are not just competing for properties against others from their own clearance, but against those with higher priority from other clearances as well. This can mean that it takes much longer to rehouse people.

Housing Staff 3 said that *“there are lots of demolitions going on across the city, it hasn't been well programmed so it makes it much harder to rehouse people”* and Housing Staff 4 said that they *“would like to be able to move people quicker”* but can't because of supply issues.

It should be recognised that these comments reflect the views of housing staff working in local areas and that there may be more city-wide co-ordination than they suggest, but there did nonetheless seem to be an issue of a lack of awareness of the bigger picture of clearance, demolition and re-provision across the city.

### **Time to clear individual blocks**

Generally, staff did not feel under any pressure to clear the blocks within a set timeframe. This results in a relaxed attitude to the rehousing process, for example, allowing tenants more than three offers of alternative accommodation if they require this.

All the staff interviewed stressed that it was very difficult to put an average timescale on emptying blocks. This varied from block to block depending on several factors:

- Voids and temporary lets – the number of voids and temporary lets has an impact on the time taken to clear blocks. These mean that there are fewer tenants to be rehoused as they are either already empty or are rehoused by the other organisation (see below).
- Other clearances – if other clearances are taking place in the city at the same time, then it will take longer to empty a block as there are other tenants competing for empty properties.
- Household size – if the households require properties of a size that has lower turnover or that there are fewer of it will take longer to clear the block.
- New build – if there are new build developments completed while the clearance is in progress then this will speed up the process.
- SST – as more stock has transferred from GHA, the time to complete clearance has got longer as there are fewer available core stock properties.

Staff did give some estimates on the timescale:

- Actual clearance: Housing Staff 1 said it took approximately two years to clear 240 properties.
- From decision being taken to demolition: Housing Staff 8 said it had taken three years to demolish 105 properties.

### **Time to complete clearance of an area**

Staff said that there were no fixed timescales for any of the clearances in the study areas. They did not have tight deadlines to meet and did not feel under pressure to have the blocks cleared. In two of the areas, staff felt that it might actually suit GHA if the clearances took longer as there were no plans in place for the redevelopment of the areas. Housing Staff 7 said that the clearances had been going well but that they

then *“had to slow down to wait for future housing, and it’s not clear what happens next”* and Housing Staff 5 said that *“you get the impression they would be happy if we slowed down, they’re not ready to start building yet”*.

This is an unusual situation, since demolitions usually take place to allow the redevelopment of an area. However, due to the initial problems with masterplanning of the TRAs (see above) and the current economic circumstances, the usual pressures to ensure demolition takes place by a certain date (to clear the site for redevelopment or sale) and ensure the phasing of demolitions (to allow new build and so on) have been absent or relaxed. The overall impression from Housing Officers was that the pace could be set to meet the needs of tenants, although in fact the clearance and demolition timetable has been revised by GHA and GCC in the light of the economic downturn.

Staff said that, while no demolition dates had been set, when the blocks were nearly empty there would be concentrated effort to complete the clearance to avoid tenants being isolated in the blocks.

Staff were aware of both the negative and positive impact of the lack of pressure to complete the clearances. First, staff seemed concerned about the lack of future regeneration plans for the areas. They felt this made it hard to explain the need for rehousing to tenants, and it restricted their ability to rehouse people in the area due to lack of stock. The longer timescales can also make it more difficult for tenants as they may have a longer wait from the decision being taken to demolish their block, to actually moving into their new home.

On the other hand, this meant that staff were not working to tight timescales and were not under pressure to clear blocks quickly. This meant that tenants could be given longer to make a decision on their rehousing, and were not put under pressure to accept offers of a move unless they are one of the last people left in a block.

## **Summary**

- The practice of focusing on clearance cases for allocations over certain periods of time could serve to make it difficult to accommodate homelessness cases. It might be better to always alternate the allocations between clearance, homelessness, and medical priorities.
- Length of tenancy was seen as a fair way of prioritising between several clearance cases deemed suitable for a particular vacancy.
- Most people accept a property by the third offer, largely as a result of the improved quality of accommodation, whether new build or core stock. However, staff appear to be flexible in allowing more than the required limit of three offers.

- There was no advantage or disadvantage to the tenant in waiting for three offers of rehousing. As the offers are based on what becomes available at that time, the quality of offer is down to chance, with the first offer being as likely as the second or third to be the best for the tenant.
- It seemed clear that a 'local priority' system is used in allocating available properties to clearance cases. There may be a case for making this clear and explicit within policy statements.
- Housing officers operate a degree of discretion in order to take local housing management considerations into account when making allocations to specific properties. This could be to avoid putting antisocial tenants into particular blocks, or to avoid high child densities in particular blocks or areas. It is difficult to assess whether this is 'right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'bad', as there has to be some way of balancing individual needs against area needs.
- The programme of Second Stage Transfer (SST) has served to make the clearance process more complex as housing staff have to deal with other RSLs to a greater degree than they would otherwise in order to secure rehousing options for tenants. Housing staff reported a lack of nominations agreements with post-SST landlords. Thus, the simultaneous achievement of two major objectives of stock transfer, namely community ownership and stock clearance and redevelopment, is a significant challenge.
- The lack of co-ordination between clearance and new build in the early years of the TRA programme has made clearance more difficult, and reduced the chances of people remaining in the local area; or for some has meant a temporary move into unimproved stock while new build is provided. Having said that, reports from GHA throughout the GoWell study have indicated that most people in clearance situations do not wish to remain locally. The extensive use of existing core stock for clearance, rather than new build, has potential knock-on effects on stock availability for other applicants.
- The reduction in private sector new build activity has meant that where clearance tenants are rehoused into new build, these are more likely to be social rented developments rather than the mixed-tenure, sustainable communities originally intended to replace cleared social housing estates. In some areas, new build is being developed to meet clearance needs rather than to match future regeneration masterplans.
- Staff are able to operate some flexibility in allocating new build housing to non-clearance cases if this aids the local situation, e.g. through 'chain moves'.
- The operation of nominations agreements with RSLs providing new build properties for clearance purposes varied a great deal and sometimes lacked



clarity and good communication. The success of these often relied largely on individual relationships between staff at both organisations. Problems and confusion arose around the following issues: duration of the nominations rights; applicability to second and subsequent lets; stage of development/readiness when the LHO is informed of new dwellings becoming available; lack of contact from the RSL in relation to particular developments; lack of notification about subsequent vacancies in new build; number of nominations put forward by the LHO and the ability of the RSL to exercise choice; the tendency to nominate only 'good tenants'.

- There was a tendency to allocate new build properties, 'better' housing, and housing in 'better' areas to 'good' tenants. The approach went beyond the stated policy of restricting the rehousing opportunities only for those antisocial tenants against whom formal action is being taken.
- Rehousing was made more difficult by the number of clearances going on at any one time across the city. Housing staff questioned how well the entire programme of clearances had been planned.
- Housing staff did not feel under pressure to clear blocks quickly as redevelopment was not imminent. On the one hand, this could cause some tenants to have to wait longer from clearance declaration to actually moving. However, on the other hand, staff could give tenants longer to make a decision and tenants would feel under less pressure to accept offers.

## Chapter 7 Moving tenants and clearing properties

This chapter reports on how tenants are given financial and practical assistance to move, and how housing staff acquire empty properties at the end of the process.

### Termination of tenancy

Once the tenant has accepted a new tenancy, they go into the local office and sign the termination agreement for their old property. The date they will vacate the property is agreed. The Housing Officers ensure that one tenancy ends and the other starts on subsequent days so that benefits can be paid and the tenant is not liable for additional rent through having two properties at once.

### Assistance with the move

Tenants are responsible for organising the move themselves. However, some assistance is offered to them to help them with the process.

**Access to previous property:** After the termination date, tenants are given time (two to four weeks) when they can keep the keys to their old property rent-free to allow them to move. This is not a written policy, but something that LHOs allow to assist tenants with the move. This is possible as no new tenants are moving into the property. Tenants are liable for any gas or electricity costs incurred during that period.

**Removals:** In some cases, assistance is offered to tenants with arranging removals. This can be arranged through the local office and then deducted from their payments (see below). However, this is usually more expensive than the tenants making the arrangements themselves and tends only to be used by older tenants who need assistance with making the arrangements. This is only for larger items, not smaller personal ones, but can be useful for some tenants.

**Additional support with the move:** Where it was felt that tenants might require assistance with the move (or assistance more generally) staff would “*try to make sure assistance was there by making referrals to Social Work*” (Housing Staff 2). However, they said that this rarely resulted in any action being taken by social workers and staff seemed frustrated by this. Where tenants already have social workers, staff still deal directly with the tenants. They feel that some tenants should have more support when they move, “*but social workers seem reluctant to get more involved*” (Housing Staff 5). Staff referred to one tenant who wanted to move to a private let and was finding it hard to do so, but couldn’t get assistance from anyone. Staff put the lack of involvement down to large workloads within the Social Work Department, but links and relationships between the two organisations seemed to be poor.

**Local Businesses:** In one study area “*local businesses targeted those moving into new build by organising arrangements where they could receive carpets, blinds etc. up front and then pay when they received their cheques*” (Housing Staff 3). This proved very helpful for tenants and also assisted with the smooth running of the clearance.

**Information provided:** Tenants receive a standard sign-up pack for when they move into their new property. This provides them with “*information on the area, RTB, antisocial behaviour etc.*” (Housing Staff 5).

### Home loss payments

Tenants being rehoused due to demolition have a legal entitlement to home loss payments. This payment is made to compensate for the inconvenience and upset caused by the move, not to cover the costs of the move. Home loss payments are covered by the Land Compensation Act 1973. The main factors in qualifying for this payment during clearance are:

- The tenant must be moving from their home permanently, e.g. not through a decant.
- The tenant must have lived in the property for at least one year.

The payment is made at a flat rate of £1,500. The payment is per household and will be split equally between joint tenants.

“GHA may make a discretionary payment for a tenancy of less than one year where it may serve the GHA’s interests”<sup>18</sup>. The policy notes that a decision has been taken to do this in the case of refugees who have been in the property for more than a year, but became GHA tenants more recently. However, Housing Staff said that, in nearly all cases, this time limit was ignored as it was detrimental to the process. Housing Staff 9 said that “*if this was applied, tenants would just wait until they had been there a year and slow up the process, so this is ignored and payments are made regardless of length of tenancy*”. It was therefore felt that making the payments available to all tenants was the most effective way of ensuring the clearance went smoothly.

Similarly, Housing Staff 8 said that “*when a clearance is not active, the tenants will still receive home loss and disturbance payments.*” This is so that they will not be discouraged from moving if an opportunity arises.

Rent arrears can be deducted from home loss payments, but only with the agreement of tenant. They should be asked to sign a waiver permitting GHA to make this deduction<sup>18</sup>. Where the tenant refuses, the home loss payment must still be made and the arrears pursued separately. There seemed to be some confusion among staff on what could be deducted from the payments and how this could be done. Housing Staff 1 said that “*GHA can take up to £1,500 for rent arrears, more with the consent of the tenant*”.

### **Disturbance payments**

Most landlords will also offer disturbance payments, although this is not a legal requirement and is at the discretion of individual landlords. This payment is made to cover the costs of moving home.

The main factors in qualifying for this payment during clearance are:

- The tenant must be moving from their home permanently, e.g. not through a decant.
- The tenant must have been living in the property on the date that the ‘active clearance’ designation was approved.

There is no set rate for payments. Some landlords pay expenses based on receipts submitted (with rules governing what can be claimed). Others, including GHA, pay a fixed sum in advance. This is currently £1,250 for GHA tenants.

Tenants can dispute the amount they receive if it has not covered their costs, but must “provide receipts to demonstrate their ‘reasonable’ expenses”<sup>18</sup>. This fact was not mentioned by any of the housing staff. It was not clear whether or not they were aware of this, and if they were that this information was given to tenants.

Rent arrears cannot be deducted from disturbance payments, but other outstanding charges can.

### **Number of claims**

Home loss and disturbance payments should only be paid once. Where a tenant has made an interim move (most commonly to await the completion of new build units), the payment will only be made at the time of the first move. However, the GHA policy states that, where the tenant has been in interim accommodation for longer than three years, they will be entitled to another home loss and disturbance payment.

## **Timing of payments**

The home loss cheque is paid at termination of tenancy, and the disturbance cheque is paid when the tenant has moved out and returned their keys.

Staff said that there was sometimes a problem with tenants receiving the first cheque and spending it prior to moving, and then saying afterwards that they did not have enough money for the move.

## **Tenant reaction to payments**

Staff said that tenants were usually very happy with the level of payments made. Some households, and in particular older tenants, were not aware of these payments and were pleased to be receiving them. In one area, staff said that *“at first when we mentioned them they assumed they had to pay GHA the money to move. They were amazed they were getting to move and getting a payment too”* (Housing Staff 5).

## **Moving owners**

GHA is responsible for the buy-back of owners' properties and finding them suitable rehousing where required. The buy-back is carried out through a central GHA team and is not dealt with by the staff in local offices.

The rehousing of owners, where they want to be housed by GHA, is carried out in the same way as that of tenants, but with no priority being given for clearance (Housing Staff 8). However, managers can award 'social points' to give owners a similar priority. While staff said that most owners requested rehousing, the very low numbers of owners meant that this was a straightforward process and did not present any workload problems. Owners are also offered the option of shared equity properties. While many can't afford this, a significant number in one study area had accepted these offers.

Where staff reported issues with owners, these were similar to those with tenants, for example an owner turning down good offers of rehousing and hoping to be offered a back and front door property in a low turnover area.

Owners are also entitled to home loss and disturbance payments. The process is very similar to that for tenants, but the main difference is that in respect of home loss, owners receive 10% of the market value of their property, with a minimum of £1,500 and a maximum of £15,000.

## Temporary lets

Temporary lets to asylum seekers or homeless applicants make up a higher percentage of properties in the demolition blocks. Housing Staff 4 said that 20-25% of those rehoused were former asylum seekers. However, the rehousing of these tenants is the responsibility of the organisations involved and is not dealt with by the local offices. As other properties for temporary use are found centrally by GHA to replace those lost, this does not have an impact on the clearance of the blocks. It was also noted that the numbers of asylum seekers has been falling, meaning there is not a shortage of available properties for their rehousing.

As these are not secure tenancies, they can be occupied up to a later date, allowing an income to be available until closer to demolition. One Rehousing Strategy noted that some of costs of clearance would be offset by rental income from interim NASS flats. This seems to cause confusion and at times resentment from secure tenants as they feel that they are being moved out but others are being allowed to remain or move in.

If asylum seekers are granted asylum (then known as refugees), GHA lets them remain in the property they were in but they will become secure tenants. Similarly, legacy cases (where leave to remain was granted due to the length of time they had been in the country without a decision) will continue to occupy their property as secure tenants. Refugees will then be rehoused with clearance priority in the same way as other secure tenants, and their length of tenancy will date from when leave to remain was granted. While refugees are then subject to the same rehousing rules as other tenants (based on length of tenancy and household size) there was often a misconception that they were being dealt with differently and given preferential treatment. Housing Staff 9 said that *“this caused resentment among other tenants as they were seen to be getting offered the best housing that others had waited years for”*. The reasons for the resentment were not clear, although it seemed to be a combination of refugees not being from the local area originally and their household size requirements meaning they were often rehoused into new build houses.

## Clearing empty properties

Staff said that, overall, the clearances have gone fairly smoothly. Some of the problems usually associated with management have not been an issue because of the nature of clearances. For example, *“if voids haven’t been cleared, home loss can be used for this, and the actual condition of the property isn’t an issue as it’s not being re-let”* (Housing Staff 9).

However, there are two issues that staff saw as problematic during clearances: keys and utilities.

**Keys:** Housing Officers found that, although the second home loss and disturbance cheque was not issued until the keys were returned, they often had to chase up tenants to return these. Staff in all areas said that having keys returned to them was often an issue and could be time-consuming. This had not been anticipated, as it had assumed the cheque would act as an incentive to return them.

However, Housing Staff 8 said that this problem was “*the same as usual*” and not particular to clearances.

**Utilities:** After the tenant has left, staff contacted the utilities companies to have supplies disconnected. Two of the three study areas reported that there were major workload implications involved in dealing with the utilities companies. The third said that it was time-consuming although it ran smoothly.

Some meetings had been set up by the LHOs with the utilities companies to discuss their concerns. However, nothing had come of them and there was a strong feeling among staff that this needed to be co-ordinated centrally by GHA. It was thought that this would make the clearance process much more efficient, even though the GHA demolitions team do co-ordinate with the utility companies.

## Summary

- Allowing tenants access to their keys for additional time in order to move belongings was positive and seemed to work well.
- The practice of making home loss and disturbance payments available to people without the one-year tenancy qualification was seen as an aid to the clearance process. Discretion is also used to make a further payment to anyone in interim accommodation for over three years.
- Staff were of the view that tenants were happy with the level of payments made.
- Allowing asylum seekers to remain for longer in clearance areas had caused some resentment among local people.
- Dealing with utilities companies seemed to have significant workload implications. While individual efforts had been made to put better systems in place at a local level, this had not improved matters.

## **Chapter 8 Conclusion**

This final chapter reflects on the main research objectives we set ourselves at the start of the study, but first it is worth recalling the nature of the study.

### **Research approach**

In order to study how the process of rehousing tenants from multistorey blocks due for demolition worked in practice, we investigated proceedings in three of Glasgow's eight Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs). In each of the three study areas, one housing manager and two housing officers involved in the rehousing process were interviewed in-depth. Policy documents and practice guidance notes were also reviewed as part of the study. It is important to note that at the time of the interviews in 2011, the clearance process had been going on for at least five years in each of the areas and the majority of the tenants had been rehoused by that time. However, very little on-site replacement new build housing had been provided by 2011, so that most tenants from cleared blocks had been rehoused elsewhere, though in most cases not very far away.

We interviewed staff who worked in Local Housing Organisations (LHOs), that is the local entities managing GHA's housing stock in a devolved structure. Necessarily, and intentionally, that meant that we gathered the local perspective on the rehousing process, not the perspective of the organisation centrally. We were interested in how front-line staff viewed the process, but that does not offer a complete view of the organisation's approach for two reasons: first, local staff may be unfamiliar with central strategy and policy (which is interesting in itself) and convey opinions which misrepresent the organisation's central perspective; second, local staff may, by virtue of their position, be more positive about local actions and approaches and less positive about central approaches, as they are more involved with the former. It is important to remember what the report represents (and what it does not) in reviewing our overall conclusions.

### **Clearance and regeneration**

Clearance was intended to take place in areas of low demand for social housing in order to provide the opportunity for the creation of new, sustainable, mixed-tenure communities. This link between clearance and redevelopment has been weak rather than strong, in timing and intention, in the areas we have studied. There are a number of reasons for this: the lack of a masterplan for each area to which all key partners are signed up, and committed to delivering; the effects of the financial crisis and associated austerity measures on funding for new social housing, funding for



new infrastructure, and developer interest in new housing construction at this time; and, the lack of an effective means of securing private sector involvement and activity.

This situation has had consequences for both the process and outcomes of clearance. In process terms, the slow rate of redevelopment has made it harder to justify and explain clearance to residents, as well as more difficult to meet the preferences of those who wished to live in a new build dwelling in the local area. At the end of the process, this outcome will have been provided to far fewer people than might have originally expected it.

In outcome terms, staff raised the question of whether the result of clearance – by moving people into existing housing, or later on new build, in the local area – might simply be to re-establish predominantly social housing areas with the same mix of tenures and people as previously, thus not changing the nature of the local communities as much as originally planned. Some staff saw new build housing as being provided for clearance purposes rather than for transformational regeneration purposes.

## **Flexibility**

On the other hand, the lack of pressure on housing staff to clear blocks quickly in order to meet the redevelopment requirements of a masterplan has enabled staff to be more flexible, and to take their time to meet the needs and preferences of clearance tenants. The study identified a number of ways in which housing staff exercised flexibility to assist tenants, including: allowing tenants to register for larger properties than they strictly need; meeting tenants' non-statutory requirements, e.g. concerning particular streets or floor levels; making additional rehousing offers to some tenants, beyond the stated limit of three offers; allocating new build housing to non-clearance cases if the resulting chain of moves helped to meet a rehousing need; and making home loss and disturbance payments to tenants who did not meet the one-year tenancy qualification.

There was also evidence of staff discretion being used in relation to 'good' and 'bad' tenants. Housing officers dealing with clearance cases tended to nominate or allocate 'good' tenants for rehousing into new build accommodation, while housing officers making allocations of existing core stock would sometimes take the tenant's record into account in deciding who to put into particular closes and blocks. This went beyond the stated policy of rehousing options only being limited for those against whom action had been taken for antisocial behaviour or rent arrears, but it is not known how far these kinds of considerations are extended, nor what their effect on rehousing outcomes is.

## **Difficulties: planning, people and the housing system**

There were several sources of difficulty for housing staff relating to: decision-making, planning and information; housing supply; the people involved as clearance tenants; and the nature of the housing system within the city.

The decision-making about demolition and clearance was sometimes the cause of difficulties, in particular when decision-making took a long time and when the rationale for the demolition of particular blocks was not clear. This made housing staff's job of explaining events to residents difficult, and was thought to disadvantage the occupants of blocks which received a later clearance notice than others.

Rehousing strategies had not proved very useful to staff as a means of either identifying the housing requirements of clearance tenants, nor as a link between the clearance and reprovisioning programmes. Housing staff identified an ongoing shortage of larger units for clearance cases which prior planning had not addressed. Recent housing need and demand assessments for the city and conurbation have tended to focus on estimating the number of households requiring housing of different tenures, rather than estimating demand for dwellings of different sizes. However, the need for larger units was recently identified by strategic planners with regard to two issues: the housing needs of asylum seekers and refugees, which is very relevant to the areas studied here; and the need for larger dwellings that could accommodate overnight stays of children with non-custodial parents following relationship breakdown<sup>19</sup>. An additional difficulty that may face rehousing officers was identified in the city's own social housing demand assessment, namely that people in overcrowded circumstances would not accept an offer of larger accommodation if it was considered to be in an area with a poor reputation<sup>20</sup>.

Staff also lacked sufficient information on housing supply in other areas to use in advising their tenants on which areas to consider for rehousing. The further development of a common housing register beyond the northwest to the entire city, will help with this type of problem in future. Finally, in relation to planning and co-ordination, housing staff considered that the number of clearances going on across the city was, a problem from time to time, in trying to identify suitable rehousing properties for their tenants. They were also of the view that little thought had gone in to the overall level and timing of clearance activities across the city.

However, the study also revealed how the practical reality of demolition, clearance, and rehousing represents a complex set of interdependencies to be handled by GHA centrally and locally through LHOs. This complexity is exacerbated in circumstances where: clearance is a city-wide programme involving many communities at once; reprovisioning is being provided by multiple RSLs rather than by a single organisation; demolition has to be phased to fit in with the requirements of both the GHA business plan and the capacity of demolition contractors; and the amount and timing of the availability of land for new build by GHA or others is an emerging

situation rather than being known beforehand. Furthermore, the economic downturn since 2008 can adversely affect each element of the process. Transformational Area Regeneration had therefore become a juggling act between these factors, and this had inhibited the ability of documents such as the masterplan and rehousing strategy to play the part originally intended in each area. Nonetheless, it was also the case that local housing staff appeared to pay little attention to such strategic documents, and did not feel any expectation to do so.

Two types of clearance occupant were identified as the source of problems or issues to be handled: tenants with support needs; and asylum seeker and refugees. Housing staff did not feel that they had been able to offer enough assistance to tenants with support needs such as dependency issues, mental health problems, physical health difficulties or language difficulties. Housing staff reported a lack of input from Social Work on such clearance cases. In general, staff thought there were more tenants with support needs than is often recognised, and that these issues come to light in clearance situations; it might be better if such tenants were readily identifiable beforehand.

The fact that the clearance communities contained significant numbers of asylum seekers and refugees was an added complication. There was often a perception among other residents that this group was treated differently to other residents in housing terms which was a source of disgruntlement which had to be managed: either when refugees were allocated new build housing (although they were housed using the same criteria as other residents); or when asylum seekers in temporary lets were permitted to remain in the blocks for longer (as with other temporary lets, they could be rehoused at short notice by their own landlords and thus provided an income stream until close to demolition). Furthermore, housing staff did not fully understand the considerations and preferences of ethnic minority residents, who often wanted to remain locally for safety reasons, and who sometimes failed to view properties they had expressed an interest in.

The shift towards a more pluralistic social housing system across the city, through the growth of the RSL sector and the advancement of community ownership via SST after stock transfer served to make clearance a more complicated process. Firstly, in some areas, SST meant that LHO staff had access to fewer social housing, core stock units for rehousing purposes, since nomination agreements had not been established for this purpose with SST landlords. Secondly, the nomination agreements in place with RSLs for clearance access to new build reprovisioning housing were not well understood by all those involved, and formal communication between RSLs and LHOs about available reprovisioning units did not work as intended. Nevertheless, access to reprovisioning housing generally worked well due to good working relationships between individual housing staff on both sides.

### **Success factors: locality and flexibility**

The clearance process benefits from the fact that the majority of those affected were positive about the prospect of moving to a better home and area, thus opposition or negative perspectives were not widespread. Clearance is also made easier for housing staff by the fact that most people want to remain in the immediate or wider local area, which is better known to the staff and reduces the search strategy for alternative housing. Staff reported operating a version of 'local priority' when it came to selecting tenants for rehousing. Whether or not remaining locally is always best for the tenants' eventual outcomes is an open question, but not one considered within the clearance process itself. The notion that one might use relocation to expand people's horizons in a variety of ways, if possible and if people were amenable to that idea, was not part of the approach to regeneration.

The fact that housing staff are able to operate a reasonably flexible clearance process is also helpful to success. This is supported by the fact that length of tenancy is seen as a fair means of prioritising among clearance cases for similar properties, while staff seem to be allowed a great deal of discretion in applying some of the 'rules' for clearance and rehousing in order to best meet their tenants' requirements. No doubt some 'steering' of tenants towards particular rehousing solutions occurs, but there was little evidence from this study of tenants being forced into rehousing outcomes they did not want.

All of the staff interviewed felt that, overall, clearances were going very well. They felt that they were "*doing a good job*" and "*meeting aspirations*" (Housing Staff 4) and that the process in place worked well.

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## **Appendix:**

### **Topic guide for interviews with housing staff**

#### The process

What happens after a decision is made to clear one or more blocks?

How do you decide which block to clear first?

How are people told about the need to move?

How do you keep people (and the community?) informed of progress?

What are the main objectives you try to achieve through clearance and rehousing?

How are people's housing needs identified and assessed?

- How many times do you have to talk to residents about their needs and options?
- What part of residents' preferences play in this?
- Are people realistic in their expectations?
- What other factors are important?
- Do you come to an agreement with people about what type/size of house they need.
- Do you come to an agreement about where people should move to?

How do you identify the rehousing options available for (i) a clearance block and (ii) individuals?

What relationships do you have with other organisations as part of the clearance process? How do they work?

Do you deal with the occupants of a block in phases? How?

What influences who moves earlier and who moves later?

- Do those who move earlier have more options?

How do you deal with people with particular needs, e.g. health issues; family support/care issues?

Who gets priority, or more choice?

Do long-standing tenants have more choice, or a better chance of getting what they want?

Do you find that many people want to stay in the original area rather than move elsewhere/ If so, can you accommodate this desire?

Do people want to move with their current neighbours? If so, can this be done?

What rehousing options are in most demand? New build houses? Particular areas?

What factors influence where you try to rehouse people?

Are there any other things to consider other than an individual household's housing needs?

Are there any situations you try to avoid creating through rehousing?

Are some people given fewer options than others? If so, why might that be?

Do you get many difficult rehousing cases?

- What makes a difficult case, and what causes those difficulties?
- How do you deal with difficult cases?

What if any limit do you use on the number of offers of alternative accommodation you make to people in order to encourage them to accept what is available?

How else can you get people to accept a move?

How long does it take to clear a tower block?

How much does the length of time matter? And why?

How easy or difficult have you found it to clear blocks?

What is the most difficult thing about clearing a block?

### The people

How do you find people respond to the idea that they have to move home?

- Are they distressed, resigned, enthusiastic?
- Do you find some people respond differently to others? What influences this?

What are people's concerns about having to move?

- Are people concerned about losing their neighbours?
- Or about leaving the area/community they have known?



What makes moving easier to cope with for some people?

What makes moving difficult to cope with for some people?

How do people's attitudes to moving change during the process?