



UNIVERSITY  
*of*  
GLASGOW

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**Workshop Session 2 (h): Hal Pawson, Heriot-Watt  
University**

**Choice-Based Lettings and Social Justice**



**SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**

Scottish Centre for Research on  
**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

School of the Built Environment

# Choice-based Lettings and Social Justice

*Hal Pawson, Heriot-Watt University*

# What do we mean by 'choice-based lettings'?

- Newly arising social housing vacancies advertised on a periodic (e.g. fortnightly) cycle
- House hunters apply for specific advertised vacancies
- Relative priority of competing applicants influenced by both:
  - assessed housing need, and
  - simple queuing concept – e.g. waiting time or length of residence
- Provision made for overriding priority for 'emergency need' cases
- Allocation outcomes published to indicate the level of demand for each vacancy let and the priority of the successful applicant
- Matching applicants and vacancies undertaken by applicants not by officials
- Applicants encouraged to trade off preferences – e.g. area versus house type

- Key ministerial priority in England
  - challenge fund distributed £13M across 27 pilot schemes, 2001-03
  - official target for all LAs to operate CBL systems by 2010
- Communities Scotland *Performance Standards* require social landlords to let houses through systems that:
  - give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need
  - make best use of available stock
  - ***maximise choice***, and
  - help to sustain communities
- Scottish ministers continue to focus on reforming lettings systems through CHRs
- Perceived regulatory distaste for CBLs
- CBLs nevertheless spreading in Scotland

- City of Edinburgh Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Link HA
- Berwickshire HA

and a number of others

- Reconciling needs-based and queue-based applicant prioritisation
- Integrating homeless households
- Implications for vulnerable applicants
- Ethnic segregation
- Area polarisation

<b>Social justice concern</b>	<b>Evaluation evidence</b>
Need to reconcile needs-based and queue-based prioritisation	All systems in operation contain needs-based components
Integration of homeless households	Most systems incorporate homeless households through time-limited overriding priority
Implications for vulnerable applicants	Extra help for vulnerable applicants a 'second order priority' in a number of pilots. Further work ongoing.
Ethnic segregation	No evidence that BME households disadvantaged or that segregation is increased. Further work ongoing.
Area polarisation	Revealed 'low demand' areas tend to be more localised than previously thought. Further work ongoing.