

# Challenge for Change

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*Outcomes and recommendations Vacants*

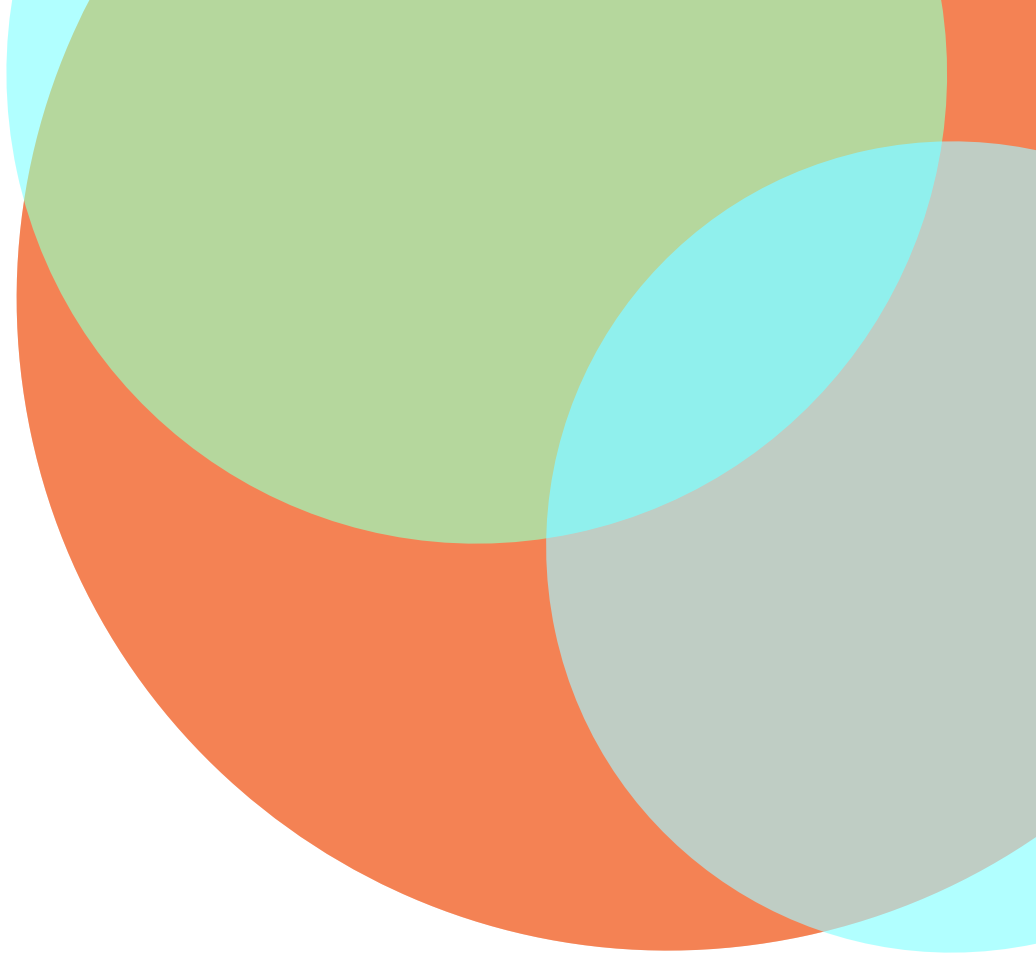


	<b>What is the C4C Judgement?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have to support that judgement?</b>	<b>What impact is this having on customers?</b>	<b>What is our recommendation?</b>
<b>1</b>	Don't think the lettable standard is high enough – particularly for hard to lets	On site viewing of vacants Refusal numbers Staff comments  Doesn't compare favourably with private rented sector for same property types  Challenger personal experience	Makes properties harder to let as more refusals  Increased turnround times  Increased rent loss  Image of an area	R1. Look into the costs of cutting grass/clean net curtains/washing windows/painting neutral colours and then target Hard to Let – areas or properties.  R2. Review the lettable standard in consultation with service users
<b>2</b>	The inspection “sign off” of vacant repairs is not rigorous enough	Vacant visits – outstanding issues in some properties  Challenger personal experience	Leads to unnecessary post-tenancy repairs  Contributes to refusals  Reputation of SCC as a landlord	R3. Introduce a more thorough inspection process both pre and post repair
<b>3</b>	Externals – both properties and gardens – could be better. Issue of “first impressions”, particularly with reference to KIER waste and abandoned items	Visits to properties  Local knowledge and experience of C4C members  C4C member's customer journey  Challenger personal experience	Dissuades potential tenants  “First Impressions”  Leads to more flytipping  Sets a poor example to incoming tenants	R1. Look into the costs of cutting grass/clean net curtains/washing windows/painting neutral colours and then target Hard to Let – areas or properties.  R4. Agree a minimum garden as part of a lettable standard
<b>4</b>	Generally the vacants visited met the current standard	On site visits to a number of vacants across a range of areas and property types	Percentage of properties that are easy to let and require few repairs is balanced with hard to lets	
<b>5</b>	Recognise that turnover times are average for the sector – so there is room to improve	Research and information	More rent loss than there could be	R5. Learn more from what the best landlords do

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<b>6</b>	Recognise that there are hard to let properties but there are few that have been vacant for more than 12 weeks and most require extensive work	Research and information		<p>R1. Look into the costs of cutting grass/clean net curtains/washing windows/painting neutral colours and then target Hard to Let – areas or properties</p> <p>R6. In Touch and The Bridge could be utilised to advertise hard to let vacants and promote areas and better use could be made of Area Housing Offices to advertise properties locally</p>
<b>7</b>	How areas are perceived is having an effect – other issues impact too such as transport/schools/shops. SCC could do more to “myth bust” and help create positive images of areas	<p>Feedback on refusal reasons</p> <p>Managers acknowledge it</p> <p>Press</p> <p>Emphasis on –ves rather than +ves</p>	<p>Affects lettability</p> <p>Refusals</p> <p>Hard to lets</p> <p>Rent loss</p>	<p>R7. Adverts need more tailoring rather than stock advert – with more detailed and better information on local facilities. More use of positive / happy images</p> <p>R8. Promote good things about an area to counter negative publicity, promote activities within the area that are appropriate for the age profile – lunch club, toddler groups. Use all Council services in a multi-agency approach</p> <p>R9. Explore idea of using “estate champions” and TARA produced information leaflets. Encourage better press and PR to promote areas</p>

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8	The website does not provide enough detail, for example on the room sizes of a property. It is not utilised to the extent that other landlords using the same system appear to be. It is basic and unattractive	Website review and comparison with other landlords websites  Refusal reasons  Other landlords providing more detailed information e.g. room sizes  Rehousing survey	May increase refusals as applicants knowledge is incomplete  Loss of bids – due to lack of promotion	R10. Use both external and internal photos and video tours / You Tube to show prospective tenants an idea of the style of the property  R11. Use clearer names to describe the area where properties are and more localised advertising  R12. Provide more information on the property and garden e.g. room sizes / steps  R13. The website could be more attractive with better use of photos
9	We feel that refusal reasons are not always real and genuine	Refusal reasons review	Doesn't provide the information that could help make improvements  Opportunity to address real concerns is missed	R14. Ask for refusal reasons a week after refusal as some customers may have provided an "on the spot" answer that is not genuine. Make better use/ analysis of refusal data
10	We feel that not all applicants are wanting to move and that some may be just exploring the system	Refusal reasons review  Anecdotal evidence from staff  The number of "multiple refusers"	Time is wasted  Slows process down for those "genuine" applicants	R15. Talk to multiple bidders about their needs to help them bid more appropriately and make it clearer that you don't have to bid for 3 properties per week
11	Housing + has potential to make for an improved and more joined up service e.g. staff could utilise their more detailed local knowledge. Better use of local knowledge could be used by all accompanied viewers	Interview with H+ staff from South East Area  Other staff comments	Creates sustainability  Reduce refusals  Less turnover  Better managed tenancies leading to better maintained homes	R9. Explore idea of using "estate champions" and TARA produced information leaflets. Encourage better press and PR to promote areas  R16. Manage tenancies in a way that limits damage caused in properties including the use of annual tenancy visits

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12	Lack of understanding by applicants that there is some flexibility / discretion of bedroom sizes	Personal experience of applicants  Data and information supplied by Access to Housing	Restricts options for elderly disabled and others who have changing circumstances  Reduces downsizing and in turn availability of larger desirable properties	R17. Ensure that information about flexibility and discretion about bedroom sizes is made available to applicants
13	The furnished policy is reasonable and seems to work well	H+ staff comments  Vacants manager comments  Furnished team comments		R18. Retain furnished accommodation as an option
14	The SCC “offer” does not always compare favourably (in cost and quality terms) with other providers	Market research e.g. Rightmove/ Stocksbridge retirement project  Website reviews	Turnaround time as potential applicants may look at other options  Reputation of SCC as a landlord	R5. Learn more from what the best landlords do  R19. Look at how private landlords are letting properties in Hard to Let areas and think and act more like a letting agent
15	The support provided in Area Housing Offices and the Property Shop varies from excellent to examples where advice given is not always accurate or sufficient	Mystery shops at the Property Shop e.g. inaccurate furnished advice  Personal observation and mystery shops  Challenger personal experience	Customers supported  Customers could be confused/misinformed	R15. Talk to multiple bidders about their needs to help them bid more appropriately and make it clearer that you don't have to bid for 3 properties per week  R20. Training of frontline staff could be enhanced to give them more property knowledge and FAQs should be produced for them



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