



Coventry **HOMEFINDER**

Letting you choose

19 February 2007

Coventry Homefinder to offer greater choice for city's residents

People looking for housing are to benefit from the launch of Coventry Homefinder, a new scheme that offers greater choice when it comes to finding a new home.

Housing Associations in the city have teamed up with Coventry City Council and advice agencies to create the new service.

Properties will be advertised in a weekly newsletter and on the Internet. People looking for accommodation can express their interest in the property they want by phone, text message or on the Internet.

Currently people looking for housing are required to join the council's housing list and also apply separately to each Housing Association in the city. Coventry Homefinder will simplify the process by creating a single application route for all available property in the city and people will be able to choose the property they want to live in.

Councillor Hazel Noonan, Cabinet Member (Community Services) said: "The way people apply for social housing in the city at the moment is very time-consuming. By working in partnership with Housing Associations and the voluntary sector to develop Coventry Homefinder, we are introducing a much simpler process that also allows people to have a real say in choosing their new home. Particular help will be available to those in most need."

Richard Monk, on behalf of Whitefriars Housing Group said: "Coventry Homefinder will bring many benefits to customers. We are delighted that we have managed to agree a common approach that allows customers to access all Housing Association vacancies by one application and allows them a real choice in the home they want to live in."

Michael Gilday, a community representative on the Partnership Board said "Choice-Based Lettings puts the power more firmly in the customer's hands by increasing choice. Customers will be able to choose the property they want to live in. At the moment many people looking for accommodation are disappointed in the property they are offered, as they have limited involvement in choosing the property they want"

The Housing Associations and the city council are now writing to all those on their waiting lists to inform them of the changes and inviting people to give their views on how the service can meet their needs. Applicants are also being advised that their details will be transferred on to the Coventry Homefinder list and that they do not need to do anything at this stage. Further information will be provided in April prior to the launch of the scheme in May 2007.

Ends

For media information please contact:

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Notes for editors:

1. **Coventry Homefinder** is a partnership between Coventry City Council, Whitefriars Housing Group, Midland Heart Housing Association, Orbit Housing Association, Jephson Housing Association, Mercian Housing Association, Ashram Housing Association, Guinness Trust, ASRA (Midlands) Housing Association, Housing 21, Starley Housing Co-operative, Nehemiah Housing Association and Advice Services Coventry.

2. The Housing Associations in the partnership have 23,000 homes in the City.

3. The partnership is supported by Coventry Partnership and has been funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

4. **Whitefriars Housing Group Limited** is a not-for-profit housing and regeneration organisation established in 2000 that owns and manages approximately 17,000 homes across Coventry. Whitefriars Housing Group Limited is a charitable industrial and provident society.

The Group has committed £240 million to the repair and improvement of its housing stock, ensuring that the Government's Decent Homes Standard is met five years ahead of schedule.

Working in neighbourhoods, Whitefriars is committed to the national 'in business for neighbourhoods' agenda and is a major player in the regeneration of Coventry and the provision of affordable housing.

In addition to providing homes, the Group works in partnership with communities and other agencies to provide training and employment opportunities and support services for local residents, with the aim of building sustainable communities.

5. **The Coventry Partnership** brings together agencies across the city, building on the existing good links between organisations in the public, voluntary and business sectors.

More than 30 partner organisations work together to find new ways to improve the lives of people who live or work in Coventry, with particular emphasis on helping those neighbourhoods and communities with priority needs.

For further information about the Coventry Partnership, visit

www.coventrypartnership.com

6. **The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF)** aims to enable England's most deprived local authorities, in collaboration with their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in our case the Coventry Partnership, to improve services, narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country; Coventry has had NRF since 2001 and has already benefited from £22.5 million worth of NRF. Coventry is entering its third phase and has been granted a further £10.6 million between 2006 and 2008

Background information

The Government published a report in May 2006 "Monitoring the Longer Term impact of Choice Based Lettings". This report found that a choice based approach to lettings leads to more sustainable lettings, generally improves customer satisfaction and tends to reduce ethnic segregation. The report can be found at www.communities.gov.uk