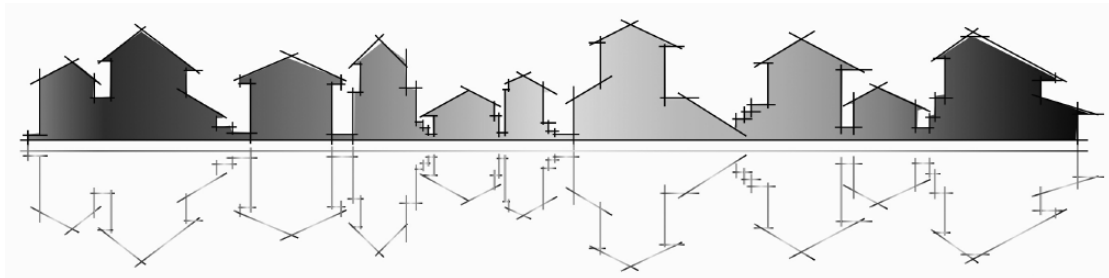


'Finding a Home' Choice Based Lettings Policy Summary



Consultation August 2009

Report of results from consultation with Tenants



Introduction

Consultation was undertaken in the form of a summary paper that outlined the Council's draft Choice Based Lettings housing policy. This was for customers on the housing waiting register to understand the way it will be allocating its available properties. The new service is called 'Finding a Home'. The consultation timetable and questionnaire was organised by Jo Mallaband and Tina Mustafa (housing operations manager).

Consultation events began in August 2009 and were originally over three months and later extended for a further month. At the end of the booklet there was a questionnaire for people to complete and return in the prepaid envelope provided to tell us their thoughts and opinions.

A copy of the full Choice Based Lettings housing policy is available on our website. A copy could be obtained from the Tenant Participation Team.

Background

The Council is moving from a points based housing allocation system to a choice based letting system early in 2010. Although this new system does not mean we have any more homes available; for our customers it is a far simpler and fairer way of letting empty homes.

What are the benefits?

- Allowing you to make decisions about where you want to live and when you want to move
- Helping to create settled communities and making the best use of our housing stock
- Having an interactive website to express interest on advertised vacant properties.

The choice based letting policy uses a banding system that is based on housing need. We will use this policy to assess the housing need of applicants and which band reflects their needs.

Applicants in the highest band will have a greater need for finding a home more quickly. Priority will be given to those who have been waiting the longest in their band.

Customers who are already on the housing register as a housing applicant or a transfer applicant will have their application automatically transferred to the new scheme for when it is launched in early 2010. In late December 2009 onwards the Council will inform all applicants to tell them which band they have been placed in and allowing them an opportunity to ask for the banding to be reviewed ahead of the new system being introduced.

What are the Bands?

People will be placed into one of five bands to reflect their priority for housing.

Applicants in Band 1+ will be ranked first followed by Bands 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Tamworth Borough Council will not apply additional or reduced preference for those applicants irrespective of local connection but will be assessed in accordance with their housing need. Applicants with a history of rent arrears may find their banding priority order reduced. Applicants with a history of anti social behaviour may find themselves suspended from joining the housing register for up to five years.

Why did Tamworth Borough Council consult with tenants?

Tamworth Borough Council wanted their customers to be fully consulted on the new lettings system being introduced early in 2010. The choice based lettings system will be a new way of allocating vacant properties in Tamworth. It will be fairer and offer more choice on where people choose to live.

By asking our customers their views and opinions amendments could be made to the draft policy and allow us to answer any questions that may arise. The feedback received is very important when writing and implementing new policies in relation to the launch of the new lettings system.

When requests were made for more information the Housing Advice Team would aim to respond with 21 days by telephone, letter or appointment to suit individual needs.

How was the survey conducted?

The survey was conducted in the following ways;

- The survey was sent to everyone on the current housing register and anyone applying for housing.
- Displayed in the reception area of Marmion House at Tamworth Borough Council.
- On line survey on Tamworth Borough council's website
- Stakeholder events and training.

In total 251 surveys (13%) were completed and returned.

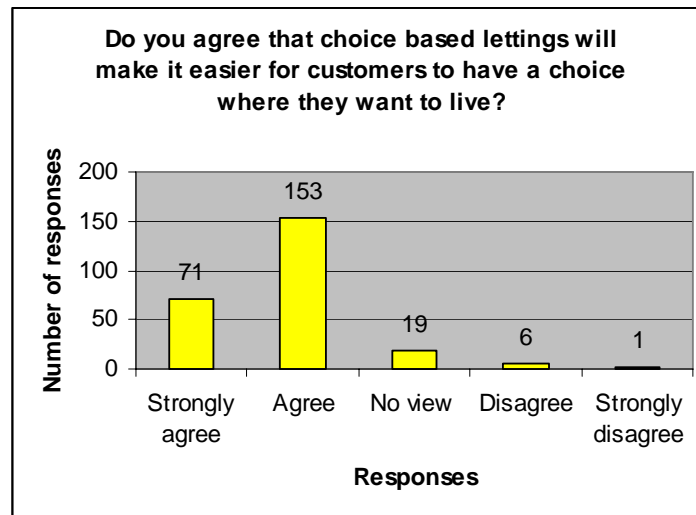
Summary of findings

Across all the questionnaire responses received throughout the choice based lettings consultation the following is a summary of the key findings:

- 89% of respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the choice based lettings system will make it easier for customers to have a choice in where they want to live. Whereas, only 3% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' with this statement.
- 90% of respondents stated that they did not think that some of the housing needs are placed in too high a band.
- 89% of respondents stated that they did not think that there are housing needs that are placed in too high a band.
- 76% of respondents stated that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing.
- 87% of respondents stated that they think how to apply for housing through the new choice based lettings system has been explained in enough detail.
- 92% of respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they thought the policy summary was useful.

Results of the Finding a Home questionnaire

Q1) Do you agree that choice based lettings will make it easier for customers to have a choice on where they want to live?



28% of respondents (71) stated that they **strongly agree** that choice based lettings will make it easier for customers to have a choice where they want to live

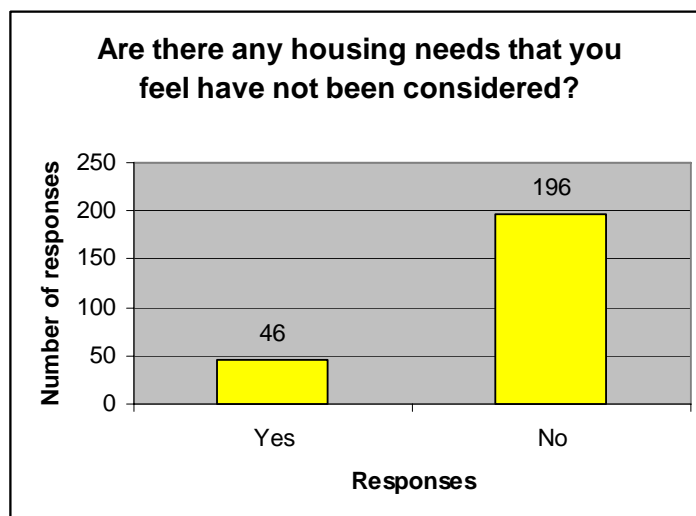
61% of respondents (153) stated that they **agreed** that choice based lettings will make it easier for customers to have a choice where they want to live

7% of respondents (19) stated that they had **no view** whether choice based lettings will make it easier for customers to have a choice where they want to live

2% of respondents (6) stated that they **disagree** that choice based lettings will make it easier for customers to have a choice where they want to live

0.4% of respondents (1) stated that they **strongly disagree** that choice based lettings will make it easier for customers to have a choice where they want to live

Q2) Are there any housing needs that you feel have not been considered?

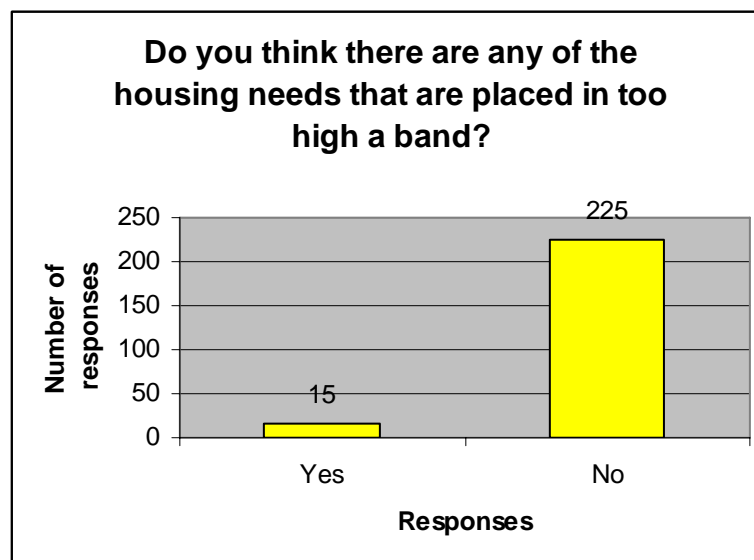


Q2a) If the respondents answered 'yes', then they were asked to explain what they are. The following are a selection of responses;

- People like me who do not earn enough money to buy a house, but are still living at home. I want my independence and my own front door
- People who are struggling to pay for private housing appear to be ignored!
- People whose health has been affected by operations and treatment for serious illness are unable to walk as well as before, and cannot walk up inclines, but require and prefer to live independently, but with some family help.
- We are not considered to even go on waiting list even though I have 2 children, 1 under 1, because we are privately renting and it is not a long term tenancy. If we did not privately rent we would be homeless.
- It doesn't mention in the banding about sheltered accommodation
- What about pets and does the length you have lived in Tamworth help towards getting a property?
- Insufficient adapted properties for the needs of the housing staff to be enabled to do their job properly and to theirs and our satisfaction, as there isn't enough available at all. They are struggling. Tenants get frustrated and stressed.
- Single homeless men and people whose homes are repossessed
- Think its discrimination that people with no children not able to be considered for a house.

- What about people in financial difficulties. Can they go on the housing list?
- Move to be nearer family
- Serving prisoners who are identified as being homeless on release
- Don't know, don't really understand it
- People like me who do not earn enough money to buy a house, but are still living at home. I want my independence and my own front door

Q3) Do you think that there are any of the housing needs that are placed in too high a band?



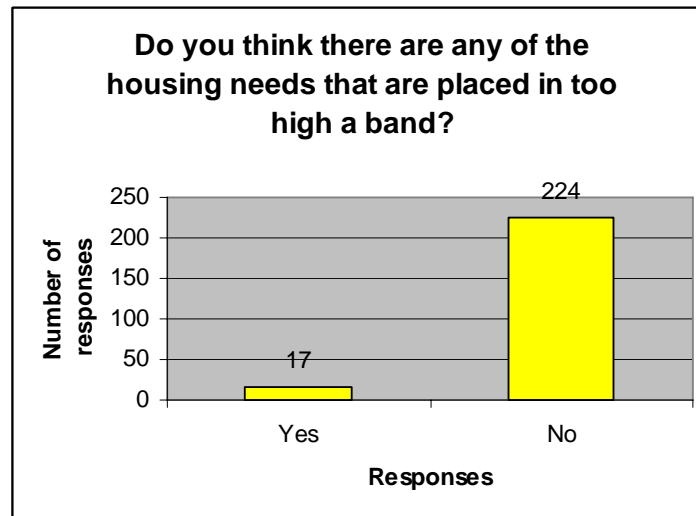
6% of respondents (15) stated **yes** that they did think that some of the housing needs are placed in too high a band

90% of respondents (225) stated **no** that they did not think that some of the housing needs are placed in too high a band

Q3a) If the respondents answered 'yes', then they were asked to specify a band. The following bands were suggested;

- Two bed housing for couples without children not being flats
- More offer of support for vulnerable people who wished to be housed near family, also high or medium band needs to be reassessed.
- Homeless! Band1+! Don't like the sound of this! Does this mean anyone can be placed higher than people with disability needs etc. Discretion to be used.

Q4) Do you think there are any of the housing needs that are placed in too high a band?



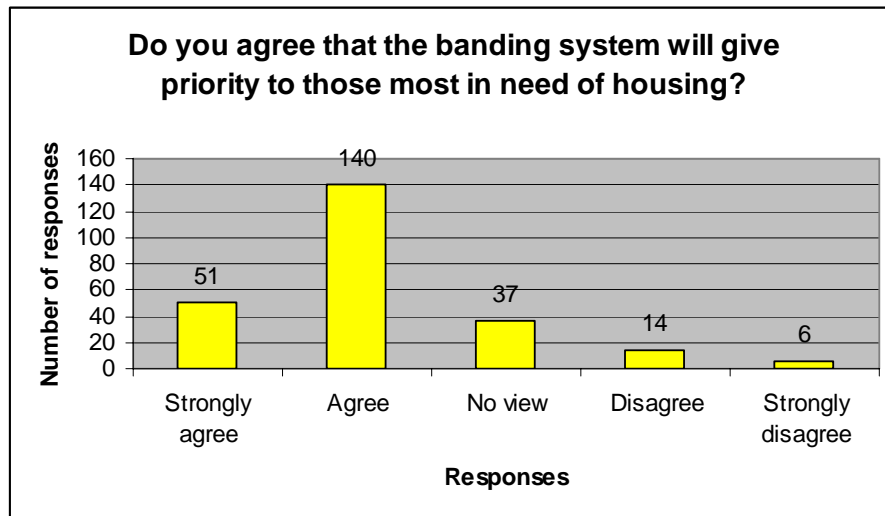
7% of respondents (17) stated that **yes** they do think that there is housing needs that are placed in too high a band.

89% of respondents (224) stated that **no** they do think that there are housing needs that are placed in too high a band.

Q4a) If the respondents answered 'yes', then they were asked to specify a band. The following bands were suggested;

- Low and medium bands are quite similar, except for the independence consideration.
- How long people have been waiting on the housing list
- Over 60's in need should be a priority, maybe 2
- There is no applicant band for whom have waited a long period of time and did not get anything
- Applicants who want to live independently from family -can affect health - band 2 would be better especially if they need adapted property.
- Medical needs -I think that any medical needs should be a priority and placed in high /medium banding. Never low
- Band 4 people who cannot afford a mortgage or private rent

Q5) do you agree that the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing?



20% of respondents (51) stated that they **strongly agreed** that the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing.

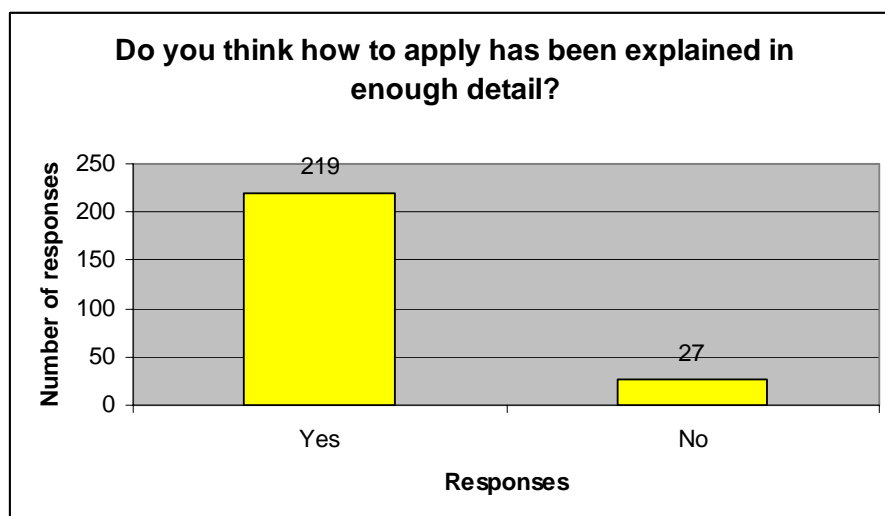
56% of respondents (140) stated that they **agreed** that the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing.

15% of respondents (37) stated that they have **no view** whether the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing.

6% of respondents (14) stated that they **disagree** that the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing.

2% of respondents (6) stated that they **strongly disagreed** that the banding system will give priority to those most in need of housing.

Q6) do you think how to apply has been explained in enough detail?



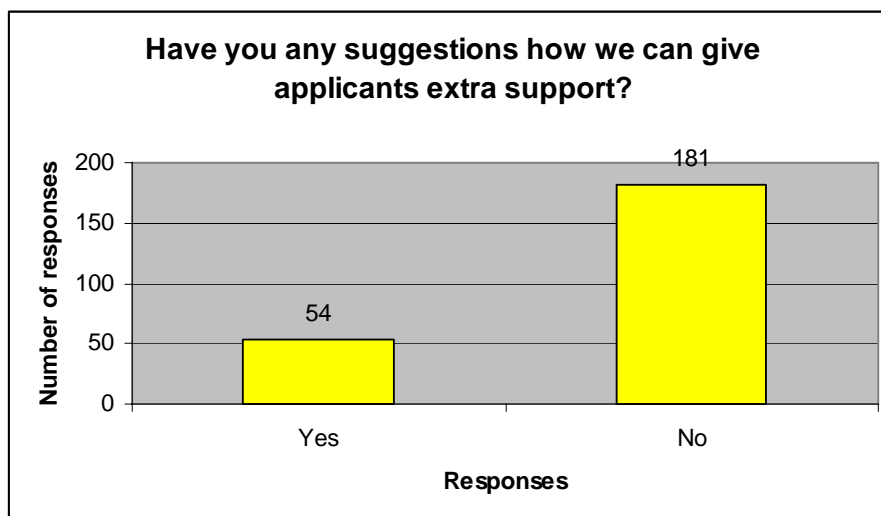
87% of respondents (219) stated **yes** they do think how to apply has been explained in enough detail.

11% of respondents (27) stated **no** they do think how to apply has been explained in enough detail.

Q6a) if respondents answered no, they were asked to state what is unclear.

- It's ok for sighted people, what about the blind
- Not too sure if it means priority will go to Tamworth residents still waiting
- All of it. It is not clear enough as to who will benefit from this. I for one, have no faith in any system due to how I have been treated during the past 6 years
- Those new rules are unclear and discriminating people already waiting. There is no information how long those bands have to wait and decrease chances of people already waiting.
- I would not be able to apply as I do not have access to a computer nor could I use one. I do not live in Tamworth so would not be able to visit the council office, nor would I be able to read the local press, newspapers.
- Don't fully understand about the banding system
- My brother cannot read or write so it is very difficult for him to understand any questionnaire you send him.
- Who is to apply both housing and transfer applicants?
- Will there be a proper application, on line only, application or both?
- Too complicated for elderly to understand
- Every individual has access to on line computer etc but people with disabilities are at a loss as regards information and I feel that this puts certain people unable to deal with this new format
- There are no details explaining where to obtain an application form from. Do you have to complete a paper application form, update circ or can you do this online
- Don't understand how some are from another council, if get it right, can pick our properties from Tamworth - and I only agree with the old system which I think is fair, not this one.

Q7) how you any suggestions how we can give applicants extra support?



22% of respondents (54) stated that **yes** they did have suggestions on how we can give applicants extra support

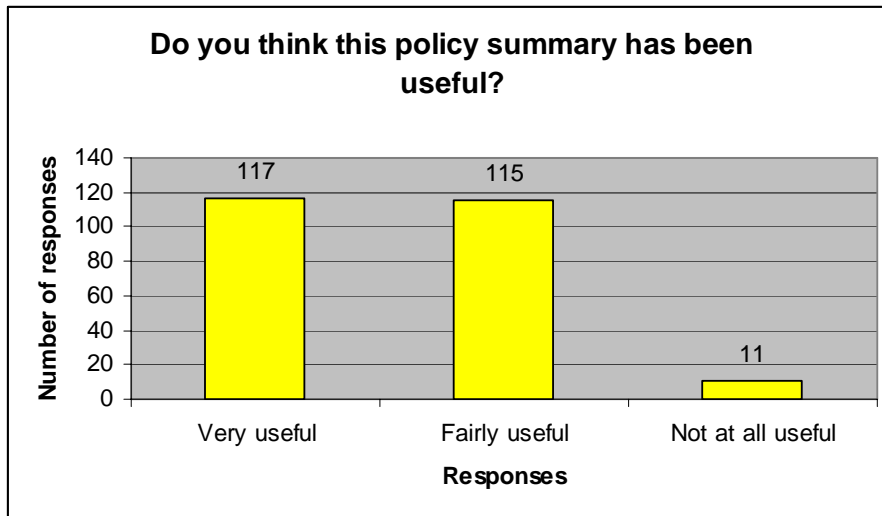
72% of respondents (181) stated that they **did not** have any suggestions on how we can give applicants extra support

Q7a) If respondents answered yes, then they was asked to tell us their suggestions.

- Give priority to disabled people
- Explain in detail so that it is more understandable
- Applications with long delay they need more support
- Just keep me and other people who have waited so long more informed
- Feedback as to why they aren't allocated a property when they have medical support.
- Make it clear enough who will benefit and who will not.
- More info on properties and areas
- keep in touch and let them know where they are on the list
- Finding properties that applicants may prefer and not just based on minimum needs and requirements.
- Display empty housing on internet web site

- Listen to their problems instead of issuing points that are irrelevant to their needs
- Meetings after a certain time on the waiting list to enable the discussion of housing from both sides
- By sending by post a leaflet of available properties to people who have no other way of knowing
- On bungalow /flat lists it could indicate which disabled persons flats are? Put 'D' beside them?
- Every 6 -12 months re-issue forms to see if there are any changes in circumstances. Some people may no longer be in urgent need.
- More contact, show compassion, don't just ignore them
- Offenders serving a custodial sentence will find it difficult to 'bid' for properties whilst in prison. Can arrangements be made where a representative (possibly a member of TBC staff) 'bid' for properties on the offenders behalf?
- Somebody from Housing in reception to explain
- Reduce the time it takes to make a decision. Homelessness -it will take approx. 30+ days before a written confirmation of being accepted as homeless.
- More communication between applicant and council
- One to one appointments are necessary
- Nominated officers whose job it is to deal with vulnerable customers and if necessary their support providers. Monitor whether those who are classed as vulnerable are accessing the CBL system and if not seeing why this is so that equal access is obtained.

Q8) Do you think this policy summary has been useful?

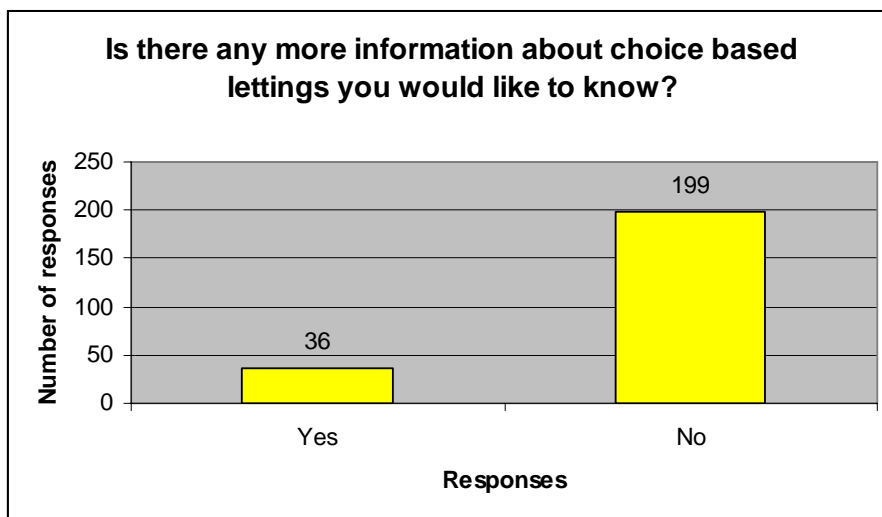


47% of respondents (117) stated that they thought the policy summary was **very useful**.

46% of respondents (115) stated that they thought the policy summary was **fairly useful**.

4% of respondents (11) stated that they thought the policy summary was **not at all useful**.

Q9) is there any more information about choice based lettings you would like to know?



47% of respondents (36) stated that **yes** they would like more information about choice based lettings

79% of respondents (199) stated that **no** they would like more information about choice based lettings

Q9a) If yes, respondents were requested to tell us any information they wanted us to send them.

- Will any consideration be given to those who have already been waiting on the list - I have been on the list for 3 years.
- The Wednesday morning drop in for housing, will this still continue?
- 1+ band to be fully explained. Council hasn't specified exactly which homeless people as Tamworth homeless should be a priority.
- What help and support there is available in Tamworth for young physically disabled people?
- What they are about in more detail and how best to approach them. Info on long term renting, private properties that could help me and my situation.
- Will you write to us and tell us what band we are in?

Q10) after having read this policy summary is there anything else you wish to tell us?

- I think more priority should be given to families who have to pay for private housing instead of being given an opportunity to council housing.
- The low and medium bands are probably too specific. I could match several points from both bands and make my band. Obviously, everyone will have similar comments. However, each of us knows their own needs. So bands can sometimes be confusing.
- I am happy that Tamworth Council is always contacting me with any change regarding my application. I hope the new system will help me get a home soon in Tamworth area.
- Can you post me a copy of the full choice based lettings housing allocation policy?
- I wish to know how long it will take from applying for accommodation being offered somewhere and moving in if suitable.
- Am looking forward to the new procedure! Good idea to view online
- This is a good idea. It simplifies some things, clarifies others.
- I think that your methods of housing people at this moment are a disgrace. I hope this new incentive works better for all.

- Why change the system? There are not a huge surplus of homes (council houses) to warrant people getting a choice. Homeless people only need to be offered one suitable property regardless of its location.
- I think you cover everything clearly, thank you
- I spoke to a lady about not being able to use a computer to see what was available and she said to get family to help, well we have no family so what do we do then. Also, what about if you was on holiday and can't come and check availability. So why can't people phone and say if they are going away
- I think more priority should be given to families who have to pay for private housing instead of being given an opportunity to council housing.

When respondents asked specific question about their own personal circumstances or general housing questions the Housing Advice Team responded within 21 day to answer their queries.

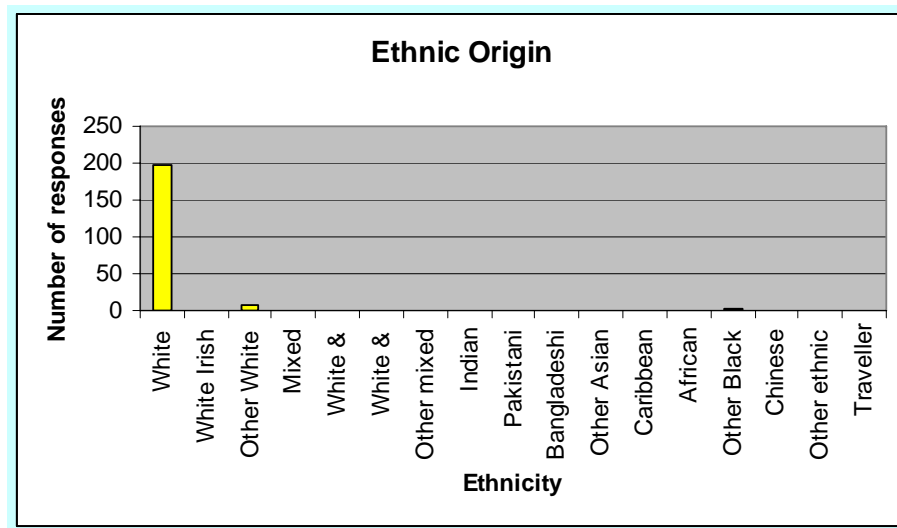
The following are a selection of general questions that were received by the respondents;

You asked	We said
Can I apply for housing as I do not have children?	Yes you can still apply for housing
This looks a great system and I would like to know how I can apply for housing?	A housing register was sent by the Housing Advice Team.
Will my application be a reduced priority because I have bought my council house?	Advised applicant that there will not be reduced priority for applications from Home Owners.
Will you write and tell us what band we are in?	Advised that all applicants will be advised of what band they have been placed in by letter.
Can you explain why outsiders are being housed when people are already on your list?	Advised that should applicants be eligible to apply for social housing then Tamworth Borough Council will assess their individual housing need.
I would like to know if I'm still on your housing register and if so I don't know how many points I've got.	Applicant was advised that they are still on the housing register. There circumstances were checked t and a new point's letter sent out.
We are currently on a transfer list to move into Sheltered accommodation because of ill health and have not heard anything from you.	Sent information on Sheltered housing and advised to expand areas of choice. Explained the incentive to move policy.
I'm desperate for a transfer and want to know if this will help.	Discussed HomeSwapper.

Equality and diversity monitoring

At Tamworth borough council we want to make sure that everyone who uses our services is treated equally. This section of the survey was not compulsory to complete. All information is treated in the strictest confidence and will be used to help us improve our services to customers.

Ethnic Origin



79% of respondents (197) stated that they are **White British**

0.4% of respondents (1) stated that they are **White Irish**

3% of respondents (7) stated that they are **Other White**

0.4% of respondents (1) stated that they are **White & Black African**

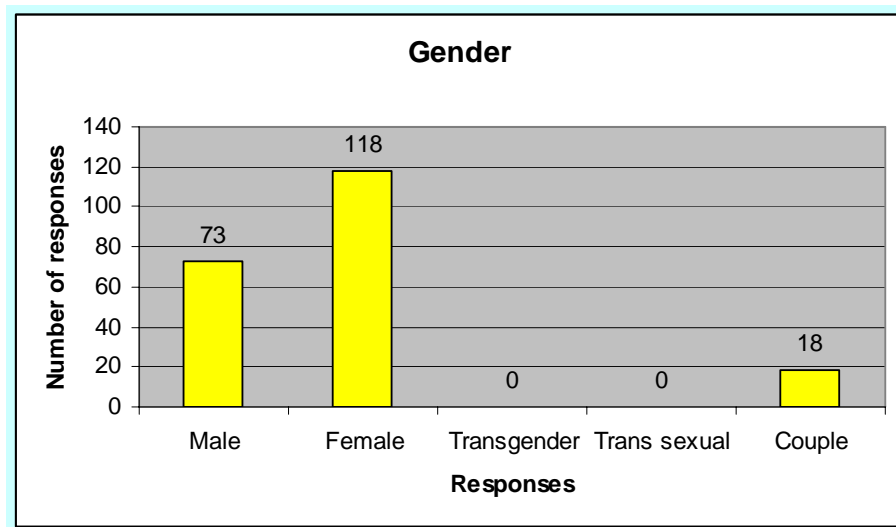
0.4% of respondents (1) stated that they are **Indian**

0.4% of respondents (1) stated that they are **Bangladeshi**

1% of respondents (2) stated that they are **Other Black**

[No other ethnic groups were represented.](#)

Gender



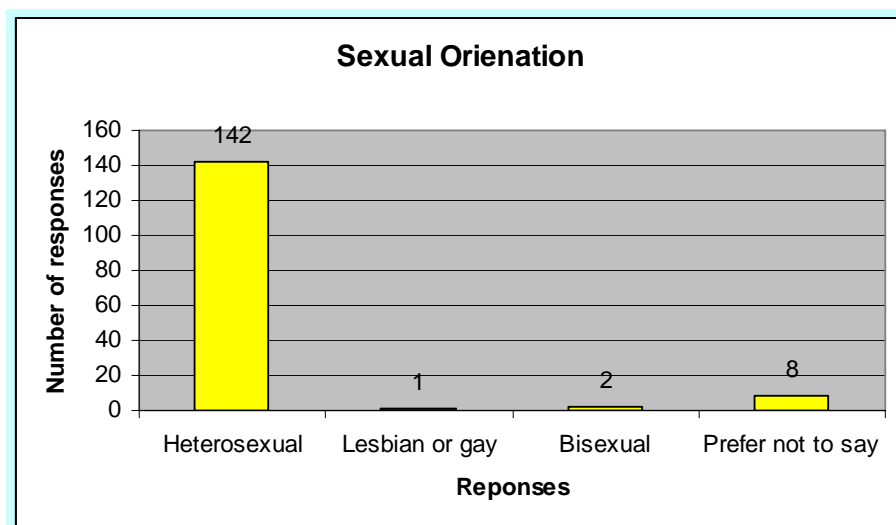
29% of respondents (73) stated that they are **male**

47% of respondents (118) stated that they are **female**

7% of respondents (18) stated that they are a **couple**

No other gender groups were represented.

Sexual Orientation



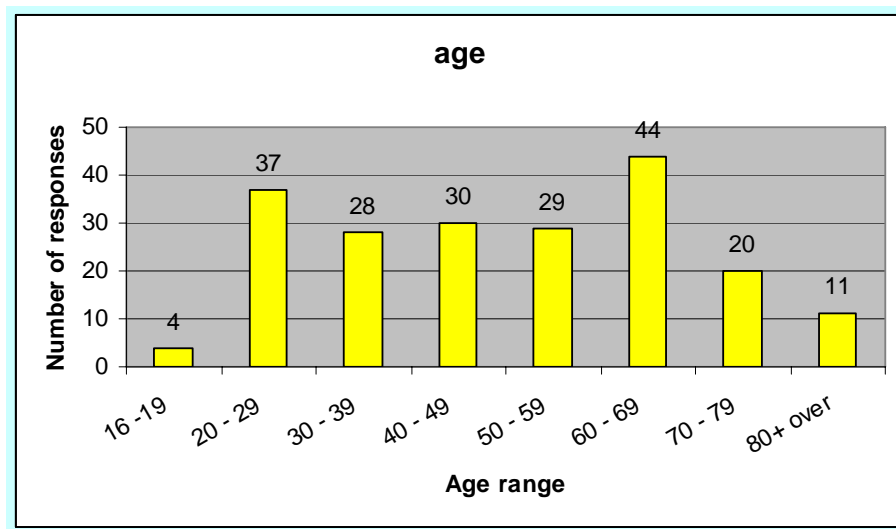
57% of respondents (142) stated that their sexual orientation is **heterosexual**

0.4% of respondents (1) stated that their sexual orientation is either **lesbian or gay**

1% of respondents (2) stated that their sexual orientation is **bisexual**

3% of respondents (8) stated that they would **prefer not to say** what their sexual orientation is.

Age



2% of respondents (4) are between the ages of **16 – 19**

15% of respondents (37) are between the ages of **20 – 29**

11% of respondents (28) are between the ages of **30 – 39**

12% of respondents (30) are between the ages of **40 – 49**

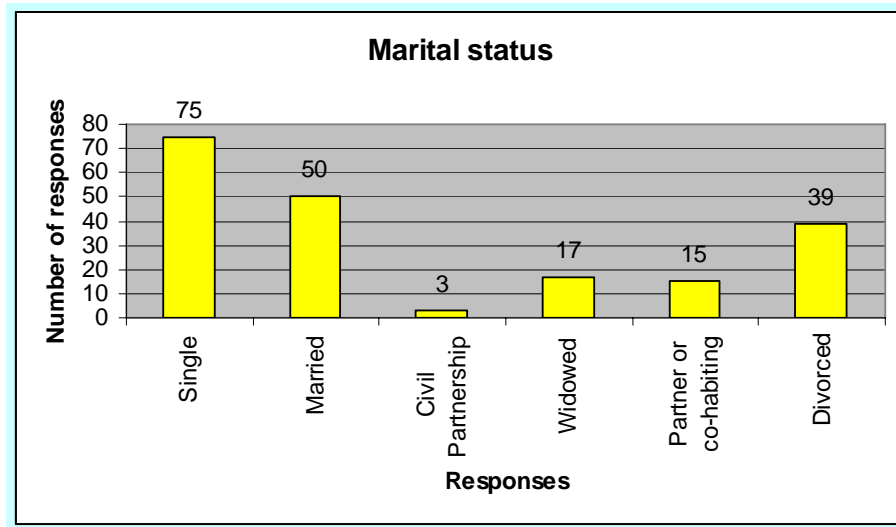
12% of respondents (29) are between the ages of **50 – 59**

18% of respondents (44) are between the ages of **60 – 69**

8% of respondents (20) are between the ages of **70 – 79**

4% of respondents (11) stated that they are **80+**

Marital status



30% of respondents (75) stated that they are single

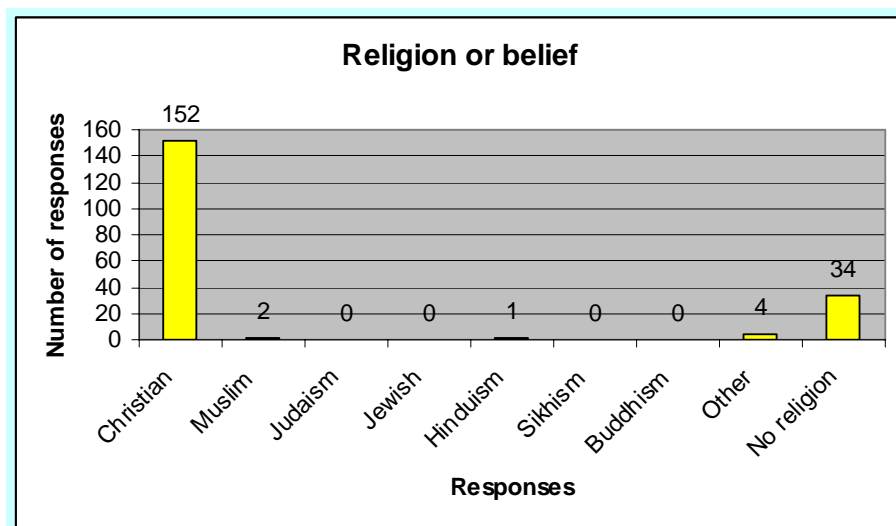
20% of respondents (50) stated that they are married

1% of respondents (3) stated that they are in a civil partnership

7% of respondents (17) stated that they are co-habiting or have a partner

16% of respondents (39) stated that they are divorced.

Religion or belief



61% of respondents (152) stated that their religion or belief is **Christian** (including Church of England, Roman Catholic or other denomination.

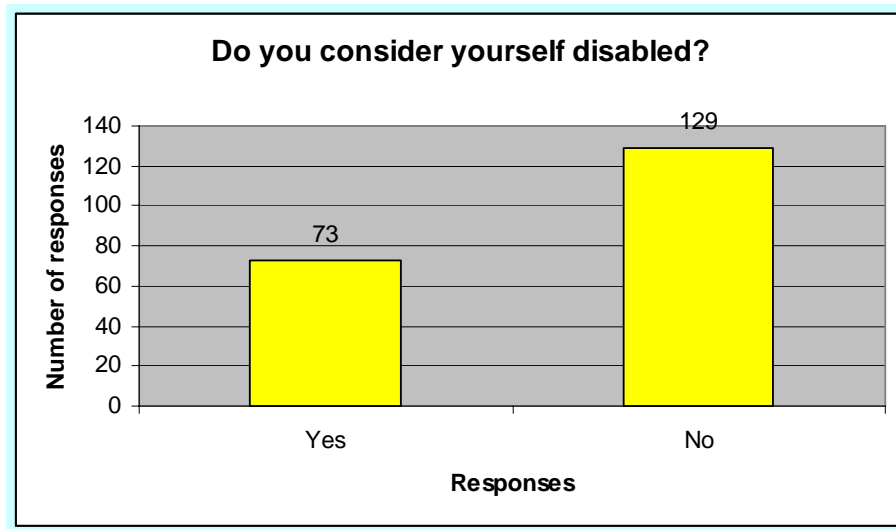
1% of respondents (2) stated that their religion or belief is **Muslim**

0.4% of respondents (1) stated that their religion or belief is **Hinduism**

2% of respondents (4) stated that their religion or belief is **other**

14% of respondents (34) stated that they have **no religion or belief**.

Do you consider yourself disabled?

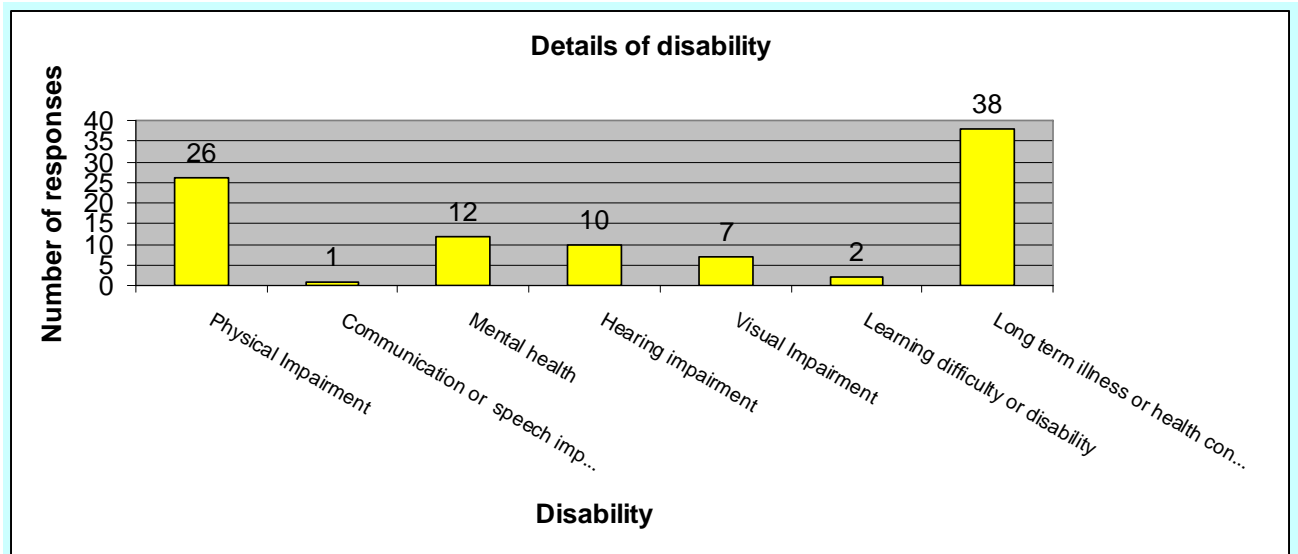


29% of respondents (73) stated that **yes they did** consider themselves as disabled

51% of respondents (129) stated they **did not** consider themselves as disabled.

NB: The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

If respondents answered yes, they were requested to provide details of their disability



21% of respondents (26) stated that they have a physical impairment

1% of respondents (1) stated that they have a communication or speech impairment

10% of respondents (12) stated that they have mental health

8% of respondents (10) stated that they have a hearing impairment

6% of respondents (7) stated that they have a visual impairment

2% of respondents (2) stated that they have a learning difficulty or disability

31% of respondents (38) stated that they have a long term illness or health condition.