

## **MERSEYSIDE: NEW LETTINGS SERVICE LETS TENANTS TAKE CONTROL**

Home-seekers on Merseyside will be able to benefit from a new lettings service giving them greater control over where they live.

The **Department for Communities and Local Government** (DCLG) has granted £100,000 to a partnership of local authorities and housing associations for the development of a sub-regional choice based lettings service.

The partnership - which includes **Knowsley, Liverpool** and **Wirral** councils plus **The Riverside Group, Arena, CDS, Cosmopolitan, Contour, Hornby, Knowsley Housing Trust, LHT, Maritime, New Generation, One Vision, Pierhead, SLHA, Venture, Villages Housing** - was one of 18 across the UK whose bid for funding was successful.

Rather than the landlord attempting to match an applicant to a property, choice-based lettings requires people to bid for advertised homes and the person with the highest priority will be made the offer. By introducing choice based lettings on a sub-regional basis, the partnership is bringing together a larger pool of available housing, giving home-seekers more choice and flexibility.

It is intended that the web-based service will provide access to a directory of available and affordable housing options. With a range of access points and methods customers will be able to choose when, where and how they use the service.

**Anna Bishop, of The Riverside Group**, said: "Most of our subsidiaries have already operated choice based lettings for a number of years but by joining together with other housing associations and local authorities we are taking this service to the next level. We believe a partnership approach is the best way of meeting home-seeker's housing needs.

"The aim is to provide a one stop shop offering access to a series of solutions from social rented, shared ownership and sheltered accommodation to care and repair schemes."

**Jill Wilson, Head of Housing, Planning and Building Control at Knowsley Council** added: "As the lead authority, Knowsley is very excited about this opportunity. There are a number of benefits of cross-local authority schemes. Not only do they enable greater regional mobility, break down artificial boundaries and recognise existing housing and labour markets but they also help to ease localised problems of high demand."

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