

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING  
BY DEPUTY R.J. RONDEL OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 6th MARCH 2012**

**Question**

“Of the figure of 522 on the Housing waiting list would the Minister advise the Assembly how many people this actually equates to in terms of the number of adults and children within each family unit?”

**Answer**

Whilst it has been possible to breakdown the waiting list data in the manner requested, doing so has required significant resources from within my department. These are therefore not figures that I am able to publish regularly.

The Housing Department has always held a waiting list for social rented accommodation and there have been a number of other waiting lists held by other providers, most significantly the Housing Trusts. Simply adding those lists together would have involved significant duplication and portrayed an inaccurate and far higher demand for social housing than was actually the case.

As part of the Housing Transformation Programme an Affordable Housing Gateway has been developed as the single access point for all affordable housing applications. This Gateway is now operational and we are in the process of amalgamating the waiting lists of all the providers with the exception of the Parishes (who represent just 6% of the social housing stock). All of the Trust waiting lists have now been closed. This has meant that we have been able to strip out the significant duplication that existed where people were applying for housing to more than one provider. As a result we can be certain that all those applying through the Gateway have been consistently means tested and are genuinely in housing need. The Housing Trusts and my department are now making all of their allocations (60 so far this year) from the Gateway.

**CURRENT DEMAND**

As at 20th February 2012 the Gateway demonstrates that there are **574** applicants in need of a rental home (Gateway Bands 1, 2, 3 & 6). It is important to note that the amalgamation work is on-going and it is possible that this figure will continue to rise, albeit only moderately. This apparent increase in waiting list figures is not a reflection of “new” or ‘emerging’ demand, but a reflection of the previously “hidden” demand within the waiting lists held by the Housing Trusts.

There are two further Bands within the Gateway, Bands 4 & 5, which refer to applicants who are already adequately housed but who wish to move, either to alternative rental accommodation or an affordable purchase scheme if it were available. Additionally the waiting list figure of **574** does not take into account applicants who are currently living in social rented housing but require a transfer to alternative accommodation.

The current waiting list of **574** has been broken down by the household make up of each application as requested. The total number of individuals within the **574** applications is **1,421** – the breakdown of the age of those household members is shown below.

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Number of individuals</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>
18 or younger	527	0
19 - 40	455	253
41 - 65	342	248
over 65	97	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,421</b>	<b>574</b>

**67% of waiting list applications are from families.**

	<b>Number of individuals</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Applications with no dependants	240	189	33
Applications with dependants	654	385	67
Dependants	527	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,421</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>100</b>

This is no surprise. Demand for family homes, particularly two bedroom properties, has seen a significant increase since 2008 when the supply of new homes being developed slowed significantly.

### **EXISTING TENANTS REQUIRING A TRANSFER**

The Gateway offers more flexibility in regards to both waiting list and transfer list applicants, as allocations of all social housing stock, not just the Housing Department but also the Trusts, are being made through the Gateway. This increases mobility and provides for more equitable allocations amongst providers for the benefit of all tenants. The Gateway demonstrates that if a greater supply of one bedroom properties were available, social housing transfer applicants currently under-occupying two and three bedroom social rented homes could move thereby releasing their existing family homes for those on the waiting list.

### **SUPPLY**

The figures demonstrated by the Gateway are not just statistics, they are real people every single one of whom will have been visited and assessed personally against stringent allocations criteria. This careful and thorough assessment takes into consideration all household members whether they are children, grandchildren or elderly dependants.

Understanding the level of need and having confidence in that data will, I hope, be sufficient justification for a greater supply of homes being delivered through our planning system. Increasing supply really is the key to reducing the current high level of need.

The year on year waiting list figures demonstrate that demand has increased significantly since 2008, when the supply of affordable homes effectively dried up. That is despite the fact that the

States re-zoned land for life long and first time buyer Homes (P75/2008) in 2008. It is regrettable that very few of those homes have been delivered to date and it is that lack of supply which we are now so short of. It must be a concern that as building on most of these sites has not yet commenced it will be another 2 years at least before we turn any keys in new homes.

It is often misunderstood that it is the Housing Minister who controls the supply of homes when it is in fact the Planning & Environment Minister who has his hands on the supply levers. I know that the lack of supply is of concern to the Planning & Environment Minister and we must all support him in whatever initiatives he comes up with to speed up the supply and see that land rezoned by the States in response to Housing need is developed in a timely manner and not just when it might best suit land owner and developer.

I will be publishing a White Paper at the end of this month which will bring forward a number of proposals which will improve the way that affordable housing is delivered in Jersey in the future.

Social housing rents and States rents in particular have fallen significantly behind the market and are now providing a hidden and unintended subsidy to all social housing tenants irrespective of their financial circumstances. This is despite the intended policy of successive Housing Committee's to have rents at 90% of the private rental market. Providing this hidden subsidy was not the intention of this Assembly when it established Income Support.

Removing the hidden subsidy and returning to nearer market rents is one of the proposals in my forthcoming White Paper. However, this alone will not deliver affordable housing. What is needed is a long term and sustainable approach to Housing the population and core to that is the need for:-

- A body to champion housing issues
- An appropriate form of regulation for the affordable housing sector
- Affordable housing providers who are financially sustainable and agile enough to respond to the changing housing needs of the population

Members will be aware that as things currently stand I am simultaneously expected to set sector and Island wide housing policy, regulate the activities of other social landlords and provide landlord services to 4,500 homes. There are clear conflicts in this which are unhelpful. I will therefore be bringing forward proposals to separate these functions and establish a Strategic Housing Unit and an independent regulatory body.

The Strategic Housing Unit will have a number of responsibilities the most significant of which will be in respect of setting our long term housing strategy to ensure that we have the right number of affordable homes going forward.

A Regulator is necessary in order to ensure adherence to the policies of the Strategic Housing Unit and to provide an independent view on the performance of the various providers. However, the other role of regulation is to generate confidence in the sector for all stakeholders including States members, Tenants and Lenders.

The White Paper will also set out my proposal to transform the current Housing Department into a more agile and flexible organisation. A number of options have been considered and my proposal is for a wholly States owned Housing Association.

The new Association will be permitted to borrow which will allow it to speed up investment in the stock for the benefit of its Tenants and to use existing assets more intensively; generating new

homes which better meet the needs of the population. The new Association will be staffed by the staff of from my existing Department ensuring that the considerable expertise is retained for the benefit of tenants. The new Association will be able to grow and provide more homes if that is what is necessary, setting the rents at nearer market level will ensure that new homes can be developed without the necessity for States subsidy.

I can confirm that the Political Steering Group overseeing the HTP includes the Treasury and Resources Minister and the Minister for Social Security and recommendations 11 and 12 of the scrutiny report are fully covered by the Housing Transformation Programme and an outline of future policy will be included in the forthcoming White Paper.

However, it would not be appropriate for a White Paper on Housing reform to discuss the detailed interaction between rent levels, income tax thresholds, minimum wage and Income Support.

Work is being co-ordinated through the Housing Transformation Programme on changes that will be required to Income Support as a result of the reform of the social rented sector. These proposals will be put to the States in parallel with the proposals for Housing reform.